
**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF FOLLOWERSHIP'S
ATTITUDE TOWARDS PUBLIC UTILITIES AND ITS
IMPLICATION ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

Followership in Nigeria is becoming more difficult and complex by the day. Many do not see reasons why they should continue to be submissive to leadership because many believe that leadership has failed in all respect. However, this paper takes a cursory look into the concept of followership, factors influencing followership's attitude towards public utilities as well as a consideration of the socio-economic implication on national development. The paper therefore suggested that leadership should rise up to its responsibilities and lay the foundation of worthy examples for followership and followership should be made to take responsibility for their negative attitude as this will go a long way in checkmating the attitude of the followers.

Keywords: Followership, Attitude, Public utilities, Socio-Economic, National development.

Introduction

Followership is the process of attaining one's individual goals by being influenced by a leader into participating in individual or group

efforts toward organizational goals in a given situation (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). Followership is seen as the opposite of leadership in a leadership-followership relationship. The importance of leadership and followership cannot be over-emphasized as both are needed to achieve group and organizational performance. Followership has the ability to influence leaders and contribute to the improvement and attainment of group and organizational objectives. Thom-Otuya (2012) summarized the functions of followership as: surrendering to leadership, obeying the command of a leader and acting as mirror of leadership, that is, checkmating the activities or excesses of leadership. For this to be done, followership needs to be articulate, vibrant and vocal as this will assist in reducing the excesses of leadership to the barest minimum.

Leadership engages in the provision of public utilities and social amenities with the intent of making goods and services available to members of the society at cheaper rates. The objectives behind government's provision of public utilities for the populace include to ensure long-term sustainability of the services; achieve economic efficiency; safeguard quality; promote accessibility; meet wider national objectives; for separation of roles; for sector structure; and, the adoption of a sound and adequate regulatory regime. However, the attitude of the followers towards the use of these utilities matters a lot as it can either promote or hinder socio-economic development. Attitude is described as the disposition of an individual toward a person, things, or phenomenon. Attitude can be learned or acquired. Nmomo (2011) conceptualises attitude as 'that aspect of a person's psychological entity, which has great influence on the life of the individual'. Attitude of followership towards leadership and public utilities provided by leadership is influenced by a number of factors such as poverty, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and inability to influence government's decision among others. Some areas in which followership has displayed negative attitude towards public utilities include tax avoidance and evasion, disruptive behaviours during electoral processes, destruction and vandalism of infrastructures, lack of maintenance culture, diverting public property into personal use, wrong use of communication platforms such as social media platforms, and so on; and these to a large extent affect national

development negatively. National development, which is the ability of the government to promote the standard of living of its citizens, cannot be achieved in a situation in which the citizens exhibit nonchalant attitude to the provisions of the government. This paper therefore gave clarified the concepts of followership, followership's attitude, public utilities, national development, and, social-economic analysis of followership's attitude towards public utilities.

Conceptual Clarifications

The term "follower" seems to be ambiguous in its meaning and use, the reason being that some persons see it as been synonymous to the term 'subordinate'. However, Crossman and Crossman (2011) have opted for other acceptable alternatives to describe the term, some of which are 'participants', 'collaborators', and 'partners'. Followership is described as 'adherence to leadership as well as a virtue of supporting leaders and helping them lead well' (Thom-Otuya, 2012). It is a people-oriented behaviour which builds relationship between leaders and followers, thus providing an environment that helps all members of an organization focus on a common goal. Kellerman (2008) describes followers as 'subordinates' who have less power, authority and influence than do their superiors and who therefore usually, but not invariably, fall into line'. Dencheva (2014) defined followership as the 'willingness to cooperate in working towards the accomplishments of the group's missions, to demonstrate a high degree of teamwork and to build cohesion among the group'. Followership is a function of the follower, the leader, and situational variables. Followership complements leadership (Crossman & Crossman, 2011);

Irikana and Orisa (2007) in Thom-Otuya (2012) identified some qualities of good followership to include total obedience to the laws of the land or constituted authorities; unalloyed loyalty or allegiance to the leadership that be; eschew indiscipline in any form or shapes; explore channels of grievance resolution; commitment to goals and aspiration of the country; demonstrate appreciable virtues and values; well enlightened and responsive; imbibe the principle of self-reliance; offering constructive criticism and

providing solutions; willingness to accept responsibility for his actions; and, develop the attitude of co-operation with his leader for the accomplishment of group goals.

Followership traits can either be positive or negative. Positive traits or qualities include trust-worthiness, industry and enthusiasm, good citizenship, being warmly while negative traits or qualities consist of conformity, incompetence and insubordination. However, the quality of followership is majorly determined by the quality of leadership. Guo (2018) classified followership into three types: passive or submissive followership, active followership, and proactive or aggressive followership. According to him, passive followers are mostly docile and do not make things happen; they escape responsibilities, love passive acceptance of leaders' commands and are usually silent making no contributions to decisions that affect them. Active followers or activists make appropriate suggestions, are conscious in all aspects of societal development and actively participate in the affairs of the society. The proactive or aggressive followers are a bit confrontational; they are very much involved in decisions that affect their living and are ready to go up against the leadership if their suggestions are not adhered to.

Attitude refers to the way individuals think and feel about people, things or situations which in turn influences their behaviour. Nnom (2011) opines that 'attitude determines what an individual will either cherish or dislike, his approach to people and his reactions to events and the world around him'. He further opines that attitude can be expressed either in one's actions or by his words. The disposition of followers towards followership in Nigeria is more often than not negative. The reason being that followership has no worthy leadership example to look to thus the reason followership does not find it difficult looting or diverting public funds, vandalizing public infrastructure, smuggling and involving in activities that are detrimental to the socio-economic development of the nation.

Followership in Nigeria is be-devilled with various problems which in turn have affected the attitude of the followers. Guo (2018) identifies factors that influence followership to be environmental, individual and cultural factors. Environmental factors include aspects such as the family environment, the work environment and external

environment. Individual factors include psychological and physiological factors with indices such as gender, age, educational level, emotions, personality, values, and such like. Cultural differences which is the macro-environment of individual growth influences followership's attitude. Differences in ethnicity and religion are part of the cultural differences which tend to influence attitude to followership. Some of the factors influencing followership's attitude are discussed as follows:

Poverty: Poverty is a state of lack or want. Hero (2012) is of the opinion that 'majority of the followers in Nigeria are poor'. This may be occasioned by lack of employment opportunities and the harsh economic conditions, hence, the reason many politicians capitalize on their vulnerability especially during elections to buy votes of these helpless and poor followers. Followers that are poor and have sold their votes do not have the courage to criticize or check the excesses of the leadership because of fear of oppression from the so-called leaders.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity refers to 'the learned customs and traditions of people; it can be more accurately linked with behaviours and perspectives vis-a-vis leadership and followership' (Craig, 2013). The average Nigerian ordinarily identifies with his or her ethnic group and may tend to be more loyal to leaders from his or her ethnic group (Hero, 2012). This so far, has adversely affected the quality of followership and national development because during elections people are inclined to vote for intending leaders from their ethnic groups and this has led to selecting people into leadership positions even when they are not qualified. Thus, tribal politics has become a bane to the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Religion: Religion serves as the backbone of ethics, values, morals, and corner stone of societies. The essence of which is to guide spiritual and personal beliefs (Gaitho, 2019). It offers personal harmony, fosters social caring and strengthens values among adherents. It also influences followership's attitude as religions that preach peace may tend to produce submissive followership whereas religions that preach violence or extremism may produce violent and confrontational followership. Also, people may want to submit to leaders from same religious inclination with them more easily

than to those from other religion different from theirs. This variable therefore has a way of influencing followership's attitude either directly or indirectly.

Lack of Worthy Leadership Example: Followers tend not to have positive examples among the leadership worthy of emulation. Over time, Nigerian leaders have been an epitome of bad examples to their followers in virtually all spheres of life. And it therefore follows that followership cannot rise above the level of the leadership since an uninspiring leadership leaves followership without role models, hence the negative disposition of followership especially with regards to public utilities.

Powerlessness of Followership in Influencing Government's Decisions: Elections in Nigeria are highly manipulated (Hero, 2012). Most of the time, leaders do not come to power through the peoples vote, they manipulate election and election results to the extent that votes cast do not make any meaning. Since people's votes do not count, their opinions too are undermined. This therefore creates problems for followership as they tend to become indifferent to political issues.

Another concept worthy of clarification is public utility which is a unique form of business organization in the sense that it provides public goods and services to the consumers in the form of gas, transport, communication, electricity, quality education, portable water, infrastructure, health care, railways, pipeline carriers and so on (Agarwal, nd). Public utilities provide essential public services that are considered to be endowed with public interest since they are goods which are open for consumption by all and whose access cannot be restricted. Public utility has four main obligations which are to – serve all consumers, render adequate service, serve at reasonable rates and serve without unjust discrimination. Public utility issues and problems are therefore, of great socio-economic significance since it provides infrastructure for socio-economic advancement.

Development is all about improving the living conditions of the majority of people. National Development refers to the overall social, economic, political and religious advancement of a country or nation. It is the end product of all citizen forces and addition to the

stock of physical, human resources, knowledge and skill. Thom-Otuya (2012) describes national development as 'the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people, by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care, and such like'. The spheres of national development include economic, human and social developments. According to Salami (2017), 'development brings about economic growth, prosperity, modernization, overall progress, provision of basic needs, creating sustainable growth, as well as improved governance'.

Economic development centres on income, job security, standard of living, poverty reduction, provision of services and basic needs. Economic development is measured by the gross national product (GNP) or the gross national income (GNI). Human development centres on health, education and skills. The human development index (HDI) is usually used in measuring human development. The HDI is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and per capita income and it is used to rank countries into tiers of human development. Social development is concerned with the levels of engagement in civil society, social trust and community life, participation and non-discrimination. According to Webbink (2012) and Foa (nd), 'social development involves civic activism, access to information, inter-personal safety and trust, intergroup cohesion (relations of trust and cohesion between defined ethnic, religious or linguistic groups), gender equity (non-discrimination against women) and, inclusion of minorities (non-exclusion of social minorities and indigenous people)'. The end of every development activity is the enhancement of human well-being.

Socio-Economic Analysis of Followership's Attitude Towards Public Utilities

Public utilities provided by the government or government-approved operators for the welfare of citizens are means of generating revenues for government as well as the operators. However, many followers have negative attitude towards the use of these utilities thereby making the operators incur losses as well as making it

difficult for other people to enjoy the benefits of having these amenities and this has been detrimental to the national economy and in turn, to national development. The socio-economic analysis of followership's attitude towards public utilities in Nigeria is presented as follows:

In the provision of power (electricity), many followers consume electricity but are not willing to pay for this service in form of utility bills but rather they would beat up and humiliate staff of electricity distribution companies who go about distributing the utility bills. This attitude leads to loss of revenues on the part of the providers of this service which in turn results in extensive government inefficiencies in the sector (Roy, Iwuamadi & Ibrahim 2020). Also, cases of illegal connections and by-passing of meters abound among citizens, and these practices portray unpatriotic attitude of followership and pose as risks to their lives and properties. Again, followership sometimes involve in the act of vandalizing transformers or looting the transformers out rightly. The looted parts of the transformers are sold out to intending buyers while other members of the community are thrown into darkness for several days, weeks, months or even years as the case may be because replacing the stolen parts may cost a huge sum of money and governments or power distribution companies may not be disposed to replacing such vandalized transformers, hence to avoid being in darkness, community members are made to contribute towards fixing the damaged parts. Lack of power affects lives and businesses adversely, thus, many business owners would invariably relocate to places where they can be guaranteed constant power supply. The long term effect of this act is that the socio-economic development of the nation is hampered (Abraham & Bello, 2017)

With regards to the payment of taxes, many followers or citizens tend to have the attitude of dodging or evading taxes by way of giving false information about themselves to their employers. They do this in an attempt to pay lower taxes except for Value-Added-Tax (VAT) that is built into goods and services; whereas government uses the revenues gotten from taxes to provide further goods and services for citizens but in a situation where the citizens evade taxes it becomes difficult for government to make available necessary

goods and services to the citizens. This further affects the socio-economic development of the nation since tax evasion has negative impact on the economy (Carvalho, 2019).

With regards to electoral process in Nigeria, a number of followers who are qualified to register and vote would rather register but may decide not to vote; and this is common among the educated and the uneducated. Also, money politicking has become the order of the day as some of the electorates who come out to vote do so because of the money or welfare packages that politicians give out to the electorates during elections thus, selling out their votes to the highest bidders (Ogbette, Idam, Kareem & Eke, 2019). Also, disruption of electoral process by political thugs through shootings in order to snatch ballot boxes to favour preferred candidates sometimes characterizes elections in Nigeria. These acts are usually perpetrated by supposed followers and have affected the attitude of other electorates towards electoral matters; the end result being that unqualified persons occupy leadership positions and are unable to deliver good governance to bring about national development.

Akram and Kumar (2017) acknowledged the usefulness and positive effects of the social media on society, as the platform can be used in networking to bring about development in the society. However, followership has developed the habit of hijacking different communication platforms in committing crimes of various degrees such as internet fraud, blackmailing and denting leaders' image as well as abusing political and religious leaders. Some followers use the platforms to peddle lies about government and society as well as spreading false information and licking out vital information about government, organizations, agencies and individuals with the intent of pulling down supposed targets. This does not say well about the social life of the people and impacts negatively on the development of the society.

Government, in promoting socio-economic development, provides various mass transit vehicles as well as other infrastructures to facilitate the movement of persons, goods and services across states. However, citizens have "I-don't-care" attitude towards the maintenance of these facilities. Many are fond of saying "you do not carry government matter on your head but on the shoulder".

This has led to the mismanagement of these facilities and many of such have become grounded overtime. Some of the causes of lack of maintenance culture as observed by Kayode, Sulaiman and Bamali (2020) include lack of maintenance policy, inadequate provision of funds for maintenance, corruption, misuse of facilities by occupants, lack of timely response to maintenance request and change in government. These do not promote national development.

Vandalism is an action involving deliberate destruction of public or private property in keeping with criminal or political intent (Mmeje, Ayuba & Mohammed, 2017). Vandalisation of pipeline-carriers as a way of expressing grievances by aggrieved youths does not say well of the nation. Unfortunately, this is how best some aggrieved followers express themselves. This practice does not help in promoting economic development but rather hampers development as the populace is plunged into poverty because the costs of reinstalling vandalized pipe-line carriers will cost the government a fortune which could have been used to boost other aspects of the economy. Pipeline vandalism significantly affects business activities in Nigeria as it results to destruction of critical pipeline installations and constant power failure which affects the smooth operations of business organizations and subsequently, retard economic development (Mmeje et al, 2017 & Onuoha, 2009).

Again, in the education sector, it is not uncommon to find school buildings and facilities being vandalized and destroyed by both students and the general public. School vandalism, according to Johnson (2005), refers to 'willful or malicious damage to school grounds and buildings or furnishings and equipment'. Many school buildings are at the verge of collapsing and no one seems to pay attention to them. Some educational materials are being diverted for personal use by heads of school and teachers. Also, teachers who are supposed to be at their duty posts neglect their assignments and go after personal businesses to the detriment of the learners. Also, it is a common thing to find funds meant for development and maintenance of schools diverted by school authorities thereby leaving the schools unattended to. This is one of the reasons some schools lack learning. This has affected the productivity of the education sector which in turn affects the socio-economic

development of the nation.

Furthermore, with regards to health facilities provided for the citizens, many doctors employed to work in public health centres go after private practice with some even diverting medical equipment from public health centres to their private clinics. They spend more time in their private clinics whereas the government pays them for work not done. This attitude to practice has led to the crumbling of public health centres in the country and this has affected the health sector adversely (Taryn, 2008).

Conclusion

It is obvious that the negative attitude of the followership towards public utilities has impacted negatively on national development and there is the need to redress this trend urgently so as to salvage the nation's economy from collapsing. Followership should be careful not to allow any negative influence on their attitude especially as it concerns public utilities and social amenities but should rather shun every form of sentiments that are inimical to national development. Also, leaders should lead by example and as well reward followers who have done well.

Suggestions

Based on the foregoing, it is suggested that in promoting the attitude of followership toward public utilities, leadership should ensure the creation of awareness on the effects of the negative attitude of followership towards public utilities. Followers who displayed positive attitude towards public utilities and national development should be rewarded openly as this will serve as an encouragement to others to follow suit while those who have and display negative attitude towards public utilities should be punished accordingly to serve as deterrent to others who may want to follow such path. Also, the law enforcement agencies should be on ground for the prosecution of defaulters and these agencies should be well funded and given the opportunity to perform the duties expected of them without compromise. They should adhere strictly to the principle of equality and non-discrimination in the discharge of their duties as

this will help to send a strong warning to followers who probably may have the intentions of vandalizing public utilities.

Furthermore, stories should be written on the impact of bad leadership which perhaps may help leaders become responsible and this in turn will go a long way in helping to impact positively on the followership who will not want their own stories to be written for bad. More importantly, leaders should learn to provide worthy examples for followers to emulate as this will certainly help to impress the intended traits or attitude expected from the followers.

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