

Sychophancy In Governance: The Destruction of Nigeria's Political Development

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Abstract

Sychophancy in governance is a servile political behaviour usually exhibited by political minions which diverts the attention of the political leader from his constitutional responsibilities of public service to personal aggrandizement, corruption and narcissistic behaviours. Hence the reason for this study was because of the consequences of sychophancy in governance which creates an abnormal lust for power by the ruling class and creates a gap between the leaders and the people such that the leaders do not get to understand or see the true picture of things from the lenses of the people. In the light of this, the objective of this study is to identify the implications of sychophancy on political development. Thus qualitative technique was employed and the findings from this paper revealed that one of the causes of sychophancy in governance is that the system of allocation of resources or positions in many political systems of developing nations is usually based on support and not merit derived from capacity to perform and so it plays an enticing role for political jobbers particularly where government rewards sychophants for not revealing the ineptitude of the system or using the main stream media in silencing those challenging the effectiveness of policy programmes. It therefore concludes and recommends that the National Assembly needs to review and cut down on the exorbitant lifestyle of public servants, outrageous allowances, royalties and other excesses in order to repel off sychophants and charlatans in corridors of power deceiving and misleading the political leaders.

Background to the Study

Sycophancy in governance is a way of generating or endearing favors from political elites and influential people through flattery and eulogy for parochial and pecuniary motives. This servile political behaviour usually exhibited by political minions diverts the attention of the political leader from his constitutional responsibilities of public service to personal aggrandizement, corruption and narcissistic behaviours. It creates a false sense of leadership by making him averse to constructive criticisms while also giving the leader the bogus impression that he is above the law. Thus, in the process, such leaders are prone to making anti people policies predicated on underhanded premises capable of destabilizing the nation which eventually not only leads to their down fall but also sabotages a nation's political development (Itaobong, 2019). Therefore, Sycophancy in governance occurs when the performance of constitutional functions are excessively exaggerated to invoke unwarranted stream of praises on a public servant, administration or government official in power. It is usually deceptive and highly opinionated. It misleads and derails the attention of the electorates from noticing or identifying the leadership failure of an administration (Hyginus, 2020). Similarly, sycophants and those in corridors of power often make use of denial, disinformation, diversion, evasion, exaggeration, indoctrination, media manipulation, mind control, propaganda and scapegoating to achieve their self-serving agenda at the expense of the electorate experiencing good governance that leads to political development (Oseji, 2017).

However, because of the successive years of misgovernance facilitated by sycophants, Nigeria has continued to experience a steady decline in political development enabled by an overwhelming army of insatiable charlatans administering, managing and supervising sensitive offices in Nigeria's politics, economy and security apparatus (Ejinkeonye, 2019), which has further sank Nigeria into pervasive squalor, national turmoil, political tension, insurgency, malnutrition, youth unemployment, child mortality, deprivation in health care, education and food security. Thus, the concentration of the nation's wealth in the hands of crooked politicians, manipulative bureaucrats, crafty bourgeoisies, government and business usually attracts the attention of the downtrodden especially the unemployed youths and economically vulnerable members of the society who have little or no access of escaping the poverty trap. Hence, these masses who are attracted to the gatekeepers of political and economic power develop such attraction from their desire to also benefit from the spoils of stolen public funds. However, in many instances, they are often disqualified by issues of illiteracy, ineptitude, lack of godfathers, nepotism, religious, ethnic and cultural affiliations etc. Hence, in order to catch some crumbs of wealth, the socially excluded masses in Nigeria have devised a self-destructive approach to get the attention of the senior government officials, policy makers and their party stalwarts. They do this by forming themselves into sycophantic support groups specialized in hoodwinking, singing deceptive praises of politicians in power and their political parties whom they know have a firm and tenacious grip on the governance, administration and economy of the nation and so the continuous pattern of sycophancy exhibited by the socially and economically marginalized masses compels the politicians to believe that they can always get away with crimes against the

state and also get the blind loyalty and support from the people irrespective of their actions and performance in governance. Therefore, in contemporary Nigeria, sycophantic politics and beguiling continues and gives the ruling class the enabling atmosphere to continue in political impunity, injustice and desecration of the rule of law (Ekong and Essien,2012).

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the causes of sycophancy in governance
2. To identify its implications for political development
3. To proffer solutions to the menace of sycophancy in governance for enhanced political development in Nigeria

Conceptual Literature

Concept of Sycophancy

Sycophancy is an enervative behaviour that seeks to please a person in positions of economic or political authority for ulterior motives. More often than not, sycophancy is driven by selfish interests by engaging in lip service flattery and sometimes slandering fellow citizens in order to curry unearned or unqualified privileges from the ruling class (Amadi, 2010). Thus, sycophancy is any deceitful and treacherous political behaviour capable of debasing political activities and corrupting the political processes. It creates decay in governance and desensitizes leaders to empathize with the people's needs (Oseghale,2012).In the light of this, sycophancy is a form of debilitating political activity used by some disadvantaged groups of individuals or unscrupulous groups of people at the corridors of power to massage the egos of those in the helms of affairs while telling them half-truths and outright lies in an attempt to secure some political appointments or have access to certain funds meant for the public. Hence, these sycophants make use of misrepresentation and intentionally repeat messages not addressing societal issues but the needs of the leaders for their short-term personal gratification. In addition, sycophancy is a vitiated political activity that employs the use of deceptive political advertisement as well as false and unproven messages targeted at the electorate to mislead reasonable thinking voters so that the political party, they want to feast on can win elections and so here the advertisers are the sycophants, political minions and party sympathizers. Thus, the consequential voter acceptance attracts the attention of the politicians to favor their selfish ambitions (Arirguzoh,2019). Therefore, sycophancy is a situation where individuals or institutions continues to falsely praise a sitting government in power, political stalwarts or people of political or economic importance despite their incompetence or their gross abuse of power. Unfortunately, these actions birth mediocrity in governance, deprives the people of political development, creates an abnormal lust for power by the ruling class and creates a gap between the leaders and the people such that the leaders do not get to understand or see the true picture of things from the lenses of the people. Hence, there is a wide social exclusion where the ruling class do not feel the pulse of the plebeians (Umeogu and Ojiakor,2012). Beyond that, sycophancy is any political behaviour wherein crass opportunism and chameleonic ideas is brazenly displayed for corrupt and unethical gains. Examples include avoidance of obvious facts

to deliberate insertion of misrepresentative information laden with manipulative rhetoric, exaggeration and outright falsehood with the sole intention of being able to entice as much political opportunities and privileges from politically influential men to themselves as much as possible. Therefore, sychophants skillfully make use of languages in a smooth way which allows them creatively control information in order to persuade, convince and impress godfathers, politicians and party stalwarts (Oparinde, Mathonsi and Mheta (2020).

Unfortunately, sychophancy is so degenerative that it has no regards for ethical principles and political development. Infact, it creates an oppressive governance structure as well as a politically toxic environment for undemocratic tendencies such as manipulation, treachery, bitterness, intimidation, ethnicity, greed, scheming, desperation for power, godfatherism, political violence, propaganda, hatred and the stifling of effective political participation (Olajimbiti,2019).

Concept of Governance

Governance is used today in many different contexts. As a term, it is used to describe regime types or the nature of relationships between states and society and as a set of norms to appraise governmental systems and prescribe appropriate or acceptable practice of the manner in which power is used. Governance therefore refers to the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the country's economic and social resources for development. In other words, the concept can be seen as the use of political authority and exercise of control over a society and the management of resources. This includes institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes, policy formulation, implementation capacity, development of personnel, information flows and the nature and style of leadership within a political system (Imam,2015). Thus, governance is cardinal for the social, political and economic progress of every country and it is indispensable for the achievement of the noble objectives of a state. Essentially, governance is viewed in terms of processes, structures and organizational traditions that determine how power is exercised, how stakeholders have their say, how decisions are taken and how decision makers are held to account (Shiyanbade, Ganiyu and Olajide,2016).Fundamentally, governance implies the structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability ,transparency ,responsiveness, rule of law ,stability, equity ,inclusiveness, empowerment and broad-based participation (Zuofa,2020).This reveals that governance is how a nation is run. It includes all processes, systems and controls that are used to safeguard and grow assets. It also involves the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels and comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. In the light of this, governance is the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say. Therefore, it is about power, relationships and accountability, who has influence, who decides and how decision makers are held accountable. In similar vein, governance is

seen as a set of institutions, laws and behaviours that affect the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic, financial and social resources across the public, private and non-state sectors (Etigbamo,2020).In simple terms, governance denotes the processes of decision making and the principles by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).Therefore, the generic understanding of governance is the management of resources and policy making by means of exercising authority (in the form of power) and so it entails all instruments through which different policy stakeholders exercise legal rights with the aim of achieving political, economic, cultural and social objectives. In essence, the concept of governance encapsulates a complex set of structures and processes (at the public as well as the private level) which are generally associated with national administration (Omilusi,2021).

Concept of Political Development

There is no academic consensus on the most appropriate concept of political development. However, it can be regarded as an increase in national political unity, stability, orderly change and an increase in political participation (Adebowale,2020). Thus, the concept of political development is always ideological in nature reflecting the biases and prejudices of different scholars and so the elite and socialist researchers have different checklist of what constitutes a politically developed polity. Nevertheless, whenever the concept of political development is associated with the new nations of the world like Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India etc. It refers to nation building and the evolution of viable political institutions and structures capable of aggregating inputs from their environments and converting them to alternative outputs. Political development for the new nations also involves growth towards real independence and attaining equal partnership with the older nations in international economic and political relations (Ishaya,2018). The point here is that political development is about the creation or transfer of institutions of government which are conducive to support the economic processes and social goals. Thus, the basic assumption here is that political development is the simple transfer of political systems from underdeveloped or developing to developed. Therefore, the key factor to political development is the creation of adaptable and coherent political institutions capable of responding effectively to citizens demands. This reveals that political development is not a product packaged in Europe or America and transferred to people in the form of democratic reforms, instead political development is a process of using affluence to eliminate affliction through the instrumentality of state power. In other words, it is simply about the state using its resources (human and material) to address the challenges of poverty, ignorance and diseases. Political development involves the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire structures of state towards a direction that engenders the core values of democracy, good governance and the rule of law. It must also make provisions for popular participation in the political processes and for the protection of civil rights and essential freedom (Nyewusira and Nweke,2012).

Causes of Sychophancy in Governance

Adekola (2020; Umeogu and Ojiakor,2012; Hyginus,2020) have identified some of the causes of sychophancy in governance which shall be identified below.

1. Illiteracy and ignorance: According to the 2018 report of the National Bureau of Statistics, adult literacy rate in English which is the official lingua franca of Nigeria stands at 57.9 % while literacy rate in any language stands at 71.6% of the total population. Thus, with over 40% of the population's lack of literacy, objective and rational participation in the activities of governance becomes difficult hence making room for sychophants to have a field day and so one major characteristics of illiterates is ignorance which makes them lack the requisite knowledge of the workings of governmental activities and thus they often become sychophantic and careless about political activities.
2. Poverty: Nigeria is regarded as the world capital of the poor. This is because Nigeria has the highest poverty rate in the world. As at 2018, about 90.8 million Nigerians were living in extreme poverty. This is about 50% of the population of the country. To the poor, sychophancy is the only way to meet their basic needs or get the attention of the ruling class to their plight since their main priority is how to satisfy their basic needs for survival and so the people assume they have no chance at having good governance, they therefore resort to cooperating with their oppresors so far as some money they can use for daily survival is doled out to them. Unfortunately, the consequences of such action is political underdevelopment and retrogression.
3. Socio- Cultural norms: In Nigeria, there are still some widely held cultural and religious practices that believe leaders are God-ordained or divine and therefore their leadership styles, actions and political activities should not be questioned, called to order, criticized or corrected. Unfortunately, this cultural practice threatens the survival of democracy and creates social exclusion as well as a large army of sychophantic poor who tell the leader what he wants to hear for their personal gain at the expense of what will contribute to better governance that facilitates political development. This destructive political behaviour encourages political impunity, lawlessness, corruption, societal decadence and poverty. In addition, it creates narcissism, psychopathy and tyranny in leaders because they assume they are demi-gods.
4. Politricking: Unlike in developing societies where politricking stops immediately after elections, in Nigeria however, the practice of winner takes it all encourages sychophancy because the impoverished electorates seek to remain in the good books of the leaders in the winning team in order to be able to curry favours, get political appointments and stipends from the political elites.
5. Colonially inherited Political Culture: As a colonial state, Nigeria formed and inherited its political behaviour on a warped foundation which inclines predominantly towards a parochial culture, thrives in the shallow knowledge of the political process, possesses a loss of intrest in fact finding and instead has a passion for double standards, hypocrisy and sychophancy that are not just baseless but rent seeking. Therefore, since colonial administration traded on fantasy in the administration of its foreign territories, it was convenient for post-colonial leadership and subjects to adopt the attitude and play by the gallery.
6. Systems of Rewards: The system of allocation of resources or positions in many

political systems of developing nations is usually based on support and not merit derived from capacity to perform and so it plays an enticing role for political jobbers particularly where government rewards sychophants for not revealing the ineptitude of the system or using the mainstream media in silencing those challenging the effectiveness of policy programmes. Thus, because the system emphasizes on blind loyalty as conditions for rewards or allocation of resources and positions, many people usually toe the line of camouflaged support using all manner of strategies including sychophancy.

Theoretical Framework

Political Development Theory

This paper is anchored on the political development theory pioneered by Plato (428-348BCE) and Aristotle (384-322BCE) and this school of thought subordinates the economic, social and technological to the political. This suggests that nothing matters or works until political development is achieved. In essence, this theory emphasizes that for governance to work according to Kwame Nkrumah such nation has to seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto it (Ola,2004). Thus, this theory posits that political behaviour, culture and political values have a decisive role in facilitating or impeding political development irrespective of the nation's economic potentials or human resources. This means that political development is used to determine the level of advancement or improvement of political systems from a corrupt, weak and sychophantic governance structure to a more advanced society in terms of legitimacy, political participation and management of internal crisis (Nyewusira and Nweke,2012).In the light of this, sychophancy in governance particularly in developing nations has become brazen because of years of misgovernance particularly in developing nations. Hence, sychophancy in governance is a consequent manifestation of nations with politically misplaced priorities, poor sense of judgement, poor political choices and behaviour. Therefore ,for sychophancy to be eradicated in Nigeria's governance structure, political development first has to be achieved by changes in different layers of society taking into account state performance, the people's welfare, activities of the elites, socio-economic and progressive political culture (Adebowale,2020),changes in institutions, individual attitudes, institutionalization of ethical behaviour as well as respect for constitutional procedures in political competition, willingness to genuinely eradicate corruption, presidential despotism and overdependence on foreign aid (Ishaya,2018).Hence, this theory is relevant to this study because it revealed the reason why sychophancy in governance persists and why governance is not working despite Nigeria's massive economic and political potentials. On this note, Imam (2015) observed that the inability of the Nigerian government to deal decisively with corruption and nepotism is the very reason sychophancy has continued to persist in Nigeria's governance structure and has inevitably made the achievement of political development impossible. Similarly, Olojede (2020) noted that maladministration, poor political culture, democratic bastardization, political impunity, administrative and state failure have become institutional quagmires that has sabotaged the ability of government to accomplish policies and programmes that lead to political development. Thus,

sychophancy and political deception has continued to flourish and destroy the very essence of governance in Nigeria.

Methodology

Documentary method was adopted for this study. Hence, data was sourced from local, national and international academic publications. These consisted of relevant textbooks and academic journals. The data gathered from the aforementioned method was analyzed using qualitative descriptive technique.

Sycophancy in Governance: The Destruction of Nigeria's Political Development

Sychophancy and hagiography seem to be taking a very dangerous institutional presence under the guise of loyalty in Nigeria's governance structure. It is a very common sight to see people including the educated and enlightened praising insincerely a corrupt political official who has not only impoverished his constituency but performed below expectation in such a dehumanizing and distasteful way. For instance, during the tenure of former President Goodluck Jonathan, President Jonathan was called many deceptive names by those around him. He was called “the best President ever in the history of Nigeria, Mandela, Obama, Martin Luther King, Awolowo, Sardauna, Nnamdi Azikwe, Ojukwu and Mbakwe put together in one President” Infact, one presidential spokesman likened him to Jesus Christ the Son of the living God who came to bear our burdens. Similarly, the same thing is happening to the present administration under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari. Thus, at present, despite the pervasive insecurity, institutional failure, corruption, continuous pilfering of the national treasury and impunity at a large scale, the presidential aides of President Buhari keep praising him. Unfortunately, many leaders get carried away and become unaware of the fact that many around his throne are liars, gluttons, gerrymandering geeks and treacherous lying in wait at the gate daily. Hence, the endemic wave of sychophancy sweeping across every political space with the rage of wildfire has become an enigmatic culture by those in political and economic disadvantage especially in every democratic regime in Nigeria (Shishima,2022).

Unfortunately, the menace of sychophancy in governance has become a threat towards the realization of political development in Nigeria. This therefore reveals that the non-performance of political leaders is a consequence of sychophancy in governance. (Olajide and Adaja,2020). This is so because sychophancy disrupts the principle and application of policies. It strangulates the aims and objectives of every laudable programme of the government to the extent that only very few people in vantage positions, rather than the target beneficiaries enjoy the benefits of governance. Therefore, when a leader emerges through subterfuge and deceit, such society would have to contend with the reign of corruption and political impunity throughout the tenure of such leader (Oderinde,2019). Thus, a panoramic analysis of the danger of sychophancy in governance shows that it is the physical symptom of numerous difficulties within developing societies. For example, sychophancy creates retarded political development, ineffective political institutions, limited economic growth, weak rule of law, enablement of mediocrity, deep ethnic

divisions, political apathy, low educational attainment and above all, corruption (Imam,2015).

In addition to that, sychophancy breeds deception and destroys the entire political system because it thrives on falsehood. Thus, it is one of the greatest impediments to political development as it undermines democracy by distorting the rule of law and wanning the institutional groundwork on which democratization depends (Salami, Atoyebi and Lawal,2016). Furthermore, sychophancy has created an environment rife for policy failures and political instability because policies are not usually predicated on sincerity and the enhancement of political development. Hence, policy failure becomes inevitable due to the lack of participation of the beneficiaries in conception, design and implementation. Similarly, sychophancy in governance has facilitated a situation where governance and development programmes are executed by the top hierarchy of government without the contribution of the beneficiaries. They decide what problems to address, what project to executed without consideration for the people involved and their needs. Therefore, political inclusion that facilitates political development cannot be achieved because it lacks democratic tenets (Olajide and Adaja, 2020).

Another implication of sychophancy for Nigeria's political development is that it creates a fertile ground for corruption, chaos and impunity to thrive which manifests as unpatriotic, undemocratic behaviours, poor political culture, high poverty rate, lack of basic infrastructural facilities, unemployment and political instability and under these conditions it is impossible for any nation to attain political development irrespective of its capacity, size, numerical strength or potentials. Furthermore, sychophancy destroys the political culture and values of any nation in so many ways. For instance, Afegbua (2021) emphasized that sychophancy gives rise to a political structure that enables the misplacement of political and economic priorities. It enthrones personal interests at the detriment of national and state interests and allows personal self-aggrandizement to supercede facts about the true nature of governance in the country. It also creates political instability and discontinuity of programmes, it creates political instability and discontinuity of programmes, it generates an expansion of administrative arms, fosters a distortion in the structure of capital programmes encourage public service inefficiency, facilitates systemic corruption, erodes objective self-assessment by leaders, sabotages the policy formulation processes and adequate consultation and then kills the institutionalizing of a virile monitoring and evaluation system which then leads to a failed state. For example, Hyginus (2020) noted that across various successive administrations in the fourth republic, sychophancy has made several policies and programmes highlighted below to veer off abruptly or get aborted some of which are:

- a. Ajaokuta steel company operation
- b. Maintenance of refineries for effective functioning and local supply stabilization
- c. Power sector reforms to end electricity challenges nationally.
- d. Important infrastructure like roads, railway and airport rehabilitation to boost transport system.

- e. Dredging of River Niger and siting of seaports at Onitsha and Lokoja to boost commerce.
- f. Poverty alleviation programmes to end poverty and hunger among Nigerians.
- g. Economic diversification and self-autonomy to encourage production for import substitution.
- h. Security and anti-corruption to ensure safety and protect public resources from abuse.

Conclusion

Sychophancy is a toxic political menace that seduces leaders into taking despicable and anti-people decisions which does not just erode the capacity of a state to achieve political development but also destroys integrity and national interests. Infact, it blindfolds political leaders from adequately addressing the political, social and economic needs of its citizens because it exists on falsehood and a debased political value. Thus, it frustrates every hope of democratization that can lead to political development. In the light of this, the following policy recommendations were made

Recommendations

1. The academia in collaboration with the religious, traditional and community leaders as well as the pressure groups need to exert pressure on the law makes to push for policies wherein political appointments and administrative roles will be given based on evident capacity for intellectual and character-based service delivery and not based on political affiliations or rewards for political loyalty. This will significantly reduce the level of sychophancy and deception in the corridors of power.
2. Policy frameworks must be institutionalized by stakeholders in the public and civil service wherein ethnic politics, sectional and religious politics must not be allowed to take the centre stage or be used as a conditionality for appointments or employment in our work culture, administrative and socio-political environments so that leadership will be based on competence rather than political, ethnic or religious sentiments that breeds sychophancy
3. The mindset and culture of selfishness and greed introduced by the new generation of politician's strips people of their dignity and standard of living and consequently breeds an increase in sychophancy. Therefore, the dignity of labour of people must be restored to curb greed, selfishness and sychophany in governance.
4. The civil society as a matter of necessity need to pressurize the National Assembly to review the high cost of governance and endless perks of political officials across the state. Thus, governance should be made unattractive, and the exorbitant lifestyle of public servants, outrageous allowances, royalties and other excesses need to be reviewed downwards in order to reduce and repel off sychophants and charlatans in corridors of power deceiving and misleading the political leaders.
5. The value system that makes people assume that politics is a job needs to be overhauled instead it should be seen as an offer to serve in order to be futuristic in development.

6. The electorate need to reduce their high and unreasonable expectations from politicians by expecting politicians to give them monies, food and gifts before voting for them.
7. The youths in collaboration with community leaders need to pressurize the House of Assembly to pass a bill to stop awards, honorary or traditional titles and celebration of leaders whose administration has not been concluded or who score low in legitimacy, effectiveness in governance or the sustainable development index

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