International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement
Volume 7 • Issue 3 • July-September 2020

Poor Public Management and Public Governance Failure:

Nigerian Experience on Oil Resource Curse or Blessing Debate

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is regarded as the giant of Africa because of its huge oil resource wealth. For years the country has been restoring peace in troubled countries. It also has the support of world leaders because of its strong advocacy against corruption and terrorism. This achievement in the global governance agenda is a blessing. However, the problem of corruption and mismanagement is a curse. In the context of the curse or blessing debate in oil-rich countries, it is clear from evidence that the experience of Nigeria is a mixed blend of blessing and curse. Exploratory research design was used for the study, and data analyses showed positive association between poor public management and public governance failure, as a result of the gross negative effect. To mitigate such a negative trend, it was recommended that government should institute management teams in government, departments, agencies, and parastatals to monitor the use of public resources for public good.

KEYWORDS

Corruption, Good Public Management, Malabu Oil Block, Natural Resource Wealth, Political Will, Public Good, Sustainability, Unemployment

DOI: 10.4018/IJPAE.20200701.oa1

INTRODUCTION

It takes good management of public resources for the entrenchment of good public governance architecture in the polity of any country. Good public management focuses on the sound management of public resources to reduce incentives and opportunities for public corruption and mismanagement. The direct opposite of good public management is poor public management which is a reflection of impropriety, inefficiency, misallocation and misdirection of public resources. Poor public management is notorious for lack of transparency in public financial management practices, and putting of pressure on public administration by the diversion of public wealth for personal gains by public officials. This in effect results to poor governance. Poor governance contrasts with good public governance which ensures the enactment and execution of public development policies that create an efficient, effective and responsible government. It also seeks to address the problems of accountability, probity and transparency and equally promotes an *environment* that accelerates national sustainability. Richardson (2010) asserts that good governance which opposes poor governance is mainly concerned with the good and progress of society and the people. Poor public management and poor governance are noticeable in Nigeria largely as the result of the inability of successive governments to implement reforms. For example, the Babangida government is reputed to have introduced the highest number of reform programmes unprecedented in the Nigerian political history, but it is also on record that over 50 percent of such programmes failed to achieve the intended results (Anifowose, and Aiyede, 2004). A reform is meant to remove faults in the system, strengthening good qualities and making necessary corrections to avoid abuse. In view of the fact that corruption is a universal phenomenon and that there will always be people and groups in any society that will always attempt to enrich themselves unjustly, government needs a well co-ordinate strategy and to implement reforms so as to minimize the incidence of poor governance. To this extent, Pope (1999) suggests that to bring integrity to government, appropriate attitudes and conducts must be taught and reinforced at all levels of government to ensure the success of reforms. He posits that reform is a long-term process, involving a series of carefully formulated programmes. Also, reforms can reduce poor public management and government must therefore, address core political and administrative goals that are not only integral to management functions but also regular reports should be made and evaluated. Reducing reform failures requires good public leadership, because it is a vital ingredient in national progress, starting from the corporate, community, state, and to national level. The challenge of leadership is the inability to craft appropriate visions and goals and to align people behind them to achieve common objectives. Also, in a changing world environment, national progress and improvements in the quality of life of the average citizen, comes to those able to efficiently use human and material resources for growth and sustainability. Nigeria since the 1960s has had leaders noted for misrule, misleadership, corruption, abandonment of projects that constitute poor public management and ultimately influencing poor governance in an oil-rich economy. While great nations have produced great leaders like: Washington, Clinton, Gandhi, Churchhill, Mao, and Mandela among others. Nigeria is cursed for producing corrupt leaders too many to mention, while also blessed with fine leaders like Bello, Awolowo, and Azikiwe among others. According to Olatunbosun (2006) unfortunately, Nigeria has had successions of reluctant leaders, mediocre leaders, and visionless leaders. Leaders who had diverted the abundant wealth of the nation into their private accounts and imposed an unforgiveable level of poverty on a nation that should be one of the world's *wealthiest*. This explains the theory of poor public management and poor public governance. This is a country where state governors' allegedly arranged to liquidate the nation's *cash reserves*. For example, according to Okonjo-Iweala (2015) *When the country should have saved for a rainy day, states blocked that saving and insisted on sharing the monies in the Excess Crude Account (ECA). The states blocked further saving in the Sovereign Wealth Fund*. These were views of the Co-ordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance of Nigeria, where despite a huge fuel subsidy scandal of over N2trillion is yet to be resolved, about N500billion was paid to marketers in 2014 and N192billion in 2015 respectively. According to her, as at 2015 marketers made an additional claim of N291.7billion outstanding payment of which N160.5billion was in *foreign exchange differentials*. At the time of this report, there was no verification of the accuracy of the payments and claims. Under the intimidation of multinational oil companies (MOCs) and those posing as marketers, Nigeria is swindled of trillions of Naira because of lack of good public management, accountability, transparency and probity in public office. Onuoha (1999) states that the late Abacha as at 1999 was worth N476 billion. His studies also indicate that virtually all top government officials in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) such as governors, ministers, commissioners, permanent secretaries, managing directors, rectors, vice-chancellors, embezzle public funds. In all cases, these top officials conspire with their fraudulent-partners like contractors in their nefarious activities. According to Mabikke (2012) many African countries are blessed with oil and mineral wealth that have the potential to transform their economies. However, he states that such resources have often proved to be a curse rather than a blessing due to poor public management. He emphasizes that among the major causes of Africa's resource wealth *curse* involve but not limited to lack of strong legal and political institutions, dictatorial and repressive governments among other causes that stem from poor public management. The level of mismanagement of Nigeria's oil revenue is too bad that billions of Naira daily flow into the pockets of corrupt people. For example, according to Ribadu (2013) The nation's oil *cash cow,* the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is being milked to death by a few persons put in charge of watching over national patrimony. Also, the reported N16trillion revenue lost in 10 years was close to federal government's capital votes in 10 years, which means that the more Nigeria earns from *petrodollars* the more it sinks into absolute poverty in the midst of huge revenues (World Bank, 1996, Onwuka, 2018, Mujtaba, et al, 2013, Ohuanunwa, 2010, Ojiabor, 2018a, 2018b, Okafor, 2018, Onyemegbulem, 2018, Onyeneke, 2018, Reinikka, 2001, Tshinyoyo, 2012).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

A major challenge of good public governance is the inability to manage public resources in an efficient manner. This problem arises partly from the fact that some people tend to think that the managerial functions of planning, organizing, directing, controlling, co-ordinating, and leading are strictly applicable only to the private sector, without due regard to the integral view of administration. This view holds that administration, whether private or public relates to the sum-total of activities to achieve a common goal in the most efficient and effective manner. Another tragedy that leads to poor public management is the misunderstanding of Adam Smith's *laissez-faire philosophy* and thus the misconception that government business is nobody's business, and should therefore receive less than careful attention. Those who see government work as *oyibo work* often feel comfortable attending to it carelessly which results to poor public management and poor public governance. In organized treasury looting in Nigeria, public officers and significant others refuse to hold public finance as the finance of the public held in trust by the government, without, which the government cannot perform creditably. In Nigeria today, the public sector plays significant roles both in theory and practice in the context of a mixed economy or a welfare state that involves trade controls, provision of basic *health-care* facilities, education, unemployment reduction through job creation, among others like providing security, and law and order. Without harnessing public finance the government cannot execute reforms that will lead to maintaining social contract with the citizens and the resultant good public governance. Nigeria abandoned reforms like the Petroleum Trust Fund, (PTF) Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) Green Revolution (GR) Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN) Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) among a host of other failed reforms. These reform programmes that took so much of public money no longer exist. The emphasis of OFN was self-sufficiency in food production which was never realized (Nzenwa, 2000). The failure of the Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (Sure-p) in 2015 after billions of public funds were devoted to it without any significant achievement is one of the tragedies of public administration in Nigeria, in the present century. Reform failure, poor public management and poor public governance in Nigeria are compounded by visionless leadership that hinders economic development. It is believed that economic development at the community, state or national level results from directing the energies of people towards the use of national resources in the creation of wealth. But what obtains in Nigeria is the use of public resources for the creation of private wealth (Ebiri, et al, 2019, Tsa, 2019, Nna, et al, 2010, Mumuni, 2012, Aucoin, 1990, Ugoani, 2017[a] Ake, 1994).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is a structure of the research concept and how it is arranged and which elaborates on the research problem in relation to relevant literature. It is often summarized in a schematic diagram which shows the major variables and their hypothesized relationships. It helps to explain facts that would otherwise be buried in excess of words. According to Cleary (1992) a model is a simplified representation of the real world, and takes the form of a diagrammatic representation. The model for this study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Poor public management and public governance failure model (Source: Author Designed (2020))

The model showed that poor public management (PPM) is a reflection of blind leadership, corruption, reform failure, tax evasion, among others, while public governance failure (PGF) demonstrates poverty, unemployment, lack of social amenities, among others. A government is a failure when it is infested by corruption and thus unable to provide for the benefit of the majority of the citizens, in terms of employment, salary payment, among other benefits. From the *cup* of PPM pours out manifestations of corruption upon government to reflect PGF which automatically is *buried in a customized coffin*. As soon as a government fails to perform well it is usually voted out of power and that represents its *corporate funeral*. Issues of PPM can be epitomized by scandals such as the over N2trillion fuel subsidy saga that rose in 2012. By 2015 the government had not taken any action on its probe reports because it could not investigate 17 oil companies which did not partake in the initial probe exercise, and nothing was done to find out the whereabouts of such huge public money before the government in power then was voted out. However, the same government at the point of leaving office paid huge sums of money as fuel subsidy to oil companies and marketers, including *foreign exchange differentials*, without due verification. A committee set up to sanitize the oil and gas sector found that some MOCs did not remit huge sums of taxes to the public purse. These actions and inactions bordering on PPM exacerbate the matter of PGF. For further examples, before privatization was introduced in 1988 in Nigeria, the country had over 2000 public enterprises (PEs) at the federal, state, and local government levels that were poorly managed. According to Zayyad (1998) while the oil boom lasted, nobody complained of the huge waste and inefficiencies of the PEs and some PEs with questionable commercial and financial viability continued to provide jobs for the *boys*. He explains that over the years, many of the PEs had developed into organizational monsters capable of devouring the entire financial resources of the government, and also beyond the managerial capacity of the government. There was a consensus of opinion in Nigeria then that all PEs were poorly managed, due to bad leadership, lack of political will, corruption and indiscipline. Toyo (2012) blames corruption for the woes of Nigeria, as other nations look on Nigerians as thieves and the country ranks among the most corrupt in the world. According to him, corruption, selfishness and greed are responsible for many of the problems in Nigeria. They are responsible for the mass poverty in the country, collapsed infrastructure, unemployment, and insecurity. He emphasizes that the masses have been improvised the more as a result of the high-level corruption that destroys governments, the lives of the poor, making them poorer. While it is estimated that over 70 percent of the population in Nigeria lives in poverty, about 67 million youths are unemployed as at 2012 (Abdullahi, 2012). In a situation of public corruption Keefer and Knack (1995) would argue that it is part of a syndrome of poor-quality institutions linked to low economic growth and sustainable development (Emmanuel and Omomia, 2012, Obanikoro, 2018, Okpalike, 2018, Magu, 2018, McCourt, 2008).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study was organized to explore the relationship between PPM and PGF in Nigeria and offer recommendations for remedy.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The result of this study will enable researchers and the public think of other ways of reducing public corruption and improving public governance in Nigeria.

Hypothesis

To achieve the objective of the study the following hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho: There is no relationship between PPM and PGF in Nigeria.
Hi: There is a relationship between PPM and PGF in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of sustainable development recognizes that natural resource wealth must be used for economic sustainability. However, since the discovery of oil in Nigeria the rate of public corruption and PPM has been on the increase at the detriment of sustainable development. There has been persistent public outcry over poor allocation and management of oil resources. Since the Gulf War there have been reports that the oil windfall arising there from to the tune of about N1.2 trillion was not accounted for. According to Anyim and Akanwa (2002) Corruption is at the root of practically every other ill of the Nigerian society. It is acknowledged that both at national and international levels, systemic corruption, including extortion and bribery, which undermine good governance and economic growth and sustainability are rampant in oil-rich countries like Venezuela and Nigeria. These countries that lack accountability and transparency in governance also lack the *political will* to effectively enforce their own laws, rules and regulations that would otherwise help in reducing PPM and improving the architecture of good public governance. Therefore, Marshall (2006) posits that strong political institutions are critical not only to combating public corruption and promoting good governance but also to restoring trust and confidence in democratic politics and public governance. Nigeria still waits for good public management against the background of mass poverty in the midst of huge natural resources. For example, according to Omotoso (2018) many high profile cases instituted after the 2007 general elections against governors who had immunity are still at infancy despite the huge material resources that the country had committed in the past decade and the emotional involvement of the people that these corrupt people who had grossly abused their privileges while in public office would answer for their infraction (Olaopa, 2015). Debate is currently raging among scholars as to whether abundant natural resources in oil-rich countries had become a curse or a blessing because of corruption. Pineda and Rodriguez (2010) state that countries that fail to invest their windfall in foreign assets that generate a steady stream of revenue will not avert a negative growth rate in their economy because poor growth rate in resource dependent states relates to institutional weaknesses. They opine that institutional weaknesses lead to pervasive fiscal indiscipline, inefficiency, corruption and poor government performance. They also argue that some resource-rich countries like Brazil, Nigeria and others for years enjoyed little to no social benefit from their oil windfalls, primarily due to corruption and inefficient distribution and management. These countries embarked on massive spending campaigns, primarily involving capital-intensive projects, viewing their oil as an inexhaustible commodity, the governments spent rapidly, then problems in production capacity and limited capacity in public management, weak infrastructure led to delays, corruption, inefficiencies and PGF. Accordingly, when oil prices crashed, these *petrostates* that did not save their oil windfall due to PPM became *broke*, unable to repay their loans and other national commitments. According to Tsatsu (2016) even though the claim that oil abundance is associated with underdevelopment in oil-rich countries is not supported with historical evidence, he nevertheless believes that the role of corruption and public mismanagement in these countries must be checked. He emphasizes the need for improved democratic institutions and administrative capacity, proper public management, and public probity. He finds that PPM and corruption keep growing and oil wealth is not efficiently utilized for the growth and sustainability of the economy. In some oil-rich nations, international oil companies (IOCs) in attempts to maximize profit margins go to the extent of bribing government officials to win huge contracts. This in turn takes away the power of proper control from the leaders and institutions of government in overseeing the true worth of their resource wealth. Other variables like population pressure environmental degradation and poor infrastructure continue aggravating the resource curse problem and conditions that can lead to insecurity and violent conflict. Mabikke (2012) blames the resource curse syndrome on the fact that the discovery of natural resources leads to concentration of wealth in the hands of a few powerful government officials directly involved in drilling, mining and resource exploration. Therefore, the discovery of these resources becomes a blessing only to these few while it excludes the majority from any benefits, and it is on this basis that it is commonly referred to as a resource curse. He points out that many African countries are blessed with oil and mineral wealth that have the potential to transform their countries. But it is noted that improvements have not been achieved due to PPM and leadership problems on the African continent. Scholars believe that the resource curse problem is put on human errors characterized by greed, mismanagement and lack of political will (Ugoani, 2017[b], 2018, Ugo, 2018, Alli, 2018, Catherine, 2001, delozada, 1999, Dollar and Kraay, 2001, Egbe, 2018, Isakpa, 2014, Moses, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The exploratory research design was adopted for the study. This method is empirical in nature and often does not require a large sample or the use of questionnaire. Secondary data used were obtained from published *newspaper* reports, government audit reports, journal publications for a period of time about corruption, PPM and PGF in Nigeria. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of analyses can be employed to achieve the research objective in exploratory research (Brannen, 2005).

Methods of Data Analysis

The qualitative method was used to present facts and figures about cases of corruption and PPM in Nigeria. This was complement by regression analysis. The essence of the technique is the development of a technique that summarizes the effects of predictor variables. The simplest and most widely used form of regression involves a linear relationship between two variables.

DISCUSSION

Figure 1 was used to demonstrate that PPM is the key driver of PGF through blind leadership and leading to poverty and youth restiveness in society. Table 1 provided ample credible evidence of endemic public corruption that tries to undermine the integrity of government (Doig, 1999). Regression technique was used to establish the relationship between the variables of interest, as in Table 2. In regression analysis, there is an important measure, R^2, which determines the variability in the dependent variable accounted for by the independent variable(s). The possible values of R^2, range from 0 to 1.00. The closer R^2, is to 1.000 the greater the percentage of the explained variation. A high value of R^2 of about .80 or more would indicate that the independent variable is a good predictor of values of the dependent variable of interest. A low value of about .25 or less would indicate a poor predicator, and a value between .25 and .80 would suggest a moderate predictor (Gujarati, 2003). In this study, the R^2 value 0.65 suggests that about 65 percent variability in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable(s) and affirms that there is very good positive correlation between the variables of interest. The goodness-of-fit test of the model is good with the adjusted R^2 value 0.63. The F-test and t-test are significant at 0.05 level, and used to confirm that PPM explains PGF. This is the objective of the investigation. This result is very good and upholds the views of Doig (1999) that systematic corruption indicates that resources for public purposes are no longer managed effectively and are rather appropriated for private gain. On the contrary, he opines that governance therefore, incorporates the effectiveness as determined by the objectives to which government and its activity are directed. As the global debate in the academia on whether oil resource wealth is either a curse or a blessing in oil-rich countries goes on, there is the temptation to state that it is both a curse and a blessing to some extent. The experience in Nigeria is such that it is a curse to the extent that oil wealth is frittered away by few people into private pockets thereby depriving the government of the financial resource to execute important projects. As in Table 1, cases abound where approved amounts for payment are inflated with the aim of diverting the excess into private pockets. The raging Malabu Oil block scandal is a typical example of a situation where over US$0.5b was allegedly shared as bribe. It is estimated that over US$400b had been stolen from Nigeria between 1960 and 2012, and more is still being stolen, in a country where about 70 percent of the population lives in poverty with massive infrastructural decay. When Nigerians lament about PGF it must therefore, be remembered that the root is PPM. Cases of high profile public officers tampering with public funds become instructive of a country where even the watchdog agencies are corrupt and can no longer discharge their duties creditably. The allegations of unauthorized payment of huge fuel subsidy are tantamount to PPM. Sundry cases of sharing huge dollars and naira in cash by public officers cannot be a blessing but a curse to the extent that it damages the country's image by perpetuating its status as an underdeveloped country. On the other hand, Nigeria has achieved greatness as the largest oil producing country in Africa which is no doubt a natural blessing and if properly managed will place the nation permanently on a higher global pedestal. The type of infrastructure in Nigeria today was not there at independence in 1960 and it is from the same oil wealth that monumental development has taken place. For example, the movement of the federal capital territory (FCT) from Lagos to Abuja would not have taken place without the availability of huge oil resource wealth. Also, Nigeria is a force in global governance in terms of international military peace keeping operations that can only be undertaken by a country blessed with huge oil resource wealth. Nigeria had interviewed in restoring peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, The Gambia and other troubled countries because of its numerical strength, strong political power base and financial muscle as an oil-rich country. Even though Nigeria has had the misfortune of mismanagement, corruption and deceitful public leadership for many years, its present anti-corruption stance has the support of global leaders including the G.7 leadership. It is also recognized as having a strong desire to reduce corruption and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa in tandem with the UN 2030 SDGs (Ugoani, 2015). Good management is imperative where people who have common objective, like benefiting from public amenities such as education, health, transportation, among others to achieve. But without good management there will be distortions, corruption, and things like diversion that lead to waste of public resources and ineffective public governance. Nigeria is blessed with natural resource wealth, but cursed with corruption, mismanagement, lack of public accountability among public officers. Because of the mixed curse and blessing experience in Nigeria it can be argued safely that oil wealth in Nigeria, is both a curse and a blessing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Governments should institute management teams in ministries, departments, agencies, and parastatals to enhance effective monitoring of the use of resources to reduce waste;
- Code of ethical conduct for public officers should clearly stipulate the degree of punishment for those who violet discretional limits to reduce the incentive for abuse of office;
- Public debt should be paid early enough to avoid the situation where fraudulent persons connive with unscrupulous public officers to make huge false claims;
- Government contractors who supply substandard items like aeroplanes with old engines to the military should be blacklisted and prosecuted. This will serve as a deterrent to others and reduce the havoc caused by such ineptitude;
- There is so much allegations of corruption in the oil sector. There should be a better way of checking the menace to save money to execute government projects and repair the image of the nation.

Table 1. 17 Cases of PPM in Nigeria

S/N	Brief Details	N	US$
1	Refund approved to states for federal projects by FEC.	487b	
2	1 above inflated by NASS	488b	
3	Malabu Oil block price		1,092b
4	Part of 3 above shared as bribes		523m
5	Alleged fraud against NBA President Usoro	1.4b	
6	Alleged payment of fuel subsidy by NNPC in 2017	216b	
7	Allegations of fraud against Fani Kayode	4.9b	
8	Allegations of looting against former petroleum minister		20b
9	Diezani's INEC bribe money	2.64m	
10	Allegations of fraud against late ex-chief of defence staff.	3.97b	
11	Embezzlement of workers' salaries by LGA chairman	23.7m	
12	Public funds appropriated by Dasuki for 2015 presidential election	19.4b	
13	Diezani's UK loot		300m
14	Dasuki/Obanikoro/Fayose electoral loot	2.2b	
15	Fuel subsidy investigation case		3.5bn
16	Power sector expenditure case		16bn
17	Grass cutting scandal	272m	

Source: Author Fieldwork (2020)

Table 2. Regression analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	7.864325	2.378588	3.306299	0.0025
BL	1.319667	0.203671	6.479393	0.0000
CR	-2.064315	1.153683	-1.789326	0.0837
R-squared	0.653701	Mean dependent var		14.34662
Adjusted R-squared	0.630614	S.D. dependent var		2.354620
S.E. of regression	1.431071	Akaike info criterion		3.641231
Sum squared resid	61.43889	Schwarz criterion		3.777277
Log likelihood	-57.08031	F-statistic		28.31514
Durbin-Watson stat	0.403293	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000000

Source: Computation using E-Views Statistical Package

SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Further study should examine the relationship between the tenure of the CEOs in government parastatals like the NNPC to see if it has any correlation with allegations of corruption in the corporation.

CONCLUSION

There is evidence in the literature that while Nigeria is blessed with huge natural resources like oil and gas, it is also cursed by corruption and mismanagement of such resources. Nigeria is today regarded as the giant of Africa because of its huge resources, which is a blessing but placed among the LDCs because of corruption and this is a curse. The exploratory research design was used for the study and result showed very good positive association between PPM and PGF. In modest contribution to the debate over *curse* or *blessing* of natural resource wealth in oil-rich countries, and raising the bar on research knowledge, it can be stated that the Nigerian *environmental* experience on the issue is a mixed blend of curse and blessing. This bad condition is brought about by corruption and mismanagement which frustrate economic growth and sustainability.

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