

Narcissistic Style of Leadership in Public Service and its Implications for National Development

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Abstract

Narcissism remains an unexplored source of leadership failure in public service delivery and falls within the ambit of psycho-personality disorder among leaders which poses as a challenge towards national development. In the light of this, the paper conceptualized narcissistic style of leadership as well as national development stating the theory adopted. Qualitative technique was adopted and the findings from this paper revealed that because of the brazen lack of respect for constitutional and administrative procedures in political competition, narcissistic leaders often capitalize on the lawlessness of the political system to infiltrate the public service and so the lack of respect for constitutional provisions in political competition often results in the emergence of narcissistic leaders who are determined to entrench themselves in power by employing coercive powers to suppress opposition groups such as placing a ban on their activities, mainstream media gagging and even imprisoning their leaders. In some other cases, the ruling power tries to make frantic efforts to remain in power indefinitely and can only be removed through military coup. It therefore concludes and recommends that continuous pressure should be mounted on the political functionaries, national assembly, public servants and administrators by the civil society, the academia and stakeholders to make policies or enact a bill to ensure that the political elites cut down on the parasitic national and state budget allowances as well as the gross and unreasonable remuneration structure that indulge the impunity and ostentatious lifestyle of the political elites at the expense of the governed in a pragmatic and organised manner to ensure that anarchistic and desperate leaders or charlatans lose interest in participating in governance.

Keywords: Impunity; Narcissism; Narcissistic Style of Leadership; National Development; Public Service

Introduction

The personal worth of any government is the ability and capability to attain a qualitative level of efficiency in public service that propels national development as it is the basis for any nation's drive for autonomy (Raymond,2018).Hence, leadership style are behavioural patterns by a leader to influence the attitudes of the followership in the attainment of national development (Nwaodike and Jacob,2021) and therefore leadership is one of the very critical moments that determine the development or destruction of any nation (Kadarko and Odonye,2022).Hence, narcissism as a personality trait is characterized by delusional grandeur, exploitativeness, superiority complex, passive aggression, unethical conducts, toxicity and an overly exaggerated view about self particularly at the expense of others which could lead them to abuse power .Thus, narcissistic style of leadership has attracted substantial attention in public administration research by virtue of the fact that narcissistic individuals are emerging as policy makers and technocrats and making national decisions that impact on nation building and development (Nevicka, Hoogh, Hartog and Belschak, 2018).

Therefore, leadership succession and style is a significant process in every democracy which is geared towards ensuring better performance and security of lives and property. However, leadership succession in public service is one of the fundamental problems confronting national development in Nigeria since its independence. The problems of transferring political power from one leadership to another has always been riddled with political violence, heated polity, extreme selfishness from politicians, unpatriotic behaviours, acrimony, tension, party cross carpeting, propaganda, sensationalism by the press, ethnicized politics, manipulations from godfathers,

monetized politics, implacable and inexorable behaviours (Adeniyi and Olanrewaju,2021)

This reveals therefore that Nigeria's political space since independence has been marred by a narcissistic style of leadership wherein a leader has an intense and unhealthy sense of self love, turpitude, entitlement to state resources, little or no interest in the political and economic development of the state, lack of empathy for the people, pays lip service to human capital development, engages in high handedness and impunity, gaslights members of the public who demand for accountability, shows interest in winning elections even if it is at the expense of the people and demonstrates a very strong aversion to any type of criticism (Stanfast and Worlu,2020).For example, despite several clamours for local government autonomy, many local governments have been denied their democratic benefits in various states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria due to the narcissistic selfishness of the concerned state government officials. These local governments have been stagnated till date as they are incapacitated financially. This is mainly because the federal government has appropriated almost every available source of finance which is against the tenets of fiscal federation. Sadly, this leads to political and economic underdevelopment at the grassroots which then forces the local government leaders to be at the mercy of the state government (Oderinde, 2019).

This indicates that narcissistic leaders are more self serving and tend to allocate state resources to themselves, cronies and sycophant because of their sense of entitlement and longing for attention and confirmation of their superiority from others and for unquestioning devotion and blind loyalty from followers. Therefore, when confronted with criticisms or negative feedbacks, they frequently react with aggression and hostile behaviours (Schmid, Kniper and Peus, 2021). Thus, it is against this background that this paper attempts to evaluate the narcissistic style of leadership in Public Service and its Implications for national development

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the causes of narcissistic style of leadership in public service
2. To examine the narcissistic style of leadership in public service and its implications for national development
3. To proffer solutions to the problems of narcissistic leadership in the public service for the attainment of national development

Concept of Narcissistic Style of Leadership

Narcissism remains an unexplored source of leadership failure in public service delivery and falls within the ambit of psycho-personality disorder among leaders which poses as a challenge towards national development. Thus, Narcissism is a mental disorder in which people (but in this context, leaders) have an unreasonably high sense of their own importance and which reflects on the behavioural attitudes towards others in the form of an abnormal sense of self -love, self aggrandizement and an extreme level of entitlement that often violates constitutional and societal norms and infringes on the human rights of others (Ibrahim, Gbenga, Musa, Charlton and Odoh,2021) and so narcissistic style of leadership is an anti social political behaviour wherein leaders feel entitled to recognition, rewards and praises even without any visible impact or achievements towards human capital development which unfortunately creates an environment rife for impunity, ethnic conflicts, sycophancy and political tension because the leader is pre-occupied and obsessed with a need for constant admiration and chronic validation at the detriment of public service. In other words, narcissistic style of leadership is a form of tyrannical leadership in which the leader has a personality malfunction and an inflated sense of self importance which makes him subordinate his constitutional responsibilities of service to the people and places his pecuniary and parochial interests above the interests of the state for selfish motives (Anyanwu, Ezenwosu, Emesi and Eleje, 2022).

This reveals that the narcissistic leader is neither capable of respecting the principles of democracy nor the tenets of human rights because of their pervasive pattern of grandiosity, constant need for adulation, obsessive

selfishness, egoistic and ruthless pursuit of political, economic relevance as well as dominance to the exclusion of needs of the people which subsequently leads to the breakdown of institutions and reduces a nation into a failed state. This is so because the narcissistic style of leadership adheres to the fundamentals of the Machiavellian principle of the end justifying the means and is also characterized or pre-occupied by arrogance, lack of empathy, histrionic attitudes, self serving and anti-people policies, lack of emotional intelligence, egocentricism and a distaste towards accountability and constructive criticisms (Sahara Reporters,2010).In essence, narcissistic style of leadership implies governance for the leaders own good while infringing on the citizen's basic rights whenever his interests are being threatened (Obonyano, Joannes and Uche,2022).

Hence, with narcissistic style of leadership, rules, procedures, strategies and processes designed for democratization and national development can culminate in difficulties and also stifle economic empowerment (Orievulu,2020).This implies that narcissistic leadership does not care about the will of the people or democratic tenets. Furthermore, narcissistic style of leadership for Okpata and Ezika (2021) comes in two dysfunctional features-The primordial insulation of economic matters from popular participation as well as the desperate manipulation and monopolization of democratic process that involves the use of violence and electoral fraud to secure legitimacy. Thus, narcissism in leadership is one of the reasons weaponization of poverty such as vote buying, ballot box snatching, militarization of elections in Nigeria, burning of electoral offices, buying of permanent voters card from economically vulnerable people and other antics is used as a means of disenfranchising the electorate while also limiting their options or jeopardizing their chances of having good leadership that brings about efficiency in public service. Thus, for narcissistic style of leadership, posterity or sustainable development goals is never the priority or action plan of a narcissistic leader even though he pays lip services through eloquent public speaking in the media in order to garner public approval or look good in the eyes of the electorate (Ezegwu, 2022).Furthermore, in reiterating this, narcissistic style of leadership has become a catalyst for those desperate to have an enduring hold on power and its weapons for political entrenchment in public service include state sponsored violence,poverty, unemployment,turpitude,selfishness,depravity,corruption,selfishness,baseness, impunity, repression and ethnic violence. In the light of this, narcissistic leadership is a style of leadership wherein leaders who are appointed or elected and who are entrusted with positions of authority engage in unethical practices and formulate policies with malicious intents for the purpose of amassing personal benefits and remaining evasive before the laws of the land and also have no genuine commitment to serve or follow the norms that guide public position in respect to the people who they have promised to represent (Olojede and Osah, 2020).Therefore, narcissistic style of leadership is leadership engaged in betrayal of public trust and covert conspiracies intended to benefit only the needs and agendas of the leaders and their cronies (Itodo, Dance and Adeyi, 2022).

Concept of National Development

National development is the end result of Public Administration. Thus, the paradigm of national development depends on the style of leadership in public service (Olojede, 2021).In essence, national development is an idea that embodies all attempt to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies the improvement in the material well being of all citizens in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not inhibit the future. National development also requires that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. Furthermore, it aims at improving social security, sustainable welfare and expansion of life chances. This reveals that national development is a process of societal advancement where improvement in the well being of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. This therefore means that national development can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as technological advancement of a nation. This is usually or best achieved through development planning which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011).

Similarly, national development is the gradual growth, bringing into fuller evolution and improvement of a

laudable scheme for the advancement of the society. Drawing from this perspective, national development involves consistent progression, movement and advancement of a nation towards something better. This includes the improvement on the material and non material aspects of life. Following the above views, national development is the continuous search for improvement with a commitment to advancement. In the light of this, national development is a widely participatory process of directed social change in society which is intended to bring about social and material advancement including greater equality, freedom and social justice and majority of the people through their gaining of greater control over their environment (Anikeze, 2011).

Fundamentally, national development is a multi-dimensional process involving the progressive advancement in the totality of man in his political, economic, psychological and social realities. Thus, national development is a holistic phenomenon that is seen as an expansion of people's capabilities, a process of emancipation from barriers that curtail the full realization of human freedom. Hence, it refers to the level of control which members of a given society have been able to establish over their natural environment. Basically, national development is an improvement in the political, economic, social and cultural institutions as well as an advancement in the living conditions of the people (Ebeh,2015).In essence, the concept of national development is a multi-dimensional process involving the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system and in which there is a rise in the nation's standard of living to free it's population from a life of subsistence agriculture to improvement in public health care and it also means that the people are the real wealth of a nation and people's opportunities for freedom as well as a long and healthy life are guaranteed.

Furthermore, national development is the act of rising to the highest value the gross national product through the process of accumulating capital and industrialization. This means that national development can also be viewed as the capacity of a nation to fulfill the following objectives-the integration of marginal population into the community, provision of accessibility to facilities such as health, education, water supply, rural electrification, roads, general physical planning, employment generation, equitable access to land, institution, housing, maintenance of law and order and also the creation of incentives and opportunities for savings, credit and investment. It also involves creating wider opportunities for individuals to realise their full potentials through education and sharing in decisions and actions that affect their lives (Amali, 2006).Additionally, national development is not limited to just the process of acquiring industries but encompasses such process of modernization, productivity, social and economic equalization, modern technical knowledge and skill, improved institutions and attitudes as well as rationally coordinated policy apparatus. In other words, national development goes beyond increase in income per-capital and financial side of people's lives. It includes changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as social behaviour and attitudes, customs and beliefs of people which is guaranteed through the provision of gainful employment coupled with the presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures. What is invariably clear here is that national development addresses certain questions such as what has been happening to poverty; unemployment and inequality? Thus, if all these three indices (poverty, unemployment and inequality) are at a relatively high rate, there is an obvious absence in national development (Raymond, 2018).

Causes of Narcissistic Style of Leadership in Public Service

1. Lack of Constitutional and Institutional Accountability: Lack of accountability is one of the many attributes of narcissistic leaders. Hence, secrecy and confidentiality in public dealings have remained a culture and legacy in public service in Nigeria since 1960 to date (Anekwe, 2022) and because of this, the Nigerian public service has now become an attractive and convenient position for narcissistic individuals to gravitate towards since they know and understand the challenges that exists in public services that enables them to get away with narcissistic behaviours which they eventually capitalize on. For instance, the weaknesses of institutions like the Public Complaints commission to which citizens can report the unethical practices of public officials have remained ineffective, thus encouraging more narcissism in public service in Nigeria (Aluko, 2006).

2. **Lack of Respect for Constitutional and Administrative Procedures in Political Competition:** The conditionality for national development in any society is the existence of an agreed set of rules and procedures for regulating political interactions and public administration. However, in Nigeria such rules hardly exist and even when they do exist, they are not respected. Thus, narcissistic leaders capitalize on the lawlessness of the political system to infiltrate public service and so the lack of respect for constitutional provisions in political competition often results in the emergence of narcissistic leaders who are determined to entrench themselves in power by employing unconstitutional means such as enlisting the support of members of the Armed forces to achieve their aims. In addition, narcissistic leaders adopt coercive powers to suppress opposition groups such as placing a ban on their activities, mainstream media gagging and even imprisoning their leaders. In some other cases, the ruling power tries to make frantic efforts to remain in power indefinitely and can only be removed through military coup (Ishaya, 2018).
3. **The Nigerian Culture of Squandermania:** Many Nigerians are imbued with insatiable lust for excessive materialism. This cultural instinct and pattern to keep acquiring for more ostentatious living has attracted narcissistic individuals into public service. Therefore, all efforts to appoint or elect good leaders into public service has significantly not produced the required effects in Nigeria due to the cultural tendencies of sycophancy and excessive glorification in vanity (Onah and Oguonu, 2010).
4. **An Enabling Indigenous Polity:** A fundamental factor for any society to experience a genuine and transformative leadership is that it must have a domestic base within the society. Thus, the desire for a leader who is not narcissistic must be people oriented. This implies that the initiative to make changes in choosing leaders who are not narcissistic must arise among the nationals of the country. A positive political change must be willed by the country itself. It cannot be implanted from outside. However, external forces can stimulate and facilitate the national forces in the choice of good leaders. They can only supplement and not supplant for them. Foreign help and support before, during and after elections can only initiate or stimulate a peaceful election, it cannot ensure the prevention of narcissistic leaders. Therefore, the prevention of narcissistic leaders will falter if the people in connivance with the civil servants continue to enable corruption. Hence, unless the momentum of destroying corruption comes from within the society, the initiative to preventing narcissistic leaders will be dissipated and short-lived (Ndoh, 2002).
5. **The Communal Culture of Africa:** Another major factor responsible for narcissistic leadership is the fact that civil servants are always reluctant to expose or turn in a narcissistic leader out of fear of being targeted as a scapegoat or regarded as a snitch. For instance, even when the people are victims of a narcissistic leader's actions or policies, they do not expose him for fear of persecution, intimidation or attacks from administrators who are beneficiaries of the corruption of the narcissistic leader (Aluko, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the narcissistic theory as its theoretical construct to analyze and underpin the subject matter and facilitate an understanding of the issues involved. Narcissism theory was pioneered by Karen Horney in 1939 and this theory explained that narcissism is a personality disorder which deals with an extreme level of self-love, self-focus, feelings of grandiosity, neuroticism, antagonism, antipathy, attention-seeking, exploitation, entitlement, empathy impairment as well as an unreasonably strong desire for adulation and recognition in addition to tendencies of masochism, algophilia, sadism, vindictiveness, rage, paranoia and passive aggression which often extends beyond a personality disorder and persistently affects individuals, institutions, policy making, political and administrative systems and the society at large (Steffens and Haslem, 2020). In essence, this theory explained that because of the personality disorder of narcissistic leaders, such leaders tend to formulate and implement policy programmes beneficial to the goal he sets without consideration or regard for public welfare or policy outcomes. In fact, such leadership neither seeks nor is he interested in public opinions as long as it is not within the purview of his self-serving agendas. This theory also emphasizes that not only does a narcissistic leader determine the policy direction on behalf of a state, coercion rather than persuasion is employed to secure compliance, obedience and allegiance (Nwaodike and Jacob, 2021). Unfortunately, the narcissistic style of leadership often results to a steady abuse of public powers for

achieving primordial goals. In addition to that, the narcissistic style of leadership also leads to political volatility, political injustice, corruption and ineffective political institutionalization that makes it impossible for public servants not to divorce their public roles from private ones thus encouraging them to subordinate their constitutional roles to the narcissistic leader's selfish and exploitative whims and caprices which then sabotages all developmental goals and policies and then leads to a failed state (Olojede,2021).

Therefore, narcissism theory is relevant to this paper because it juxtaposes the reasons for failed national developmental policies however laudable they are.

Methodology

Documentary method was adopted for this study. Hence, data was sourced from national and international academic publications. These consisted of relevant text books and academic journals. The data gathered from the aforementioned method was analyzed using qualitative descriptive technique and this was done because of the qualitative approach employed for this research study.

Narcissistic Style of Leadership in Public Service and its Implications for National Development

Leadership in public service is the core essence to all organized societies, administrations, politics as well as governance. Any wonder the book of Proverbs in the good book avers that where there is no vision, the people perish (Ogundiwin and Ogu,2022).Thus, there is no gainsaying to the fact that the style of leadership in public service has become a determining factor used in measuring the attainment of national development in many developing countries and so the leadership style played by actors in the political system of nations are equally what shapes the development of such institutions, community or nation (Osundina, 2022). Regrettably ,several decades after colonial rule, Nigeria's history has been plagued by narcissistic leaders who have either been military dictators or civilian administrators wherein their actions and policies have brought about the inability of the state and its custodians to adequately address the cultural ,economic, political and social needs of citizens. In essence, the siege Nigeria faces today is a consequence of the many years of narcissistic style of leadership which has unfortunately taken its toll on governance and administration in such ways that the leaders have failed to meet their own part of the social contract which they entered to with the governed. This reveals that narcissistic style of leadership which is characterized by government's predation and militarization of civic societies leads to the steady breakdown and eventual collapse of all governmental institutions that ensures national development (Oyadiran, Afegbua and Obisanya, 2020).For instance, in Nigeria, the constitution merely guarantees the existence of public services like the local governments but grants the powers to determine their outlook and functionalities to the state government. Unfortunately, this policy borne out of self-serving intents has led to many local governments being denied their democratic benefits in various states of the nation and the reason is due to the narcissistic leadership and selfishness of the concerned state government officials. Sadly, the implication of this is that the local governments have been stagnated till date and the resultant long term consequence is the sabotage of national development (Oderinde, 2019).

Secondly when there is a narcissistic style of leadership in public service, it leads to a breakdown in law and order because the institutions and civil societies used in checking and curbing the excesses of government officials is broken down. Hence, when the society becomes entrenched in cycles of vulnerability to crimes and insecurity, there is a higher risk and increase in agitations from various forms of criminal gangs and ethnic militias some of which include-The Indigenous People of Biafra, Bokoharam Oodua People's Congress, The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, The Niger Delta Youth Movement, The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People etc (Fayeye, 2006).

Thus, no society or its people can prosper with narcissistic leadership because the fundamental structures upon which development thrives are eroded through lawlessness and anarchy which is a bye product of narcissistic style of leadership (Joda, 2011).This reveals that poverty and income inequalities are often linked with societies

with narcissistic leadership and this is so because developmental projects are often made unnecessarily complex and unsustainable due to the incessant selfish attitudes of Nigerian leaders. For example, General Sanni Abacha who ruled Nigeria between 1993 and 1998 mercilessly pilfered Nigeria blind. In fact within a span of five years, General Sanni Abacha was able to criminally amass an unreasonable amount of wealth for himself and family while the rest of Nigerians were living and dying in squalor, food crisis and massive foreign debt. Similarly, Olusegun Obasanjo came to power in 1999 poor and with only 20,000 naira in all of his bank accounts, but within eight years, he had already possessed poultry farm worth hundreds of millions of naira, owned educational institutions at the primary to university levels, owned over two hundred millions of shares in many conglomerates mostly from Transcorp Nigeria Limited and sold government properties to himself and friends while the governed were wallowing in poverty and unemployment. Again, out of obsessive selfishness, Olusegun Obasanjo wanted to extend his tenure in office by seeking for third term of tenure while infrastructures and public institutions were decaying, President Olusegun Obasanjo was busy trying to amend the constitution to enable him remain longer in office. In similar vein, during the administration of Goodluck Jonathan, Political leaders embezzled public funds with arrogance and impunity to satisfy their selfish and egoistic cravings in the midst of pervasive national deterioration while unemployment, poverty, anarchy, militancy and terrorism kept increasing exponentially (Ezugwu, 2022)

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a famous adage that says every country deserves the leader they get. It might sound insensitive and unkind but upon closer empirical observation, it is often true. In the light of this, vote buying has become one of the accepted culture and pattern during electioneering. Unfortunately, vote buying are hallmarks of narcissistic leaders who are not interested or sincere in the efficiency of public administration that brings about national development but who are pathologically and obsessively after their own selfish ambitions. Therefore, the first step of preventing narcissistic leadership is to put an end to vote buying and all forms of weaponization of poverty against the electorate.

Secondly, continuous pressure should be mounted on the political functionaries, national assembly, public servants and administrators by the civil society, the academia and stakeholders to make policies or enact a bill to ensure that the political elites cut down on the parasitic and outrageous national and state budget allowances as well as the gross and excessively unreasonable remuneration structure that indulge their excesses and ostentatious lifestyle at the expense of the governed (majority of whom are living in absolute poverty) in a pragmatic and organised manner to ensure that narcissistic and desperate leaders or charlatans lose interest in participating in governance.

Thirdly, corruption is not only a national disaster, it is a recipe for poverty and narcissistic leadership. Therefore, policy frameworks should be established against corruption in every public institution as a matter of necessity and with all sense of urgency

Lastly, policies should be made wherein community leaders, the local government leaders, traditional leaders, media advocates, the academia and relevant political stakeholders would come together on a monthly basis to work collaboratively in ensuring effective political education of the citizenry in order to ensure that the electorate are able to make a more qualitative and objective decision in the choice of political leaders. This will consequently drift the electorate from making politically myopic and partisan decisions during elections.

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