The Burden of Political Leadership-Followership Relations and the Crisis of Development in Rivers State, Nigeria (2015-2023)

By

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Abstract

The overall aim of this paper was to interrogate the impact of political leadership-political followership relations and the crisis of development in Nigeria. The major challenge of this study was that there is less academic attention on political followership, mindless of the fact that political leadership is a shared responsibility; and that political followership had jettisoned its civic responsibility of acting as check on political leadership. The argument of this paper that if the Nigerian political leadership has become dysfunctional, deficient, and unproductive and therefore anti-development it is because of followership failure. The argument of this paper was guided by the questioning theory of development. For this particular qualitative paper, the *expost-facto* research design was used. Data for work were derived from secondary sources and analyzed using the content analysis method. This study established that the unpatriotic, lackadaisical and sycophantic attitude and the lack of the questioning spirit of the followers accentuate the criminalized, exploitative, negligent, predatory, rentier, and prebendal character of political leadership. Hence failure of political leadership and the crisis of development is largely a problem of failure of political followership. As such the papers recommended for education and building of consciousness on the part of political followership: self-education or self-improvement as drivers of awareness; demands for accountability, transparency and stewardship, value re-orientation and character rebirth as paths to remedying followership deficit and development crisis in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political Leadership, Political Followership, Shared Responsibility, Crisis of Development, Questioning theory

Introduction

Governance, in whatever quality is a product of political leadership and political followership. But many times, the blame for bad governance and crisis of development has been heaped on leadership with sketchy comments on role of political followership. This is an indication of want of appreciation of the roles both play in governance and the drive for development. Crisis of development is caused by both political followers and political leaders. Political leadership emerges from political followership, better followers produce better leaders (Kellerman (2008). Thom-Otuya argued inter-alia that passive followership abounds because, the people had been ravaged by the leaders; and "when a people are ravaged by their leader, it will weaken their ability to rise up to their challenges of checkmating the excesses of their leaders; …this docility has great negative impact on the leadership -followership relationship" (2012, p. 116).

In the leadership – followership relation, the leaders is the vision bearer is the driver of development. As such it is incumbent on the leader to give direction, while the follower is expected to comply. This however does not downplay on the influence of the political followership; but goes to indicate that societies face not only leadership crisis, but also, followership crisis. While leadership crisis results in failure to drive development, followership crisis is made manifest in the people's inability to produce good leaders translating into a compounding crisis of leadership and development. The point is that political leadership emerges from, and is built on a social contract and particularly within Rousseau's framework of the "general will" (cited in Gauba, 2003).The terms of contract here crystalized in the pursuit and delivery of common good that will occasion the greatest happiness of the greatest number of the people). That common good is encapsulated in the concept of good governance and development.

Problematizing the issues

There is an avalanche of academic attention on leadership and national development. There is however less academic attention on followership. Paltry treatment of followership in leadership research is largely leader-centric. What

such studies produce are stereotype leadership as well as stereotype followership, where the followers are treated as recipient of leaders' influence; who dutifully and unquestionably carryout the orders and directive of the leader (Uhi-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, &, Melissa, 2013). Studies Achebe (1983), Achebe (2012), Joseph (1991), Thom-Otuya,(2012), Agbesa and Kieh (2014) etc , largely blame failure of leadership as the bane of Nigeria. Infact since Achebe (1983) conclusion that the "the trouble with Nigeria is the trouble of leadership," many other works have uncritically followed the same path. The crisis of development in Nigeria has also been traced to devastating colonial legacies inherited and sustained by the Nigerian political and ruling class (Ake, 1981; Ekeh, 1975).

Followership is not just allowing oneself to be influenced by a leader, but making critical contribution into the leadership process. Understanding of leadership is therefore incomplete without an understanding of followership. Leadership is a shared responsibility. It needs the followership's correction of leadership. In Nigeria's leadership selection process, supposedly built on the supremacy of the choice of the people (followership) - albeit manipulated and subverted - followers are the tools for manipulation, pervasion and subversion of the process in favour of anti-people outcomes. For instances, members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) recruited as electoral officers (returning officers, collation officers, supervisory presiding officers, etc) had been found to have subverted the will of the people during elections. After betraying their consciences in pursuit of immediate gratification and some other pecuniary advantages, they only turn to complain of underdevelopment of the educational sector, poor condition of service, hence strikes and its attendant negative implication on socio-economic development of the entire society.

Similarly, the abandonment of the political space, continuous voters' political apathy, indiscipline in the public and private behaviour of the followers are serious issues in the failure of leadership in Nigeria. The use of the phrase *abandonment of the political space* instead of *alienation from the political space* is most appropriate here following the assumptions of the frustration - aggression theory (Dollard, *et al* cited in Ritzer &Stepnisky, 2014). Followership frustration with leadership had not produced desired result. In Nigeria, the nationalist movement of the pre-independence era, Aba women riot of 1929, Ali-Must-Go riot/protest of

1978 including the recent End-SARS protest of 2020, among others, were examples of active followership resistance against bad leadership and bad governance. But what has changed? What has changed is that followership has failed to demonstrate patriotism; but has rather become z*ombified.* They have rather become more ethnic chauvinists than the leaders themselves. One is attempted to believe that Nigerian followers learnt nothing from the "Arab Spring," the regime and social changes it triggered in North Africa with cataclysmic contagious effect on the Middle East in the early 2000s.

The present work is a radical departure from the studies that placed large scale blame on leadership failure as the bane of Nigeria's governance and crisis of development. It rather tenaciously, un- relentingly and unapologetically attributes the main problem of the crisis of development in Nigeria to failure of followership. The problem of Nigeria and the crisis of development are caused by followership abandonment of their civic responsibility of acting as check on leadership. The argument of this paper therefore is that the Nigerian leadership has become dysfunctional, deficient, and unproductive and subsequently anti- developmental because of the failure of followership. It is against this background that this paper seeks to unravel how political leadership-followership creates and exacerbates Nigeria's crisis of development.

Therefore, the broad aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between political leadership-political followership relations and the crisis of development in Nigeria. In doing so the paper describe the character of political leadership and political followership in Rivers State and by extension Nigeria; and examine the impact of these characters on crisis of development,.

Conceptual Review:

Political Leadership

Political leadership has been given different definitions by different scholars and writers. This is perhaps because leadership is one of the most observed yet the least understood phenomena or concepts. Tannenbaun, *et al* cited in Aboekwe (2019), defined leadership as the interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed through the communication process towards attainment of a specific goal or goals. Ihonvbere (2011) simply defined leadership as "the capacity and

ability to build a vision about the future based on a strategic, dialectical and holistic appreciation of the past and present" (p. 38). Intrinsic in Ihonvbere's definition is capacity and ability to build vision. Ekekwe (2011) on his part offered that leadership is about working with others and making tangible and measurable impacts in specific areas and over a specific period. The area could be the family, school, organization, community, state, country or at the international level.

Lemay (2002) introducing the concept of authority into definition, defines leadership as the exercise of authority in directing the work of others. The authority may be informal, but it is the key to leadership. Authority ordinarily (i) flows from the people, and upon interaction with the character of the leader; (ii) followers' attitudes, needs and other personal characteristics; (iii) organization's characteristics such as its purpose, structure and the nature of the task performed; and (iv) socio- economic and political environment of the organization within which it operates (Magregor, cited in Ntete-Nna, 2011). The positive interaction of these variables results in an influence of relationship between leaders and followers with intent for real changes that reflect in their mutual purpose.

Extant literature had identified different theories of leadership which produce different styles of leadership such as: great man; trait- behavioural, integrative, contingency, transformational, transactional and situational theories of leadership. These theories are largely mutually inclusive because each seems to reinforce the other. The great man theory, according to Dobbin and Platz (1986), pushes the argument that leaders are born with heroic potential and that only those endowed with heroic potentials can be leaders. However, a great-man leader is usually an eventful man or event-making man and many times, his structures and projects collapse with his demise from the leadership position. Examples in history are Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini. They mostly exhibit dictatorial and autocratic tendencies.

Trait theory of Leadership explains that leaders or would-be leaders must exhibit certain inherent, distinguishable and desirable qualities or characteristics which may be physical traits or a personality characteristic (Khan, Nawaz, & Khan, 2016 ; Geddes &Grosset, 1998). These traits such as intelligence, self-confidence,

effective, charisma, forthrightness could be hereditary or learned (Jenkin, cited in Khan,*et al* 2016; Ekval&Arvonen, 1991).

Charismatic leadership theory or style of leadership therefore flows from the trait theory of leadership. Weber explains, charisma is the greatest revolutionary force, capable of producing completely new orientation through followers and complete personal devotion to leaders they perceived as endowed with supernatural, superhuman qualities and power" (cited in Khan *et al*, 2016, p. 2). Closely related to the trait theory and sometimes used interchangeably is the behavioural leadership theory. Style and behaviour from the perspective of Khan *et al* (2016) are enablers of leadership and as such anyone who adopts the appropriate behaviour can be a good leader. This is why individuals exhibit different styles of leadership, with each style and behaviour fitting different circumstances and situations. Satisfaction, creativity, motivation are enablers of successful leadership. Meanwhile, trait and behavioural theories may also explain the emergence of autocratic or democratic leadership styles.

The integrative leadership theories are combinations of Weber's charismatic leadership theory, House's charismatic Leadership Theory, Conger and Kanungo's charismatic Leadership Theory. All focus on charisma as the distinguishing quality of good leadership. These theories used *charisma* to explain a form of influence based on follower's perceptions that a leader endowed with the gift of divine inspiration or supernatural qualities ignites followers' energy and commitment, producing results above and beyond the call of duty (cited in Klein & House, 1995).

Contingency theory otherwise called situational theory of leadership explains the situational emergence of leadership and determination of a leadership style. The theory argues that there is no single right to lead or style of leadership; rather the internal and external environment and situational variables that influence would determine the type of leadership deserving of a particular situation (Khan, *et al* 2016; Kandra, cited in Wariboko (2011).

Transformational theory, according to Bass and Avolio (1994), explains leadership as interactive. Leadership interacts with the followers based on shared values,

beliefs and goods. In such interaction, the leader influences the follower to re-order their needs and strive for higher order needs. According to Burns(1978) in a transformational leadership society, "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p.20). As Khan, *et al* (2016) puts it, both leaders and followers are attracted to the delivery of public goods or satisfying public need than self-interest. Ethics is the hallmark of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership could also produce authoritarian leadership just as the case of Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore showed. In Nigeria, the nearest to transformational leaders were Muritala Mohammed and Tunde Idiagbon(1976-1979), Olusegun Obasanjo, (1999-2007). The transformational leader at the national level that never lasted was Umaru Musa Yaradua 2007-2010. Transactional theory, according to House and Shamir (1993), describes a style of leadership where leaders-followers association is based on agreement. In other word, it is built around reciprocity; and contingent-reward leadership that is based on active and positive exchange between the leaders and the followers (Bass &Arolio, 1994). While transactional leadership motivate followers by appealing to their self-interest, transformational leadership motivate and mobilize power to change social systems and reform institutions for public interest.

Political Followership

The Civil Air Patrols Professional Development (CAPPD) define followership as obedience to leadership for the purpose of reaching specific goals while demonstrating a positive attitude, integrity and self-discipline (cited in Umeobi, Aigbiremhon, Nnaji, Eze & Aguiyi, 2021). Kelly, cited in Umeobi *et al* (2021), defined followers as "people who act with intelligence, independence, courage and a strong sense of ethics" (p.86). The definition of Kelly strikes at the essence of this discourse. It indicates that followers are not just *never-do-wells* and *rules-takers*. They are people with some levels of intelligence, independent decision makers and partakers in the formulation of rules; and therefore, takers of the rules they made for themselves.

Kelly (1992) identified the types of followership as: alienated, passive, conformist, pragmatic and exemplary followers. Agreeing with the typologies, Novikov (2016) sees passive followers as those who follow the leader unquestionably whether motivated or not. They are similar to the conformists. They are "yes people." They

follow "sheepishly" (Umeobi, *et al* 2021, p. 88). The alienated followers are disgruntled elements of the followers. Though they have strong capacity for independent thinking, they also unquestionably follow the leader like the passive and conformist followers. Albert (2005) says they mostly apply such thinking and energies negatively. A very good example of this in the Nigerian types of democracy is members of the opposition party. They see nothing good from party in government.

The pragmatic followers are described by Kelly (1992) as "fence sitters" who are in the majority in any society. Like the "yes men" people, they are not in support of the status quo or desirable of change. They are mere bystanders that can be clearly pushed around without conviction. They are in effect, the real enemies of progress. These are the people for whom, Kelly said, the hottest part of hell is reserved for maintaining lukewarm and natural positions in times of moral (governance and development) crisis. Dante had cursed these people who do nothing in the face of evil. The evil in the present circumstance is the evil of bad governance and development crisis (cited in Horton, 2010). The last type is the exemplary followers. These, according to Northouse (2019), are slow followers. They are desirous of a working system. They are therefore active and positive in their criticism of the status-quo.

Thom-Otuya (2012) described extensively the attributes of a good political followership. He noted that good followership implies obedience to laws and constituted authority, unalloyed loyalty to (properly constituted) leadership, discipline; explores only legally permissible channels of conflict resolution; committed to public goal and aspiration; demonstrates appreciable virtues and values, avoids sycophancy (but tells the leader truth), patriotic and active civic-political participation, well enlightened and responsive, self-reliant, positive and constructive in criticism, willing to accept responsibility, cooperativeness and goal-oriented. There is no gainsaying the fact that it is from the above attributes that good followership can act as a mirror for leadership and practically put leadership to check and on the path of delivering good governance.

Development and Crisis of Development

There are different orientations, perspectives and paradigms to the explanation of development. To Dukor (2003), development is a series of interaction *(social relations)* and other factors which include values, ways of life, beliefs, traditions as well as good governance which allows for broad participation in decision making. Rodney (1972) conceptualised development as being interested in increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing of the people at the individual level; and a jointly increased capacity for dealing with the environment at the societal level. Todaro (1999) sees development as both a physical process, a state of mind and transformation of institutions with focus on improved living condition of the people, better life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. It involves a multi-dimensional process of the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems such as improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs.

Ake (1981) describes development as a multi-dimensional process which covers social, economic, political, cultural, and religious developments - the combination of which results in quantitative development (i.e. it increases per capita income), qualitative development (progressive and measurable increase in quality of people's lives in the area of education, health, equality, security, social comfort e.tc.), social amenities, and infrastructural development. Seers (1969) went on to say that the questions to ask about a country's development are: what has been happening to poverty, unemployment and inequality? The decline of these three from a high level indicates existence of development for the country concerned. Where any one or two of these is growing worse, especially if all the three does, then it will be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubles (cited in Kalu, 2022). To Sen (1999) development is freedom. Wariboko (2011) in projecting Sen's theory of development as freedom (removing all resistance and obstacle to freedoms such as poverty, want, human right violation etc), describes "development as excellence" (p. 67) which targets "completeness of gaining freedom and removing all unfreedoms" (p.70), and improvement in the quality of man. Development would therefore mean improvement in social welfare, reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality, injustice, insecurity, freedoms, reduction of ecological imbalance driven by the capacity and creative

capability of the people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services that help improve their social conditions.
What then is a crisis of development? Crisis is a complex situation of high level of uncertainty and threat or perceived threat to the actualization of a group or societal goals. Its described by (UPSC, n.d). as a conundrum, a perplexing situation of simultaneous presence of tremendous wealth and widespread poverty It is a product of accumulation by dispossession. Barigbon and Idoniboye-Obu (2022), explains the crisis of development absence of development or lack of stimulation of development, which manifest in high level of poverty, high inequality gap, poor health quality, low life expectancy, decrepit social infrastructure, insecurity, human rights violations. What has stopped Nigeria from effectively utilizing her abundant natural and human resources to bring development to her people? Is it the character of leadership or that of political followership?

Theoretical Underpinnings

The argument of this paper is anchored on the "questioning theory of development" developed by Willie J. Okowa. Okowa (1996) used the "questioning theory of development" as the sub-title to his work "how the tropics underdeveloped the negro." The fundamental assumptions or arguments of the theory are that: (i) to develop is to change in a positive direction, (ii) change is the father of development, (iii) in order to change, society has to question the status quo, (iv) a society that does not question the status quo cannot change, and (v) a society that does not change cannot develop (Okowa, 1996, p. 215).

This theory is very relevant for the advancement of the argument of this paper. As identified by the theory, the pursuit of change is an engagement with and questioning the factors confronting social progress. This will lead to a *revolutionized* thinking and the development of tools to confront the environment and other human factors that inhibit development. The lessons of development show that societies that have gone through history of turmoil and interaction have developed the questioning spirit through revolutionary consciousness.

The collective cultural heritage of Nigeria that "discourages questions conduces to the fossilization of ideas and social formation and hence underdevelopment" (Okowa, 1996, p.219). Religion is one element in cultural heritage. Nigeria is

predominantly Muslim and Christian adherents. Religion, seen by Marx as the opium of the people, is part of the Marxist superstructure and has been used by leadership (ruling class) to subvert the questioning spirit of the followers. Both Christianity and Islam are used to instill a forced and false discipline of followership's unquestionable obedience to leadership. Both religions in the form and manner it is practiced in Nigeria are therefore not change and development agents. As long as both religions stifle the questioning spirit but constantly sermonizes prayer for leadership change of heart, Nigeria will continue to face the development crisis. This is so much as religion remains a tool manipulated by the *leadership class* for the *zombification* and subjugation of followership. Okowa (1996) admonishes that any culture and civilization that is opposed to the development of the questioning spirit is opposed to change and hence opposed to development. African culture is opposed to the development of the questioning spirit in man and therefore frustrates development. Time, questioning and social struggles by followers against self-serving political leaders have produced competent and development-oriented leadership. The reverse has been the case for societies (such as Nigeria) were political followership has not questioned and challenged the status quo and therefore "expected to negotiate through a relay of incompetently corrupt government *(leadership)* (Okowa, 1996, p. 223).

The Character of Political Followership and Political Followership

Character of followership in Rivers State, and largely Nigeria is unpatriotic, lackadaisical and sycophantic and negligent. They are seen to support and abet public corruption. Aside from followers collecting petty (pocket) bribes and cutting corners, they also do not see anything wrong with persons close to them pilfering public resources in as much as it trickles down to them. However, no matter how many times it trickles down, hopes have remained unfulfilled. In fact, things have not really trickled down to the followers. In such circumstance, Michael, *et al,* (2021) explained that followers (masses) see the leader as their greatest enemy hence, "anarchy, instability, distrust, acrimony, and lack of patriotism becomes the order of the day" (p. 82). Given that the above is the circumstance, has the followers taken the constitutionally and legally permissible options to turn around political leadership situation to their advantage? This shall be unfolded soon.

The character of leadership in Rivers State and largely Nigeria is complex and multi-dimensional. It is criminalized, exploitative, negligent, predatory, rentier, and *prebendal.* These are characters of leadership otherwise described in extant literature as the characters of the Nigeria State (Agbesa & Kieh, 2014; Ekekwe, 2011; Ake, 1996). The Nigerian leadership "wearing a negligent garb" cares less about the interest and basic needs of the people (followers). It is a class uninterested in national development (Barigbon & Idoniboye-Obu, 2022, p.27).

This leadership has over time been malevolent and exhibits a predatory character. As predatory, it is self-interested; using the position of wielding of political power as a vehicle for private accumulation of wealth and property through the extraction of rent from the collective patrimony of the people. This has made it the most "irresponsible, corrupt, self-serving, *personalistic* , anti-people, anti-progress and anti-development type of leadership. It is all these that have caused a visionless leadership unable to utilize public resources to foster common good, growth and development. Public resources are rather used by the leader to foster divisive tendencies, intimidation and further impoverishment of the majority of the people.

Political leadership-followership relations and crisis of Development

The character of followership determines the dominant style of leadership in same manner as the character of leadership determines the dominant style of leadership in any society. The Chaleff model explains that character of followership is built on two pillars otherwise called *axes* (Chaleff, 1997). The first axis concerns the degree of support that followers give to the leader while the second axis is concerned with the degree to which the followers are willing to question or challenge the leaders' behaviour or policies. This model throws up four clearly distinguishable but not mutually exclusive followership styles which are: implementer, resource, individualist and partner followers.

The implementer-followers provide unchallenged and unquestionable support for leadership, follow and execute all directives without questioning and moral justification. In Rivers State, very recently, the implementer followers character of some local government chairmen were demonstrated in their unquestionable implementation of Rivers State Governor Executive Order (EO) 21. The Executive

Order (EO) 21 could be likened by to the repulsive and draconian Decree 4 of the military regimes directs that political parties must receive written approval and payment of ₦5million as caution fee for the use of public premises such as public schools for political activities. While the propriety of Executive Order 21 remained legally unchallenged, it must be noted that such orders were only permissible in emergency situation such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no doubt that electioneering is not an emergency situation. As such, while the legal propriety of the executive order is yet challenged and determined, the situational propriety of same has become rather controversial. The EO5 remain a tool to gauge opposition and resistance to expression of peoples' will.

From the second axis of the Chaleff model emerges the resources, individualist, partner style of followership and support. Resources followers display low support and low challenge. The individualists display high support and sometimes high challenge to leader. These are usually driven by the actualization of personal interest. For instance, many activists, rights crusader and opportunistic politicians in Rivers State (by extension Nigeria) fall into this category. For instance, in the month of May, June and July, Chris Finebone a former member and State publicity secretary of the All Progressive Congress (APC) was lampooning Governor Nyesom Wike for poor performance. Very shortly afterward, the non-performer and political evil personified was characterized agent of development and the light of new Rivers State. This is another example of the sycophantic nature and character Nigerian followers. They display high support at one point, at another point low support and high challenge and vice versa, all in pursuit of self- interest. Such display of interest (personal) without morality and principle is anti-progress and anti-development. The partner-followers demonstrate both high support and high challenge; and take responsibility for action as well as the inactions of the leaders. The central point here is that followers who fail to hold leaders to account are the real bane of Nigeria's progress and underdevelopment. The implementer, individualist and resource style of followership fall into the category of anti-progressive and anti-developmental followership.

The partner style of followership is pro-progressive and pro-developmental. They are honest to the actualization of corporate or societal vision; and positively

influence leadership to the path of good governance, progress and development. This accentuates the point that the strategy for building a developmental society does not necessarily lie with leadership, honest and progressive followership bears some burdens. As such any society (followership) which out of the lackadaisical attitude of followership fails to demand for the best from its leader is a society that will feed on crumbs and leftovers (Mofolowawo, 2020). This is the society where Rivers State (and largely Nigeria) has found herself.

The introductory part of this paper re-echoed the idea that a people get the type of leader they deserve. Rivers State with sycophantic followership has in very recent times produced retrogressive leadership. In a democracy with the executive, legislative and judicial arms of the government, the head of the executive (in this case governor) at the state level provides leadership. Others in some sense provide followership; however, the legislature (House of Assembly) is the sole of democratic governance. Expectedly, through their constitutional role of representation, legislation and oversight, they put the leader in check. Unfortunately, the 8th and 9th Rivers State House of Assembly (RSHA) has become sycophantic and rubber stamp, leading to failed leadership.

There is no doubt that the relationship between the legislature (RSHA) and the executive though described as cordial has become destructive for good governance in Rivers State. One case accentuates this assertion clearly. On the 26th of October, 2007, the Supreme Court in what was described as a very controversial judgment sacked Sir Celestine Omehia and de-recognized to have been a Governor of Rivers State. By an executive fiat, emboldened legislative hara-kiri of the Ikui-Awaji led Rivers State House of Assembly during the reign of Chief Bar. E.N. Wike as Governor recognized and granted all full rights and privileges due a former governor to the Sir Celestine Omehia. The actions of the RSHA and its master were rather contemptuous. They are issues for another space and time. But safe add for the record that it is not within the legislative powers of the RSHA to assume appellate jurisdiction over the court much more the Supreme Court in Nigeria. How the RSHA by a House resolution reversed the judgment of the Supreme Court for purely political calculations and to score political points is one the wonders of Nigeria's democracy. Seven years after, and following serious political differences between Sir Omehia and Wike as sitting governor, the same

RSHA consequent upon another executive request and by another House resolution reversed itself and derecognized Sir Omehia as former Governor. The House claimed that the earlier House Resolution of 2015 was made in error and at a time it had sufficiently studied the October, 2th 2007 Supreme Court judgment. Certain points are discernable from the above. Firstly, the RSHA has not shown to be acting independently in the discharge of its duties to the state. It has not demonstrated proactive and exemplary leadership at some level and followership at another, hence the failure of followership. They are exhibited mere implementer, individualist and resource style of followers. Secondly, it shows the dictatorial and self-interested character of the political leadership of Rivers State. Thirdly, it shows there is a crisis of governance and development. The accumulated N600million benefits and ₦97million pensions paid to Sir Omehia and later asked to be refunded were enough to settle some social development challenges such as payment of pensions and gratuity to an armada of retired civil servants. Political misinterpretation, sycophantic followership and *zombification* have not allowed the people of Rivers State (political followers) to rise to the occasion and question the government wastage of public funds for selfish political interests. The followers having become numb and soothed by the gale of a trickle-down mentality resorted to seeking personal benefits instead of pursuing collective goal. One overtime finds in Rivers State "great man" leader and situational leader running the affairs of the state as though it were its personal fiefdom. Otherwise, how would one justify the action of a Rivers State House of Assembly who kowtowing to the avarice, whims and caprices of their great man and situational leader, voted against public interest and failed to ratify a national bill for Local Government autonomy in the 2022 constitutional amendment by the 9th National Assembly.

It is important to re-emphasize that governance Rivers State from 2015 to May, 2023 was a one man show without public accountability, transparency and public participation. The man in the saddle was a situational, non- transformational leader hence the personalization political and public office. The non-verbal personalization of this power manifested in the brazen amassment of materialistic possessions. It exposes the obsession, avarice and *kleptocratic* character of an unrestrained political leviathan.

Another dimension of failed leadership in Rivers State within the period under review was the *ethnicization* of governance and opportunities. The spatial distribution of 63 land mark infrastructure development projects of the Rivers State Government within the period under has 31 are located in Obio/Akpor, 20 in Port Harcourt City and about 12 spread across the other 22 local government areas of the state (Ekwebelem, 2023). As a governance structure and institution in pursuit and delivery of development, the state must be seen to be functioning in the interest of all sections and interest. Unfortunately, the development effort and distribution of opportunities had rather been unbalanced. The Obio-Akponization of recruitment in the Rivers State University portrays a case of unbalanced distribution of opportunities of that period. The question is: how did Rivers state and Nigeria by extension get here? The next section provides some explanations.

Followership Failure and Dearth of the Questioning Spirit

The general and long held perception is that the trouble with Nigeria is exclusively a crisis of leadership. However, existential reality demonstrated by the evidence provided here suggest to the contrary. The trouble with Nigeria now and even long before is the crisis or failure of followership. It is the problem of the docility, sycophancy, incompetence and gullibility of followership. While the argument that poverty and the *weaponization* has become an instrument of subjugation and coercion, it must be equally noted that poverty is a-spatial, a-religious and a-ethnic. The manipulative instrumentation of poverty, religion and ethnicity are essential for the failure of followership and not leadership. The endemic poverty and its associated miseries are sufficient to crystallize and precipitate the questioning spirit in the followers. Poverty, economic upheaval and bad governance are centripetal factors in the galvanization of progressive followership for a cataclysmic demand for change, good governance and development. Unfortunately, Nigerians generally welcome leaders with euphorically high expectations but rarely consider themselves as essential factors in the success or failure of government, impatiently they turn into wailers even though their attitude and conducts too often militate against desired national progress and development. The character of followership and their reaction to development crisis here appears to negate frustration-aggression thesis. Bad followership is not aggressive for change and therefore bad leadership, crisis of governance and crisis of development thrive due to followership lack the questioning spirit.

It is undisputedly clear that popular power draws from a relationship between leadership and followership. Impliedly, the people by a social contract provide direction of exercise of power. Democratic governance also provides mechanisms of check and control of public office holders. Where leadership has failed, it is the responsibility of followership to force it on track, on the part of governance, development and social progress. A greater detail offered on this somewhere in the preceding paragraph. But suffice to add that where leadership in its barrenness or due to *kleptocratic* tendencies has failed to put forward the ideas that will drive development, followers must by legitimate constitutional means grab the issue and set in motion mechanism to salvage themselves from the shackles of failed leadership and solve the crisis of development. Followers are therefore critical stakeholders in the political re-engineering for development. Yet belligerent followership had shied away from it social contractual responsibility of keeping the performers of the terms of the contract governance in check.

There is no doubt that the quality of leadership is a reflection of the quality of followership in any given society. It is the equality of leadership and followership in the churches or religious bodies, work places, family, etc that is replicated in the administration of public affairs. Where leadership fails to deliver on the expectations of governance, and instead of supplying social goods such as quality education, infrastructural development, improved socio-economic standard of living of the citizens and improved freedoms and reduced unfreedoms but had instead increased the misery and accentuated the development crisis, poor followership is to be held responsible. After all, a people get the type of leadership they deserve.

There is the crass underutilization of the power of followership in Rivers State and Nigeria.

Ordinarily, the social contract between leadership and followership is not expected to produce a leviathan. It is rather a contract of fiduciary relationship which can be likened to the relationship between the bank and a customer. The social contract is expected to produce an executor of the "general will" but also not a maker of the will. The execution of the general will first and foremost targets the

welfare, happiness and wellbeing of the beneficiaries of the will (followers, citizens); and any deviation from this expectation calls for repudiation and dissolution of the contract. In fact, Locke (1952) targeted this in his construction of the social contract by projecting the deployment of 'dissolution of government' (p. 119) when it deviates from the general will as a check mechanism on arbitrariness of leadership. Followership has the authority to question non-performing leadership that is accentuating the crisis of development and, where necessary, replace it even in between elections. The Nigerian constitution respects this authority which it describes as the power of recall. There is also the power of impeachment which lies with the legislature as the representatives of the people. Both are mechanism of check, popular control and safeguarding the drifts of arbitrariness and failure of leadership. These mechanisms has not effectively deployed in Rivers State or elsewhere in the despite the various leadership atrocities, constitutional breeches, mis-governance and entrenched agony of underdevelopment and misery in the midst of abundance.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The established position here is that the prevailing quality of governance in any society is a product of leadership-followership relation, but most importantly a product of followership. The problems of poverty and illiteracy, lackadaisical attitude, and un-patriotism and sycophancy had remain become tools for political manipulations and subjugation in satisfaction of selfish interest and the undermining of governance and development. This has been the case because followership has acquiesced to such mosaic machinations, instead of using such factor as poverty and its association frustration -aggression reactions as propelling forces for positive revolutionary action against bad leadership and the crisis of development.

Unfortunately, Nigerian followership does not direct their aggression to the source of their frustration is the criminalized, exploitative, negligent and predatory political leadership who had undermined Nigeria's development or rather accentuated the crisis of development.

It is apposite to conclude that the argument advanced in this paper would appear as one against the tide of common knowledge. It may also be attacked as counter-

factual and a revolutionary article. However, author as a budding development studies scholars find it intellectually stimulating, and illuminating and theoretically beneficial to advance perceivedly counter-factual argument, without which there may not be any intellectual development. Meanwhile, those who may argue against the positions articulated here may quickly resort to the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to provide rationalization for the anti-progressive and anti-development behavior and the dearth of a questioning spirit in the Nigerian followers, hence their susceptibility and acquiescence to the manipulations of the anti-progressive and anti-developmental leaders. Such self-defeatist rationalization blinds to the gains offered by the frustration-aggression theory. It is also common place that where few, perhaps informed, followers had dared to tow the path of cataclysmic social change, counter-revolutionary pressures employing uninformed segments of the follower as canon fodders have largely undermined such efforts. The cases of the End-SARS protest, ASUU demands and emergence of Congress of University Academics (CONUA), these are yet followership problems.

From the foregoing, the following recommendations if followed will over time salvage Nigeria from the crisis of development:

1. **Education and Building of Consciousness**
   One of the problems with leadership and followership is that scholarly works on the issues of governance and development are mostly leader-centric. Scholarly and policy attention should shift to budding quality followership as an incubator for quality leadership. This is the manifest role of education as an agency of change and development. There is the urgent need for the radicalization of the education system towards a conscious awakening of the questioning spirit in followers. This will cause them to question the status quo, demand for change and over time achieve development. Political science as a discipline must be awakened to its guardian role and dedicates quality scholarly attention to developing this questioning spirit in the man.
2. **Self-education or Self-improvement as Driver of Awareness**
   There is every indication that leadership will not acquiesce to followership demand or willingly provide opportunity for type of education that awakens their consciousness toward self emancipation. That is tantamount to

leadership class suicide. The only viable option here is urgent followership self-education and self-improvement and continuous self-improvement; that helps followers de-emphasize the blame game mantra without action but appreciates their manifest critical role in the development process and takes the critical decision for positive action against their social conditions.

3. **Demand for Accountability, Transparency and Stewardship**
   Followership demands for increased public transparency and accountability in governance is critical to development. Nigeria followership desiring of a transformational leadership for development must exculpate and delink themselves from tribal sentiment and ethnic chauvinism and demand for accountability, transparency and stewardship. Excellence must drive the path of good governance and attend to the crisis of development.
4. **Value Re-orientation and Character Rebirth:** Both the schools and the churches as agents of socialization have a duty here. This is because transformative leadership and followership training begins from the family and later to the school. The family and school must take-up the challenge of bringing up children who are critical, progressive and resourceful followers that will emerge into transformative leadership for quality socio-economic development.

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