

# The Impact Of Leadership Selection Process On National Development In Nigeria

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## Abstract

Democracy is recognized as the best kind of government since it allows for a high level of citizen participation in decision-making and policy creation through leaders. A key factor that determines democracy is the technique of selecting leaders, often known as the electoral process. The problem of leadership selection at all levels of government in the nation is fundamental to the existing state of affairs; The study engaged secondary data. Therefore, the emphasis of this study is to investigate how the national development of Nigeria is dependent on the country's leadership selection process. Findings revealed that most process of leadership selection in Nigeria are characterized with fraud. Hence, solving it would require a paradigm shift which must include constitutional amendment, electoral reform, and structural reconstruction of the leadership selection process.

Keywords: Leadership Selection, Election Process, Nigeria, Democracy, National Development.

## Introduction

Regardless of whether a country is developed or developing, leadership selection process or election process is an important and essential component of democracy. Elections are unpredictable occurrences that involve many different elements that connect and reinforce one another. It is frequently referred to as an "official" act of aggregate choosing that takes place within the framework of a series of connected antecedents and

succeeding deeds (Bamidele, Olowojolu, Ake and Ake, 2022). The functioning of the contemporary democracy depends on elections (Singh and Suresh, 1991). Elections are the cornerstone of a society that is fair and democratic (Olowojolu, Rasak, Ake, Ogundele, and Afolayan, 2019). The argument for the improvement of leadership selection process in Nigeria is based on the idea that doing so would decrease systemic fraud and ensure that votes are counted (Duruji, Olanrewaju, Olu-Owolabi, Duruji-Moses and Chukwudi, 2021).

In Nigeria, the bad actors are consistently in power because the political system is rigged in support of misfits with dubious sources of wealth who effortlessly destroy their path to power, and this has hampered Nigeria's national development (Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 2018). Most elections are frequently envisioned as violent conflicts that pose a risk to the country's polity (Sule and Tal, 2018). Nigeria has dominated the political conversation on both the national and international levels as a good example for democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. This was predicated on the effective execution and results of the general elections in 2015, which saw the first-ever nonviolent election process and changeover of a civilian government (Okeke, 2015). The 2019 general election is also significant in the political history of Nigeria, for the sixth consecutive democratic peaceful transition, which has not been possible before this Republic, choosing the next president of the largest nation in Africa through the electoral process is a protected right and activity of the people (Page and Tayo, 2018). Regardless of the customary difficulties experienced, which are considered as proof of future strive for excellence, every election that is held throughout this Country is a plus toward Nigeria's goal of achieving complete democratization. Contrary to widespread belief or mention, elections are not always conducted in a peaceful, transparent, and competent way around the world. No election is conducted without hiccups, regardless of the process and existing structures. To contribute to knowledge, have real policy ramifications, and serve as a basis for similar future research, this study emphasized the importance and necessity of investigating these concerns and other concerns resulting from the consequences of the leadership selection in Nigeria. In this light, the study examined the Nigerian leadership selection process and its impacts on national development, as well as the problems that have resulted from the process, challenges that have been

encountered, and the effects this have had on national development. Next, plausible alternatives were offered for potential future ramifications.

### **Operationalization of concepts and Theoretical framework**

Leadership Selection or Election is a process of evaluating a government's effectiveness, the extent of political engagement, and its legitimacy. The viability of truly democratic politics around the world depends heavily on elections, which are frequently seen as the core of democracy (Inokoba and Kumokor, 2011). In the same way, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2001:217), voters' cards are stuffed into ballot boxes, voting history are inflated, and voters are treated unfairly throughout Nigeria's electoral leadership selection process. Additionally, ballot boxes go astray or are damaged, and election results are altered or falsified. Leadership selection process is therefore seen as crucial and important for assessing a political system's democratic qualities. If elections are not conducted fairly, it could exacerbate ethnic and regional conflict, undermine confidence in the credibility of elected officials, spark mass demonstrations, violent elections, civil upheaval, suspiciousness of institutions, crime, and destabilization, or even endanger the entire democratization process (Oni, Chidozie and Agbude, 2013). Therefore, the leadership selection process is essential to democratic governance (Ajagba, Gberevbie and Agbu, 2020).

The term "National Development" refers to all facets of a country's growth, including social, governmental, economic, administrative. It is both quantitative and qualitative and is especially designed to transform the development capabilities of any country. The actions, compels, and expansion of the pool of tangible, individual, intellectual, and technical resources are what lead to national development. The social and economic welfare of the populace can be enhanced and sustained by modifications in the development of social, cultural, political, and economic elements (Luno, 2018). National development is the combined result of all residents, energies, and additions to the available physical, human, intellectual, and technical resources. It emphasizes that transformation in a country's social, cultural, and financial standing is a sign of growth (Vaizey, 2018). The national development metrics are as follows:

- Equal living standards for everyone
- Equal portion of all profits
- Expanding access to education, healthcare, housing, and social protection
- Equitable distribution of income and capital; and environmental preservation (Nwali, 2019).

According to Myerson (2006), on democratic state theory, he holds that a potential leader requires two reputational assets: he must be widely regarded as a legitimate contender for state leadership positions, and a group of committed followers must believe in his claims of long-term benefits. The availability of these leaders is a crucial component of a country's social capital, and it can only grow gradually over time. From this vantage point, producing democratic leaders for the country is the main challenge in creating a democratic state. A democratic leader also needs to have a good name with the public for upholding democratic competition norms and appropriately using public funds to further the interests of the public rather than just rewarding his most ardent followers (Myerson, 2011).

Nigeria's democracy for over 4 decades is faced with the challenge of having democratic leaders to transform the political institutions that can rebate the dividends of democracy to its citizens, and this has brought about serious challenges on the country's national development, according to the democratic state theory, the root of this problem can be traced to leadership selection process, of which is how political parties select their representative. The theory recognizes how political parties are a social network that gives their active members access to positions of power and privilege. To organize those who have an interest in preserving the democratic political system. The theory further points out that one of the ways to deal with the issues affecting democracy is to adjust the way political parties select their representatives (Myerson, 2011).

Also, the democratic state theory states that, the selection process of national leadership can profoundly influence a country's social development. Considering how the impact of leadership selection in Nigeria's democratic process contributed to national development with a specific focus on grassroots empowerment (Myerson, 2011). In 2015, Nigeria held its general elections, offering citizens the opportunity to choose their leaders at various

levels of government. The election featured a range of candidates, each presenting their visions for social development and empowerment. Among the candidates, Candidate X stood out as a champion of grassroots causes, advocating for policies that would uplift marginalized communities and promote social inclusion. Candidate X recognized the need for comprehensive social programs that would address key challenges faced by the Nigerian society. Their campaign emphasized education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and youth development. The candidate pledged to implement policies that would provide equal access to quality education, affordable healthcare, and opportunities for skills training and entrepreneurship.

The election resulted in a resounding victory for Candidate X, who assumed office as the President of Nigeria. With a clear mandate to drive social development, the new administration wasted no time in implementing its agenda. They launched programs aimed at improving education infrastructure, providing free and quality education for all, especially in rural areas. Healthcare was another critical focus for the government. They embarked on an ambitious plan to revitalize the healthcare system, increasing access to primary healthcare services, expanding medical facilities, and prioritizing healthcare in underserved regions. These efforts resulted in a significant improvement in overall health.

#### **Historical antecedent of leadership selection process in Nigeria 1960 till date.**

Nigeria as a state had independence in 1960, which propelled Nigeria election for the first republic in 1963 where general election was held nationwide. Since the first republic, several elections have been conducted including the current fourth republic (1999-2023). Achieving stable democratic rule was particularly challenging at the initial state. Just five years after gaining independence, the first republic fell. Comparable to the first republic, the second fell apart five years after democracy was restored, and the third was put an end to before it even began. It has been more than 22 years since the fourth republic came into existence (Gberevbie and Oni, 2021).

Nigeria was divided into the Western, Eastern, and Northern region, and each region's political party adopted its philosophy, culture, and ideas. The National Council of Nigeria and the

Cameroons (NCNC)] (later renamed to "National Council of Nigerian Citizens") displayed the desires of the Igbo Eastern region, the Action Group (AG) controlled the Yoruba Western region, and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) depicted the desires of the largely Hausa/Fulani Northeastern Part. The NPC seized control of the federal legislature and partnered with the NCNC to form a coalition government (Osaghae, 1998).

As early as 1960, there were some internal problems with the coalition that the first republic's coalition government was facing (Dudley, 1973). The Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, had pushed for a national government to be centralized in this same year 1960(Ake, 2000).

Since the North's political and economic leadership in the federation was based on its demographic superiority, the first post-independence census in 1962 appeared to present the best opportunity for a created Northern plurality to be challenged (Dudley, 1973). The census results gave the South the upper hand. The NPC-controlled government, nevertheless, deemed the results of the Western and Eastern regions' census to be slightly implausible and annulled it. Consequently, the 1962 census results were never formally released (Ake, 2000). A fresh survey was chosen by the prime minister and was conducted in November 1963. According to Osaghae (1998), Chief Dennis Osadebey, the Mid-West region's premier, "agreed to embrace the results after originally condemning them, for the purposes of national reconciliation (Ekanade, 2011). Throughout the period of the 1964 federal elections, a fresh bipolar alliance had developed in response to the census results. In contrast to the N.P.C., that joined forces with the NNDP, the party created in the South by Chief Ladoke Akintola, to create the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), the two biggest Southern parties, A.G. and N.C.N.C., created the United Progressive Grand Alliance. Elections were widely boycotted because of the Southern parties' protests over restrictions imposed on their ability to campaign freely in the North when the campaigns got underway. The N.P.C. received an outright majority because of the altered results. In the East, this was fiercely opposed, and it led to a major constitutional catastrophe (Ayoade, 1973). Amid the constitutional crisis, elections for the Western House of Assembly were held on October 11, 1965. Under these conditions, a part of the military

effectively overthrew the administration on January 15, 1966 (Arikpo, 1967).

The Federal military government ceded control to a new civilian government led by President Shehu Shagari on October 1, 1979, after the first elections required by the 1979 constitution were held as scheduled in July and August of that year (Broom, 1978). The Second Republic of Nigeria was ushered in with high hopes. Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) triumphed in a succession of elections in 1979 wherein five political parties contested. As the first head of state in the Nigerian history to voluntarily relinquish office, Obasanjo smoothly handed over the reins of government to Shagari. However, unrest disrupted the elections, and claims of extensive vote tampering and electoral misconduct resulted in legal disputes over the results (Falola, Toyin and Ihonvbere, 1985).

The third attempt at democracy in Nigeria began in 1989 but was abandoned in 1993 as a basis of the presidential election being declared invalid, which would have been the culmination of the change (Ogbeidi, 2010). In August 1985, General Buhari was deposed by a palace coup d'état, and General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida took command. Political turmoil caused the presidential election to be delayed until June 12th, 1993. Rich Yoruba businessperson MKO Abiola, who ran for president on the SDP platform, easily defeated Bashir Tofa of the NRC (Wale and Ebenezer, 2010). In a telecast on June 24, 1993, General Ibrahim Babangida declared the June 12, 1993, election invalid, disbanded the National Electoral Commission, and stopped the switchover process (Ogbeidi, 2010). Due to the widespread opposition to his tyranny, Babangida was compelled to promptly cede control to the Chief Ernest Shonekan-led Interim National Government (ING). On November 17, 1993, however, General Sani Abacha—whom General Ibrahim Babangida had appointed as Minister of Defense—removed the interim administration and destroyed the two political parties, the Social Democratic Party, and the National Republican Convention, kicking off a novel change strategy.

Polls held as part of the Abacha transition plan met the same demise as preceding elections. In fact, the late General Sani Abacha rigged the complete system to serve his interests since he intended to replace himself in government. Security officers consequently apprehended Chief M. K. O. Abiola in June 1994 on

the grounds that they believed he had announced himself to be the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. To get him to give up the power that the Nigerian citizens had given him, he was thereafter kept in solitary prison. Despite being imprisoned for four years, Chief M. K. O. Abiola would not give up the presidency he won on June 12, 1993. Chief M. K. O. Abiola passed away while being held in custody on July 7, 1998, while General Abacha passed away on June 8, 1998 (Ogbeidi, 2010).

Nigeria's republican administration is presently known as the fourth republic. It has administered the nation in accordance with the fourth republican constitution since 1999. Since its founding in 1999, the fourth republic has been in power for 24 years. With such length, the fourth republic stands as being the longest-lasting political era in Nigerian history (Changwak, 2021). In the fourth republic, elections were held seven times: in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and most recently 2023 (Sule, 2019). Just two political parties, the AD and PDP, filed representatives for the presidential election. Olusegun Obasanjo, the PDP candidate, easily conquered Olu Falae in the race (Sule, Sambo, Adamu, 2020). Another general election was held in 2003, and its results laid the groundwork for the reinforcement and maintenance of democracy in Nigeria in the twenty-first century (Sule, 2018). There were nineteen people running for the presidency in the election. The majority PDP received 58.20% of all valid votes. More parties were registered in 2007, thereby establishing Nigeria's fourth republic multi-party system. New parties, notably Muhammadu Buhari's Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), were incorporated for the 2011 general election. The PDP candidate received 58.89% of the votes, as normal, and the CPC candidate received 31.98%. The results of the 2015 general election were unexpected and made political history in Nigeria. Muhammadu Buhari ran for office this time on the platform of the All-Progressives Congress (APC), a grouping of four major parties and a PDP subgroup (Sule 2019). After the 2019 general elections were successfully concluded, Nigeria's democratic path attained another landmark (Onapajo and Babalola, 2020). Although seventy-three of the 93 recognized political parties ran for the presidency, the election was clearly a fight between the strong opposition PDP of Atiku Abubakar and the incumbent APC of Muhammadu Buhari. According to the results, the APC candidate

received 55.54% of all votes, followed by the PDP (41.18%), and other parties (3.28%) (Sule, 2019). It is not unexpected that fewer people cast ballots this time around than in previous elections, which is an indication of the public's growing cynicism and skepticism of the electoral process (Ojetunde, 2019). Nigerians turned out to vote in mass on the 25 February 2023 general election, the election was in no way free and fair as there were obvious forms of rigging and violence in some polling units. The INEC guidelines on the conduct of elections were extensively breached, the processes leading to the results were severely compromised, and the votes were not being transmitted electronically as was previously planned. Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Bola Tinubu of the All-Progressive Congress (APC) the winner of the 2023 presidential election. Tinubu polled a total of 8,794,726 votes to defeat his closest rival, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who scored 6,984,520 to emerge second (Sule, 2019). After the results were announced, opposition brought the election results to courts, and claims were dismissed of the results being rigged (Sule, 2019). **The Nigerian Electoral Act and Electioneering Process in Nigeria**

Nigeria electoral process is guarded by certain laws which are expected to be adhered to by the electoral umpire and political parties, respectively. But anything short of the laws in the conduct of election is regarded as electoral misconduct. The oversight of the electoral structure, right to vote, ballot access, electoral management agencies, electioneering, the polarization of the territory into electoral zones, the processes for registering voters and candidates, their funding and media manipulation, voting, the count of votes, oversight, electoral disagreements, and plebiscites are all covered by the election act (Oshisanya, 2020). The Main Electoral Act was approved by the National Assembly on July 29, 2010, and President Goodluck Jonathan signed it into effect on August 20, 2010. The legislation offers the fundamental legal foundation for controlling how Federal, State, and Area Council Elections are conducted in Nigeria (Oshisanya, 2020).

Four amendments have been made to the 2010 Electoral Act, The first amendment, the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2010, The second amendment, Electoral (Amendment) Act (No.2), 2011, The third amendment, Electoral (Amendment) Act, 2015, and the lastly the

final amendment is what President Muhammadu Buhari finally gave his approval to the 2022 Electoral Act Amendment Bill on February 25, 2022, after months of delaying (Adewole, 2022). The 2022 Electoral Act ("the new Act"), which replaces the Electoral Act No. 6, 2010, ("the former Act"), aims to modernize how Nigerian federal, state, and local elections are governed (Eme, 2022). The provision of the electoral act 2022 is as follows:

1. Financial independence to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC): Nigerian elections are overseen by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which was founded in 1998 (Odeyemi, Igwebueze, Abati, and Ogundotun 2022). The new Act creates the Independent National Electoral Commission Fund, which will house fees from the Federal Government, financial assets created from the financing, and other aids and grants that will be given to the Independent National Electoral Commission ("the Commission") to help it perform its duties. Additionally, the Act mandates that the Commission must disburse any election funds that are owed to it no later than a year before the subsequent general election Section 3(1).
2. Increase of the Election Notice's Publication Period: The new Act mandates that the Commission publish a notification for every state of the nation and the Federal Capital Territory no later of around 360 days prior to the day set aside for the conduct of an election within this Act, announcing the election's duration and indicating the location where candidates' papers must be submitted. Each seat for which an election is to be conducted must publish this notification Section 28(2). In comparison, the rules of the former Electoral Act required that the Commission disseminate this notification no later than 90 days prior to the election date. The timescale for issuing a notice announcing the time of by-elections is 14 days, and this is the only instance where the new Act preserves the exact provision as the old Act Section 30(1).
3. Early Party Primaries Encouraged: According to the new Act, political parties must present a list of their supported candidates who have won legitimate internal primaries no longer than 180 days before the scheduled general election date Section 29(1). In juxtaposition, the previous Act required that this submission be made at least 60 days prior to the date of the general elections Section 31(1).

4. Central Electronic Voter Database provision: According to the new Act, the Commission must maintain the Register of Voters at its National Headquarters and other locations. However, in contrast to physical or printed records, the Register must also be maintained electronically in the Commission's central database Section 9(2). This Register was only maintained manually or in paper form under the previous Act Section 9(2).
5. Modification of the Overvoting Terminology: In accordance with the new Act, the Presiding Officer shall annul the outcome of the election in any polling station when the number of votes cast at an election exceeds the number of accredited voters in that polling unit Section 51(2). The term " number of accredited voters " denotes the entire number of registered voters who will be allowed to cast ballots on election day Section 153. According to the previous Act, the presiding officer had to annul the election results in any polling station when the number of votes cast at the polls exceeded the number of registered voters in that polling unit Section 53(2).
6. The review authority of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC): Within seven days of the decision, and in cases where the declaration was not made voluntarily or in violation of the law or election rules, the INEC has the authority to question the returning officer's final ruling regarding unfilled ballots, denied ballots, declarations of candidate scores, and the revert of a candidate Section 65(1). The decision of the returning officer was only open to scrutiny by an election tribunal or court under the provisions of the previous Act Section 68(1).
7. Technological developments in the election process: The new Act permits the use of electronic devices, including smart card readers, electronic voting machines, and other modern gadgets, in both the voter registration procedure and the general election administration Section 47(2). The new Act also allows for electronic transmission of election results in conformity with the Commission-established protocol Section 50(2).

#### **An Evaluation of leadership selection process in Nigeria -1960 till date.**

Evaluating Nigeria's selection process from 1960 to the present requires an in-depth analysis of various factors and criteria. The

selection process in Nigeria refers to the mechanisms through which political leaders, government officials, and other influential individuals are chosen for key positions in government, public institutions, and other sectors of society. To measure and evaluate this process, there is a need critically investigate Nigeria's leadership selection process in conformity to the electoral act.

According to Durotoye (2014: 27), It has been noted that the level of general election preparedness in Nigeria has not been promising, and this has been evident in electoral frauds which include the illegal printing of voter identification cards, illegal possession of ballot boxes, stuffing of ballot boxes, falsifying election results, illegal thumbprinting on ballots, infant voting, compiling fictitious names on voter lists, compiling separate voter lists illegally, illegal printing of forms used to collect and declare election results, and consciously withholding election materials from certain areas, as opposed the Electoral Act of 2022 as amended.

Osinakachukwu and Jawan (2011:128), stated that "Election riggings in Nigeria were apparent in the general elections of 1964–1965, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, and 2007." Which has undermined democratic institutions in Nigeria, and this type of election rigging comes in the form of inducement of voters by cash or by kind, over voting etc., as stated under Electoral Act of 2022, Section 51(2) as amended.

The party primaries that took place in the run-up to the 2019 general election created a barrier to the election itself. Anarchy, murder, fraud, money politics, buying votes, coercion, godfatherism, and violations of intraparty democracy marked the party primaries in the two main rival parties, the APC and PDP, as well as in several minor parties. Court cases, widespread defections, pro actions, a lack of preparedness, and the inability of the electorates or party members to nominate their favorite candidates were all consequences of the party primaries (Sule, 2019).

As stipulated by the Electoral Act of 2010 and Sections 225 and 226 of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution as amended, that every political party must post an accounting of its assets and liabilities at the times and in the ways specified by the Independent National Electoral Commission, the campaign process was also plagued by

extravagant spending of funds and other violations of the rules and guidelines. Politicians still utilize regional politics to further their ambitions for power, and they have also made derogatory and harsh words, demonstrated the politics of a strictly competitive game, incited their adherents to commit crisis against their rivals, and exploited religion to sway their supporters (Sule, Amadu and Sambo, 2020). For many years, corruption has been institutionalized and made legal in Nigerian society. Electoral corruption includes a variety of irregularities and misdeeds, such as buying votes, purchasing members in party primaries, bribing election authorities and safety services, violating the electoral procedure, and more (Sule, Sani and Mat, 2018). In the just concluded 2023 general election, INEC violated the Electoral Act of section 64(4) and section 65 of the Electoral Act 2022 as amended, the act required that the results of an election be sent to INEC Election Result Viewing Portal (IREV) without fail after the polls closed. Additionally, an electoral officer is forbidden from recording the results of an election without first confirming that they have been forwarded to the IREV, none of these was done or met, leading to an uproar from the public (Hassan, 2023).

### **The impact of Leadership selection on Nation Development in Nigeria**

The key to achieving national development has been lacking in effective leadership selection. The problem of leadership selection at all levels of government in the nation is crucial to resolving the current national situation and is essential for both growth and poor governance processes (Attahiru, 2022). The electoral misconducts as observed in previous discussion in this paper, Nigeria's general election has resulted to series of issues on national development. The impact of leadership selection on national development in Nigeria are thereby as follows:

- I. Insecurity has remained one of the major problems in Nigeria, despite promises made by the successive democratic government. The armed bandits, of which some state actors have treated to state banquets and camera calls, have captured over the whole nation, looting all in its route and costing lives. In the northeast of the country, Boko Haram's, and its Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) counterpart's rampages have proceeded for more than ten years. In 2014, Boko Haram killed over 6,600 individuals

(Buchanan, 2015). The organization has conducted large kidnappings, like the kidnapping of 276 schoolchildren in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria, in April 2014, and massacres, including the murder by fire of fifty-nine schoolboys in February 2014 (Buchanan, 2015). This has resulted in at least 250,000 of the 2.3 million people who have been displaced by the violence since May 2013 have fled from Nigeria to Cameroon, Chad, or Niger, causing them to leaving their jobs and businesses, leading to a drop in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Buchanan, 2015). Furthermore, security forces' abuse of human rights and corruption have made it difficult to quell the uprising in every way, Fulani herdsmen and bandits have been waging a deliberate genocide against the people of Southern Kaduna and the Berom of Plateau State. The directionless state is silent in the middle of these events. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2022, Deborah Yakubu was assassinated in horrific ways by some Islamic religion fanatics for declaring her beliefs in connection to her educational prowess, clearly undermining the secularity of the state, right to life, and liberty of expression guaranteed by the current Nigerian constitution ("Deborah Yakubu", 2022).

- II. The social-economic imbalance in the country is made worse such as unnecessary closure of universities that lasted from 14<sup>th</sup> February to 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022 because of the political elite's and the state's minders' inaction. Falling educational standards for both students and teachers because of the nation's inadequate education funding. Nigerian graduates are finding it harder to get employment and may quickly forfeit the strategic advantage that the nation's liberal elite goods were renowned for a few years ago (Imhonopi and Ugochukwu, 2013).
- III. The nation has all imaginable economic wrongdoings on display, including the nation's naira, buildup without correlating manufacturing, debt slavery, privileged extravagant lifestyle despite rampant poverty, ongoing petroleum product imports, and domestic efforts to refine petroleum goods being sabotaged. This is a public disgrace, and the hex should be overcome for the benefit of those in power, who have an informed ego. Nigerians observe an elite walk that accepts the circumstance as usual rather than the variety of items that come with petroleum that should

stabilize the nation's energy condition and increase national productive forces. Capital flight—the continual theft of money by governmental actors and their allies—takes place amid these economic difficulties.

- IV. Despite several promises from the government that the situation would soon end, fuel shortages intensified across Nigeria. The fact that the same commodity, which is being subsidized and is intended to be sold at a pump price of N165 per liter, is instead being bought for over N300 and in some cases N650 per liter all over the country, raises concerns. Since the introduction of the fuel subsidy scheme in 1973 as a measure to reduce the touchdown cost of petroleum products due to refinery turnaround repair, subsidy has taken a horrifying turn and grown into a significant drain on the country's finances. The enormous amount of money spent under the pretext of a subsidy system is utilized to fund waste, fraud, and extravagance. These funds might have been wisely employed in other climates for more beneficial initiatives that will immediately improve the lives of locals, most notably the construction of infrastructural development (Agbakwuru, 2023).
- V. A decaying health system that only offers medical and health advice but directs significant health issues to developed health systems in other nations, causing capital flight and enhancing those nations' health sectors. It is unfortunate that even the late President Shehu Musa Yar'adua lacked faith in the Nigerian healthcare system that his class-based ruling elite had established. Today, many government employees flee the country for the best medical care at the first sign of illness, putting most of the populace at the whims of the country's underfunded and underequipped health system (Imhonopi and Ugochukwu, 2013).
- VI. Over 90% of Nigerians are locked in a vicious cycle of poverty, which is only becoming worse and worse, and they are wondering how to get out of their miserable predicament (Imhonopi and Ugochukwu, 2013). According to predictions made by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), the nation's jobless rate will reach 37% in 2023. The organization predicted that the country's poverty rate would increase to 45% in its 2023 Macroeconomic Outlook report, Nigeria in Transition: Recipes for Shared Prosperity.

According to the report, the nation's projected 3.2% population growth will result in a decrease in real per capita income because of weak performance in the sectors that are job-elastic and low labor absorption in sectors that will drive growth (Izuaka, 2023).

- VII. In Nigeria, corruption is a persistent problem. According to estimates from 2012, Nigeria has wasted more than \$400 billion to corruption since becoming independent (Bankole, 2015). Election vote-rigging by political parties is pervasive, and corruption in government is endemic. Many government workers in 2018 made more than \$1 million in yearly salaries. The Nigerian administration is rife with corruption at every level. It is believed that corruption within the state apparatus costs the nation billions of dollars annually, ranging from significant contract fraud at the top to minor bribery, money laundering schemes, embezzlement, and taking salaries from false employees (Campbell and Matthew, 2018). In October 2020, End SARS protestors claimed that Nigerian police officers, despite working for what has long been seen as Nigeria's most corrupt institution, were no longer paid adequately. In addition to denouncing police brutality, their list of five demands included an increase in police salaries (Enweremadu, 2019). A clear case of corruption by a person in power would be Ahmed Idris, the Accountant General of Nigeria, who was detained in May 2022 on charges of money laundering and misappropriating state funds (Sanni, 2022).

In summary, it is impossible to overestimate the influence of leadership choice on Nigerian national progress. It affects how policies are made, the extent of corruption, global relations, security, and stability. Sustainable development can be aided by meritocratic, ethical, and inclusive leadership selection procedures; ineffective procedures can stall progress and prolong socioeconomic problems. Therefore, maintaining a transparent, equitable, and responsible system for choosing leaders is essential for Nigeria's long-term development goals.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

It is obvious and clear that leadership selection process has been a bane in achieving the required development in the country. There is no doubt that the problem of underdevelopment is rested on the nature of leadership selection in Nigeria, as most times, it is

observed that leadership selection is based on the highest bidder, influence and not on merit. It is based on this, this paper recommends:

- a. The electoral act in the conduct of election should be adhered to.
- b. There should be a legal framework to deal with all forms of election malpractice and fraud which has been characterized with Nigeria's selection process.
- c. Unemployment and poverty must be addressed as it was observed that most unemployed youths are usually vulnerable to political thugs and election inducement.
- d. The need for electoral reform that would accommodate independent candidate without political party. In the case of this, people can come and contest for election without having a godfather or much money.
- e. And lastly, to prevent future incidents and lessen the use of funds in Nigerian politics, to entice, and influence voter, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) or other related agencies must be given the authority to include its responsibilities in the investigation of bribery and corruption involving parties, lawmakers, and the electorate.

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### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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