

REVIEW ARTICLE

Good governance, social order, and development in Nigeria: The critical role of gender inclusion

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Tayo O. George¹, Anthony C. Onwumah², Mercy I. Ozoya¹, Olawale Y. Olonade¹

Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria¹; Independent Researcher²

*For Correspondence: Email: tayo.george@covenantuniversity.edu.ng; Phone: 08121026997

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine whether gender inclusion in governance is a determinant of good governance, social order, and development. This is germane to ascertain the policy implications of gender inclusiveness in the attainment of development in Nigeria. The paper utilizes secondary sources of data, archival reviews, and relevant sociological theories to advance knowledge on good governance, social order, and the need for gender inclusion in Nigeria's development agenda. The study found that good governance cannot thrive without accountability, a strong, virile, predictable, and stable legal framework. Notably, all stakeholders' collaborative efforts by gender inclusiveness are crucial for attaining good governance and social order and ultimately developing the country. This paper advocates for policy inputs on gender inclusiveness in the attainment of development goals. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2021; 25[5s]: 202-209).

Keywords: Governance, social order, gender inclusion, development, Nigeria

Résumé

Cet article cherche à examiner si l'inclusion du genre dans la gouvernance est un déterminant de la bonne gouvernance, de l'ordre social et du développement. Ceci est pertinent pour déterminer les implications politiques de l'inclusion du genre dans la réalisation du développement au Nigeria. Le document utilise des sources secondaires de données, des revues d'archives et des théories sociologiques pertinentes pour faire progresser les connaissances sur la bonne gouvernance, l'ordre social et la nécessité d'inclure le genre dans le programme de développement du Nigeria. L'étude a révélé que la bonne gouvernance ne peut prospérer sans responsabilité, un cadre juridique solide, viril, prévisible et stable. Notamment, les efforts de collaboration de toutes les parties prenantes par l'inclusion du genre sont cruciaux pour atteindre la bonne gouvernance et l'ordre social et, en fin de compte, le développement du pays. Ce document plaide pour des contributions politiques sur l'inclusion du genre dans la réalisation des objectifs de développement. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2021; 25[5s]: 202-209).

Mots-clés: Développement des compétences, entrepreneuriat féminin, faible statut socioéconomique, attentes en matière de compétences, réalisation perçue

Introduction

Without any doubt, social order is a sine qua non to good governance and development, not leaving out the vital role of gender inclusiveness in both physical and structural policies that guide societies. In many countries, including Nigeria, social order and good governance are prerequisites for societal development. The concepts of good governance, social order, and development are a relatively new discourse in many developing nations, especially in Africa, where despite the enormous material and human resources, the populace is impoverished¹. Deprivations are epitomized by high levels of malnutrition, disease, hunger, environmental

challenges, and different forms of violent acts, including internal and external conflicts, internal wrangling, wars, political violence, ethnic clashes, and kidnappings, displacement of persons from their natural homes, and killings are prevalent in Nigeria².

According to the United Nations Development Programme³, "a nation that is not engendered is endangered." In other words, a society, state, or country that is not driven by gender inclusiveness is bound to experience backwardness, stagnation, and underdevelopment, as great untapped potentials may be wasting away. Gender is a factor to reckon with within a modern society. It is an organizing principle of any society. It is

egocentric to say men are the only agent of national development. No doubt, their role is important but must be complemented with that of women to achieve sustainable development⁴.

The global economic crisis characterized by massive job losses, depreciating and inadequate infrastructural facilities, high inflation rate, poverty of the mind and materials, thuggery, social instability, and other high-ranking social vices are prevalent in many developing countries, including Nigeria. The unemployment situation has also worsened for all and sundry, most especially for women and even men alike⁵. Women bear the brunt in the labor market due to the absence of or relatively low education, discriminatory tendencies in certain occupations, the heavy burden of meager incomes in petty trades and jobs, psychological cum physical pains from childbirth and care which dampens their moral, waste their time and energy for income-earning activities. According to Oladosun *et al.*⁶, education is crucial and has a positive relationship with sustainable development. For instance, women with tertiary education are likely to make better and informed decisions than their counterparts who do not possess the same experience or level of education.

Nigeria has been variously described as one of the poorest nations wallowing in abject poverty at the expense of the affluent human and natural resources she is endowed. The social, economic, political, and development of a nation ought not to be restricted by cultural, social, economic, and traditional sentiments, which gives more opportunity for a particular group or gender at the expense of the other. In response, the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.) has called on all nations of the world to respect, protect and promote gender-equal societies where all persons are free to air their views, opinions, and ideas⁷.

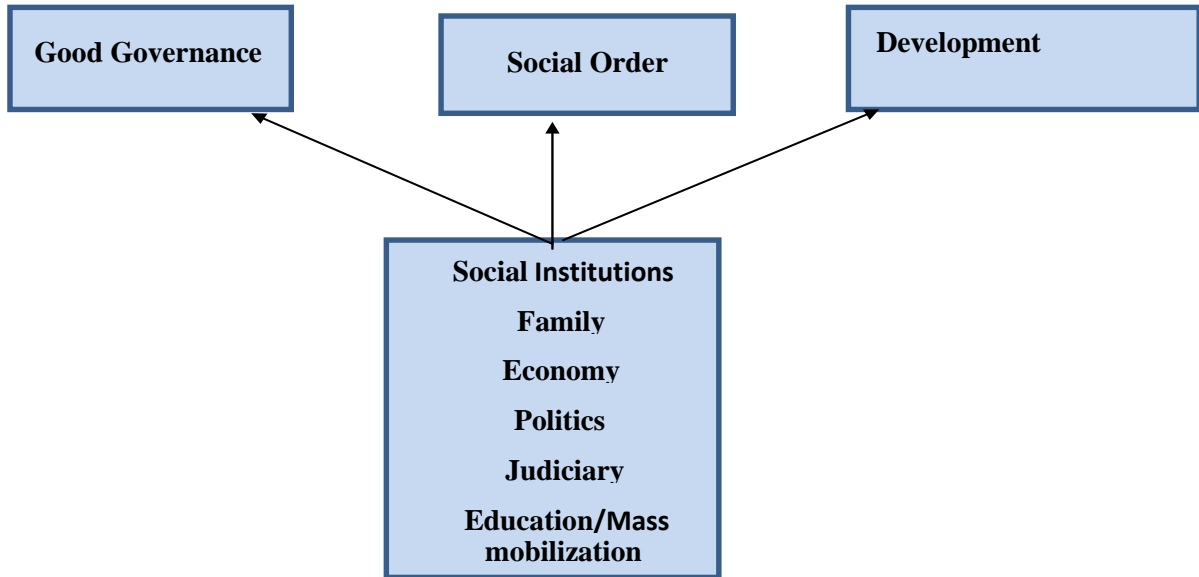
Nigeria has technically responded to the U.N. clarion call by formulating policies and programs that seek to reduce gender inequality in socio-economic and political circles. However, this move has been met with the pervading challenge of African socio-cultural values that pride the male gender over their female counterparts. It is against this background that this paper advocates the collective efforts of every citizen to promote gender inclusiveness in Nigeria's development agenda. The study's objectives are as follows: 1) to examine the relationship between gender inclusiveness, good

governance, social order, and development; and 2) to identify the role of good governance, social order, and development within Nigeria's context. The study will provide answers to two questions: whether there is a relationship between good governance and development and what role gender inclusiveness has for good governance, social order, and development in Nigeria.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

The functionalist theory propounded by two American scholars- Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore⁸ are useful in situating good governance, social order, development, and gender roles in contemporary societies. In their seminal work the *Principles of Social Stratification* - published in 1945, Kingsley and Wilbert⁸ explained social stratification, which involves the hierarchical ranking of social positions in the society in terms of creating social order, progress, and ultimately development for a society based on the following assumptions:

Firstly, is the need for functional prerequisites, which explains that certain positions are necessary and of functional prerequisite to the survival of the social system, especially the extent to which other positions depend on this particular function. Good governance is critical for development and progress and the attainment of social order for society. This perhaps explains the famous saying as championed by writer John C. Maxwell that "everything falls and rises with leadership" The security, peace, and stability of any nation is dependent on good governance and leadership. Davis and Moore⁸ posited that all roles must be occupied. In other words, there should be no vacuum or vacant positions. However, those that occupy these positions must be able to function in such a capacity. The proponents stressed the need for adequate capacity, skills, and expertise to deliver effectively on assignments and functions. The theory emphasizes the need for meritocracy instead of mediocrity or popular candidate. The scholars also identified the need to execute duties and assignments conscientiously without fear or favor. Although Melvin Tumin mainly criticized the functionalist theory of social stratification in 1953⁹, it remains useful in explaining societal development dynamics, good governance, and social order needed for progress. The theory also recognized the



Source: Researcher's compilation, 2020

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

role of each gender in attaining sustainable development.

This paper's conceptual framework reveals that good governance, social order, and development are hinged on society's social institutions. These institutions include the family, economy, politics, judiciary, and education. Consequently, these institutions' ability to function optimally is a prerequisite for good governance, social order, and development. For instance, if the judiciary is not fair in the adjudication of disputes brought before the legal practitioners, the public may lose confidence in the judicial system, culminating in hampering good governance, social order, and development. It also depicts the interrelatedness and interconnection of various social institutions in the society which must work together for the survival of the whole. Buttressing the fact that both men and women have vital role to play in achieving sustainable development.

Methods

The study engaged existing data from relevant literature and archival resources to explain the concept of good governance, social order and development, and the pivotal role of gender inclusiveness in achieving these goals were

critically examined. The concept of gender is a socio-cultural construct that explains the differences in the social roles performed by men and women in society²⁵. Gender as a socio-cultural concept is often misconstrued to mean women's affairs, discrimination, and marginalization of the female or girl child to the detriment of other groups in society. This study adopts the gender responsiveness approach to discuss the stakeholders' critical roles, including men, women, children, government, religious leaders, traditional institutions, and other Non-governmental organizations in ensuring good governance, social order, and ultimate development for the society. The method engaged by the study was to critically analyze relevant concepts including good governance, accountability, and social order using content and discourse analyses.

The concept of good governance

The concept of good governance ensued due to the quest for the development of people and society. However, these days, what is obtainable is bad governance characterized by massive and official corruption, unaccountable governments, and lack of respect for human rights. Good governance is an integral part of economic and political agendas. It

addresses several central issues ranging from universal protection of human rights, non-discriminatory laws, an independent judiciary, transparent public agencies and parastatals, public office holders' accountability, direct redistributions of state wealth, balanced representation, equality for all persons, meaningful citizen participation, and contribution in public policies and prevailing issues⁸.

In general terms, good governance can be explained as the exercise of political power to manage and direct the state's affairs. It is referred to as socio-economic and political power to build and transform a nation into a higher global ranking. Good governance connotes how public officials and institutions acquire and exercise the authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services within a given set of rules. The World Bank^{11,12} affirms that good governance can be explained explicitly in three distinct aspects, namely: the form of the political regime put in place; the exhibition of power and authority in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development; and the political will and capacity of government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge their duties and functions according to laid down rules and regulations.

Good governance from the perspective of UNDP¹³, entails the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage, direct, and build a country where rights will be respected. Benefits will be shared appropriately across the board (race, gender, ethnic, religious activities, social status, and standing). It encompasses robust mechanisms, processes, and institutions that will galvanize citizens' involvement, articulate the views, interests, and permit them all to exercise their legal rights, enjoy privileges, reconcile and manage differences when it arises in an atmosphere devoid of palpable tension, discrimination, and acrimony.

Lawal¹⁴ reports that good governance is how public institutions conduct and manage public affairs in tandem with public resources. Azikwe¹⁵ sees it as the democratic use of political authority and control in managing society with its resources for the sole aim of social and economic development. This can be carried out peacefully and logically by ensuring the roles of the ruled and the rulers do not clash, and there is a clear-cut

distribution of wealth and responsibilities between both parties.

Sheng¹⁶ outlined eight characteristics of good governance, which include: citizenry's participation, consensus-driven, accountability, responsibility and responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, balanced and equitable distribution, all-inclusiveness, and rule and regulation compliant. Good governance by every standard and measure should depict a corrupt-free nation, recognition of the rights of minorities and vulnerable persons in decision making. Good governance no doubt, sets the pace for rapid and genuine development.

Elements of good governance participation

Political and citizenry participation is of paramount importance. The involvement of men and women is the key to good governance. It can take different forms. According to Omoniyi¹⁷, citizen participation is in three forms: participatory, political, and gladiator levels. This could take direct or indirect means. Direct means detail straight involvement and demonstration of civic obligations in tandem with the constitution of the land, while indirect involvement signals citizens' reliance on intermediate institutions to carry out their civic responsibilities and competences. Indirect participation submits that citizen hide under institutional arrangements to exhibit his or her civic competences. However, the patterns of civic engagement, to have entirely good governance, must be full involvement of all and sundry to have a society or a nation where tranquility, security, growth, and development thrive.

Good governance queue along the line of this aphorism "majority will carry the vote, but minority must have a say". Based on this assertion, governance will not be one-sided. Credits and freedoms in line with the law requirements are accorded citizens to enable them to contribute their quota without sentiment, biases, fear, or favor. Freedom of association, expression, and opinion on one side, organized civil society, and functional structure on the other side, all these will galvanize growth and development and promote gender inclusion for all and sundry¹⁶.

According to Jeremy Bentham¹⁷ "greatest happiness for the greatest number of people" to enjoy good governance, civil service has the opportunity to participate during the building of the

structure, strategies as well as the implementation of policies and programs because all these affects their respective communities and by extension the society at large. This aspect of governance is of paramount importance as the citizenry is charged with playing oversight functions of planning, monitoring, querying, reporting, and registering opinions and grievances were necessary for all and sundry benefits without acrimony, separatism, favoritism, and tribalism. This aspect is essential as it secures commitment and supports quality implementations.

The rule of law

According to Professor A.V Dicey cited in Yadav¹⁸, the rule of law is the equality of all citizens of a country without exception to the ruling and elite class. The saying goes, "no one is above the law, and by extension, all are equal before the law"¹⁸. Both the ruled and rulers are subject to the obedience of the stipulated rules and regulations as enshrined in the Nations' constitution. Good governance requires a robust legal framework spearheaded by a transparent judiciary independent and impartial for it to thrive. There is also the protection and promotion of all citizens' fundamental human rights, regardless of their social status. There is also the need for a healthy and selfless security apparatus that caters for abnormalities and crises that may arise due to human relationships and interactions.

Good governance cannot thrive without a robust, virile, predictable, and stable legal framework that will guide the distribution of economic and political opportunities without fear of arbitrary interference or expropriation. Good governance depicts that the rule of law is clearly stated, as ignorance will never be an excuse for violators of rules and regulations. Furthermore, whenever there are issues and litigations, the court and the law should take its' full course as violators, offenders, and criminals are meant to face the law's wrath and, by extension, are punished to serves as a deterrence to others. The rule of law as an element of good governance hinges on the premise that conflicts are resolvable and procedures for amending rules and regulations are flexible.

Transparency

Transparency as a concept preaches openness and accountability. It depicts that any decision taken, including policies and programs, are done in a

manner that satisfies the requirement of the land laws, and by extension, citizens are entrusted with the right to seek information, query, and interrogate grey areas without coercion. Transparency is one of the basic principles of good governance. It implies openness and public insights into the activities and operations of institutions¹⁸. It ensures that information is provided in an easily understandable format using appropriate communication channels to reach all citizens. A responsive and responsible government put up institutional arrangements to serve and not to oppress people. Such institutions and structures are citizen-oriented and are capable of building and stimulating cordial and triangular relationships among the ruler, the ruled, and infrastructure cum socio-economic demands.

When the chains of relationships are allowed to thrive on principles and planning involving the citizens, good governance will naturally evolve, while growth and development will take its course. Whenever the private sector raises issues, a good and responsive government should have known that it represents the entirety of the populace. Private sectors are accurate reflections of society. Transparency in decision-making, budget planning, regulatory, and procurement processes are germane to define which government is responsive, transparent, and accountable. Transparency is only achievable when government is committed to all-inclusive governance, fight against corruption and efficient resource management.

Consensus oriented

The literature is replete with evidence that good governance requires a nexus relationship between different interest groups and forums to serve as a good platform to on leverage what is best for society and the best possible means of achieving them^{16;20}. Sustainability as a program of the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.) requires projection into the future on how to ameliorate and proffer plausible solutions to the masses' pains. The government of the day must ensure that there is a need for a profound understanding of a given society's historical, cultural, and social context. Citizens must have the assurance that they are involved in society, particularly the poor, weak, and downtrodden masses. Taking care of their well-being will send the right signals that they enjoy an iota of good governance.

Accountability

To achieve good governance, therefore, accountability is another weapon or tool to measure good governance. Government agencies, ministries, and parastatals must be accountable to the rulers and the entire public. However, there are exceptions to some of these government organs. Most of their activities should be in the public domain to the private sector, building high esteem and societal confidence. Whether internal or external, the government must consider its target citizens and beneficiaries in making decisions and carrying out actions.

Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law. It entails financial openness in expenditure control, cash management, and external audit. It depicts sound fiscal choices made in a transparent manner, which to a large extent, has an impact on the entire populace in the areas of health, education, agriculture, job and wealth creation, improving the standard of living, and promoting economic development. Accountability in good governance also signals and requires that managers, government, and private sectors properly implement core key programs in a fairest sense of transaction with operational efficiency while not neglecting the role of check and balance through internationally recognized auditing systems subjected to public scrutiny. Examples from selected countries- Several leaders in African countries and beyond are adjudged as passing the test of good governance irrespective of sex and gender differences. The next section presents a few examples:

President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, his leadership style, and sacrifices for his country ushered development programs and rapid societal transformation for South Africa. To this day, Nelson Mandela is celebrated because of his great legacies of a free, fair, and non-discriminatory South Africa. Nelson Mandela exemplified good governance, social order, and development during his reign as the President of South Africa. Others include President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania.

For example, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Angela Merkel – the German Chancellor, Joyce Banda of Malawi, Sir Erleah Helen Johnson of Sierra Leone, and Li Qun Yun of South Korea, whose transformational and impactful leadership

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and governance in their respective countries are points of references to date when it comes to the role of gender and good governance. Irrespective of their gender and peculiarities, good governance, and social order leading to rapid societal development and transformation became the identity of these countries, essentially because of good leadership.

Discussion

The literature review on the subject matter and the content analyses of major sub-themes, including good governance, social order, national development, and gender, reveal that a lot more needs to be done in most African countries, including Nigeria. Despite the excellent template and blueprint for good governance, implementing and sustaining the laudable projects has been a significant concern, especially when the country has to grapple with the leadership question. Additionally, are the multiple challenges of accountability, corruption, and security concerns emanating from the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, Fulani Herdsmen, and Farmers clash in the North Central, kidnapping, militancy, and oil pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta^{4,20}.

The paper found that accountability and corrupt practices are key indicators inhibiting good governance, social order, and national development in Nigeria. Most importantly, is the gender-discrepancy in governance, where women's gender is grossly under-represented in leadership at all levels (Local government, state and the federal level). In Politics, Nigerian women are grossly under represented and dominated by men; despite the fact that women constitute about 60% of the registered voters in the country and are also active participants in political rallies and campaigns across the nation²⁷. Few women vie for political offices and fewer of these win elective seats. When it comes to vying for elective positions, they are discriminated against and dominated by men. This gap could have heightened these undesirable occurrences. The challenges facing women politically and the benefits of having women adequately represented in elective positions with a bid to overcome the challenges to pave the way for a proportionate female-male representation on elective seats in the country have been suggested by George *et al.*²⁶. These include but are not limited to

the influence of poverty and lack of funds, financial resources, and financial supports for women. The assertion was corroborated by Oladosun, George, Onwumah, Adewole-Isaac and Adekoya⁶, in their assertion that, for Nigeria to achieve its demographic dividend, with the aim of eradicating poverty, improve quality of life of citizens, economic growth, health and well-being of families and societies, accountability, good governance and gender inclusiveness is paramount in addition to improving information on fertility dynamics and modern contraceptive use.

Conclusion

Many issues have hindered Nigeria's development; one major challenge is the corrupt practices by political leaders with limited good governance, societal order, and development in the country. To manage the challenges that hinder good governance and development in Nigeria, the government and citizens need to synergize to create reforms and restructuring among political leaders by totally removing bad leaders and replacing them with rather more competent and effective ones. This will ensure good governance. The electoral process should be as transparent as possible to vote the right man for the job. Polling points where people are required to vote should be secured and guarded for the safety of everyone. Political leaders should be sanctioned when they commit crimes. Importantly is the need for gender inclusiveness in all political offices at various levels of government in order to achieve the quest for good governance, accountability and societal developments George, Adetunde, Ijagbemi, and Udume²⁶.

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Contribution of authors

Tayo George conceived and designed the manuscript
Anthony Onwumah and Mercy Ozoya provided the secondary data
Olawale Olonade prepared the manuscript.

Declaration

The authors declare no conflict of interest and all authors mentioned in the manuscript approved the publication of the manuscript.

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