

CURBING POLITICAL INSTABILITY THROUGH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mary Ogayi Otoja PhD

Department Of Curriculum Studies, College Of Education, Oju Benue State

Phone Number: 08133090878 Email: otojamary67@gmail.com

Abstract

Political instability prevails in Nigeria mostly because of poor leadership style. Most of Nigerian leaders are deficient in integrity, patriotism and morally bankrupt. The activities of these leaders are based on personnel and tribal interests. They cause confusion in order to achieve their selfish aims resulting in political instability which is the order of the day. This paper focused on the roles of Guidance and Counselling in curbing political instability in Nigeria for National development. Key concepts in the paper were clarified. Factors responsible for political instability in Nigeria like socio-economic factors, corruption, bad governance, ethnic and religious rivalry, poverty, unemployment among others were examined. The paper also looked at the various effects of political instability on the development of the nation. It was recommended among others that Nigeria should not see politics as a business to enrich themselves but as a call to serve. Resources should be distributed fairly according to the geo-political zones. Political leaders should not divert government money to personal accounts while generality of the masses are languishing in abject poverty and unemployment. Conclusion was drawn that the leaders at both the National. State and Local levels should be models to the citizens to promote stability in the politics and the nation at large.

Introduction

Nigeria has witnessed a lot of problems as a result of political instability, crimes and crises. These have drawn the attention of various education stakeholders to initiate ways and means of establishing political stability, peace and national peace in the country. It is no more news that people are angry about the situation of political instability, conflict, insecurity and underdevelopment in Nigeria. The current political and national crises, violence and protest Nigeria has been facing since 2003 till date which includes the issue of Boko Haram insurgency, Niger Delta Militancy, Armed Robbery, Odua people congress, xenophobic strife, corruption, ethnicity, tribal conflicts, negative political electoral tendencies and many others serves as hindrance to national security, unity, peace and national development in Nigeria (Anagbogu 2011).

Globally, including Nigeria, youths are involved in perpetrating crimes and executing crises in the society. Such crises includes political wars and crises, social crimes like kidnapping, theft, murder, conflicts, religious rivalries and many more which poses a great threat to peace, conflict resolutions, economic progress, National development and security. Political instability has been an issue even before the colonial era. Since the post-independence period, Nigeria has however witnessed series of transitions from Parliamentary democracy, military regimes and civil war to presidential democracy, each of these phases has had its own ups and downs in terms of the stability of political system. Mash, (2009) observed that, during

the colonial era, Nigerian politics have unanimously agreed on the struggle for independence and had failed to achieve the political development and reformation expected of it, considering the riches in resources and population. Political stability is a phrase with high esteemed value which can affect the survival of modernization and development. It is worthy of note that political stability is an unavoidable necessity for Nigeria's development and this requires Counselling principles to curb the problems of political instability in Nigeria. Hence, Guidance and Counselling as introduced in education should help in building consciousness in the minds of individuals to prepare them towards taking action for the peace and development of Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Guidance

Guidance is a broad concept in education designed to assist an individual to know his abilities, interest and personality traits, to develop them in order to achieve a state of complete life. It is a process of assisting an individual to understand himself and his environment Akume, Igbo and Tor-Anyiin (2008) looked at Guidance as an assistance made available by a professionally qualified and adequately trained men and women to an individual of any age to help him/her manage his/her own decisions and carry his own burden. Guidance is that part of the total educational programme that helps to provide the opportunities and specialized staff services by which individual can develop to the fullest of his/her abilities and capacities in terms of democratic ideal. According to Chauha (2009), guidance is a systematically organized phase of educational process which helps a youth grow in power to give point and direction to his life so he may be able to gain richer personnel experiences in making his unique contribution to the society.

Counselling

Counselling is a helping relationship aimed at assisting individuals to cope with his life situations. It is a relationship of trust in which the counsellor who is capable of being regarded as a special kind of teacher assists an individual to evaluate himself and his opportunities, make a feasible choice in the light of his unique characteristics and opportunities, accept responsibility for his choice and initiate a choice of action that is consonant with his choice. Counselling according to Otoja (2020) is a process by which a person is helped by a professional counsellor to voluntarily change his behavior clarify his attitude, ideas and goals so that his problems can be solved. Counselling is a face- to- face professional relationship between the counsellor and the client. In which the counsellor uses professional skills to positively influence the perception, thinking, feelings and actions of the client. Counselling can therefore be used to curb political instability for National Development.

The most accurate definition of counselling according to Osamwonyi (2016) could be what the counsellors actually do as follows.

- Having a personnel commitment to help client
- Being given a certain degree of authority and thus inspiring faith and hope in clients
- Acting as a mediator between suffering clients and the larger society.
- Helping clients release emotions, rethink problems and restore, morale simply by listening in an empathetic manner.

- Creating a framework for change by providing exploration schemes that help clients understand the conflicts and pains.
- Being actively involved in the process of change usually over a number of reasons.

Counselling is an interaction between trained personnel and troubled person for the purpose of helping the client to resolve his problems. To this end everybody needs Counselling to work towards National Political stability.

Political Stability

Political stability is paramount for the survival. Modernization and development of any nation. A political system is stable if structural changes within the system can be seen to proceed from the rules governing organizational processes in the society. Agbor (2023) stated that, political stability refers to the durability and integrity of a current government regime determined based on the amount of violence and terrorism expressed in the nation and by citizens associated with the state. For a stable political system to sustain itself relies on how leaders respond to crises, people must be satisfied with how their leaders handle problems and the solutions they offered. Political stability requires that the public interacts freely and openly with legislators on a regular basis. Giving access to individuals to speak out their mind on state of a nation promotes the stability of a nation.

Political stability signifies a state of tranquility. It is a situation characterized by the preservation of an intact and smoothly functioning government or political system, avoiding significant disruptions or changes over an extended duration political stability indicates a state of tranquility, organization and sustained continuity within the political domain. Nations with political stability experience a decreased. Probability of encountering major political upheavals, civil unrest, or sufficient changes in leadership.

Wikipedia (2023) observed that, political stability is essential for a nation's development, economic growth and social Unity. It enables long-term planning, investment and prosperity as business and citizens can rely on consistent governance and policies, Political system is stabled when it survives through crisis without internal warfare.

Political Instability

Political instability means unsustainable and unstable coalition governments formed by different political parties with widely divergent ideologies to grab power and exploit people for their vested interests. A nation that is constantly having political coups or revolutions or civil wars would be said to have very low political stability since there would be very low levels of respect for the existing political order, constitution and governmental institutions by key political players like politicians, judges and army officers. Mumuni & Abidogun (2023) viewed political instability as a condition in which institutional or structural patterns of authorities break down and the expected compliances of political authorities is replaced by violence, intended to change the personnel, policies or sovereignty of the political instability hastened the collapse of Nigeria state barely five years after political independence. Political instability can be seen as a phenomenon caused by the state's coups and some other associate elements with the sole purpose of delaying the progress of reform and thus affect performance of the economy. It is the degree of propensity for a change of government in a country, which

includes several types of insurrections, revolutions and military coups. Indices of political instability includes political assassinations, number of people killed in clashes between masses of people, the number of successful coups, anti- government demonstrations and clashes in general and more recently terrorist activities that gradually destroy government stability (Mumuni & Abidogu 2023).

National Development

National development could be referred to as the process of development that a nation experiences or undergoes. National development encompasses Social and political development. Abubaker and Haruna (2017) viewed national development as the plan, usually initiated by the government for economic, social and political development of a nation. National Development refers to those positive and meaningful changes in the spheres of social, economic political educational and cultural aspects and enhance better quality of life for the overall benefit of the people in the country. National development is about meeting and satisfying basic human needs and aspirations, protecting people's freedom and rights, minimizing risks to their survival, enhancing human security and empowering citizens to help them maximize their potentials.

Factors responsible for political instability in Nigeria

There are many factors responsible for political instability in Nigeria some of which are listed by Adeshina (2015) in Mumuni & Abidogun (2023)

1. Socio-Economic factor: This is one of the prominent reasons contributing to political instability in Nigeria. Socio- economic inequality refers to the case where there is significant gap between the rich and the poor. Economic disparities often result in unequal access to resources, education and opportunities which can lead to injustice and frustration. Such gap can lead to social unrest and dissatisfaction among the marginalized sections of the society. This can fuel social movements, protests and violent conflicts destabilizing the political landscape.

2. Corruption: This refers to the dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery. It is the illegitimate use of power to benefit a private interest (Moris 1991 in Otoja 2019). It is the giving of bribe to an official so that the truth will not be told. Corruption is the misuse of public authority for personal gains. It involves the embezzlement of public fund for personal use and any act which is considered to be a criminal act according to the law of a particular society. When government officials engage in corrupt practices such as embezzlement, bribery or nepotism, it betrays public trust in the political system. Corruption despise the rule of law, distorts economic development and perpetuates social inequalities. Political perpetrators pretend as if they are not aware of what is being said and this can result in political instability in the country. Corruption is rampant and a threat to country's development and democratization process. It is one root cause of political instability in Nigeria.

3. Bad Governance: Good governance is required by the public for the growth and development of the nation. Unfortunately in Nigeria bad governance is more common than good governance. Resulting in disjointed development. Characteristics of bad governance according to Otoja (2019) are.

- Failure to properly distinguish between what is public and what is private leading to private appropriation of public resources.
 - Excessive rules, regulations licensing requirement and others which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking.
 - Priorities that are inconsistent with development resulting in misallocation of national resources and so on
- Bad governance makes citizens to lose faith in the government's ability to address their concern and provide basic services this lead to protests, unrest and demands for change and end to bad governance.

4. Ethnic and Religious Rivalry

Ethnicity is a social phenomenon that is manifested in interactions among individuals of different ethnic group within a political system where language and culture are the most prominent attributes. The formation of dialects within language was one of the ways in which ethnicity both small-scale and large-scale- became fixed in Nigeria.

Members of the unique groups acquire their status by ascription, share common history, culture and tradition, language and locate within an area. Ethnic identity and religion are the two major social binding forces amongst a people, with jealousy protect; respect and preserve cultural, political and religious heritage for posterity.

According to Nwagwo (2018) sources of inter-ethnic conflicts and religious crises is based on religious intolerance, ethnic chauvinism and lopsided distribution of societal benefits, cultural and political domination or exclusionism. The tribal hostilities are generated by dynamical reigns of the military or suppressive nature of monarchical regimes or repressive Oligarchy to avert confrontations. When different ethnic or religious groups have conflicting interests or historical grievances, it can lead to social tensions and conflicts. Civil wars or disintegration can emanate from political instability.

5. Hindrance to political involvement and representation: This factor can result in political instability. The issue of power sharing among the six geopolitical. Zones of the country is posing danger in the nation's politics when certain groups such as minorities, women or marginalized communities are excluded from the political decision making process it can result in disenfranchisement. The result of this could be social unrest and demands for greater political participation and representation. To maintain political stability, there should be equal participation in political systems.

6. Election Rigging in Nigeria: This is another cause of political instability in Nigeria. During elections, the contestants hire thugs who go round the election polling stations to high jack the ballot boxes and papers, they can use their hands to vote for their candidates. Electoral rigging is also known as electoral malpractice or fraud where the alteration or change of vote count in an election. It is the process by which the rules and regulations that govern the conduct of elections are manipulated to favour specific interests. Political unrest and violence and all forms of electoral malpractice are steps to political instability in Nigeria.

Rigging of elections in Nigeria is a complex mix and happens in diverse ways starting from nomination of party flag bearers, political thugs have a field day with the security agents so are unable to arrest the many brazen election malpractices.

7. Unemployment: Job situation, youth unemployment and the recent financial and economic crisis has been a major concern for this nation. This unemployment is exacerbated by the additional challenges of youth population which is considerably higher than other regions, weak national labour markets and high levels of poverty, youth unemployment and underemployment are threat to political stability, social stability and economic advancement. Unemployment is seen as people who are without job, waiting for job, seeking for work and are available for work, yet cannot find any (Otoja 2020). It is the absence of work and a period when a person is not engaged in any productive activity. Youth unemployment is associated with political violence and armed conflict in developing countries. Instability as a result of high rates of youth unemployment does not aim to change the political regime but can lead to anti-government demonstrations, politicians take advantage of the unemployed youths by making them thugs to cause unrest in the society, vandalizing properties, destroying lives just to show grievance over a lost of election. Thus unemployed youth is a liability to himself, family and nation at large. Therefore to maintain political stability, the youth should be attended to by being gainfully employed.

8. Poverty: Poverty signifies inequality and social injustice and this traumatizes the poor. Majority of the people in Nigeria are in abject poverty, living below poverty lane. This includes army of youth in urban centres in Nigeria who struggle out for a living by hawking, chewing sticks, bottled water, handkerchiefs and the profit margin on such goods are so small that they can hardly live above poverty line. This kind of situation can lead to loss of livelihood, inequality, youth restiveness and various forms of protests. When people struggle to meet their basic needs and experience economic hardships, they may become more susceptible to radical ideologies, social unrest and political upheaval (Edwards 2024).

10. External forces: A country's political system can be destabilize by external powers via geopolitical rivalries, foreign powers, economic exploitations etc. Through manipulation of external powers of the local politics, they can fuel internal conflicts weaken institutions and hinders the political stability of the nation.

11. Inconsistency of our electoral system: Is another factor that has caused political instability in Nigeria. A successful voting system will be abandoned for a more porous and manipulation prone system of voting at the voters discretion which permits multiple votes by a voter.

12. Power sharing among the geo-political zone of the country: Is another powerful factor of political instability. This is where a particular geo-political zone will continue to dominate and rule the country over and over and will not augur well for the political stability of the country.

13. The way and manner election candidates are selected is another huge factor. There are established principles by some political parties on how their primaries could be conducted and selection of members for election. Rather than proper selection of qualified candidates, candidates are imposed on the party members as long as such candidates could spend enough money or have influence on the people.

The aggrieved candidates would then engage in activities that will not be favourable to the political system thus resulting in an unstable situations.

14. Military in politics and development could be another strong factor. Military in politics aimed at unseating civilian governments and replacing them with ruling councils drawn

from the army. Since 1960, successive military regimes subdue the rule of law facilitated the wanton looting of public treasury. Corruption become the document guiding the principle for running the affairs of the nation. This period of military administration witness a total destruction of every good thing in Nigeria including political stability, resources and potential for national development.

Effects of political instability on National Development

Due to political instability, the focus of leadership parochial with the over-riding considerations for personal survival rather than National Development. For instance, money that would have been used to procure weapons to fight the insurgency were shared among the political stooges of the previous administrations. The failure of the political class to ensure good governance in the country has led to frequent military involvement in the politics of the country since January 15, 1966 (Raj, & Wahab 2016). Instead of the armed forces to defend the territorial integrity of the nation they dabbled into the country's politics where they fail to maintain peace and tranquility. Power struggle between political class and military hierarchy introduces instability in the country's political structure and subsequently brings down the economy and leadership problems. Other effects of political instability on the nation is that, there is insufficient use of natural and human resources that are endowed in the nation. This has resulted in glued poverty, hunger and other problems in the country. Again, political instability leads to loss of lives. Violent crises in Nigeria have resulted in a number of casualties. The current protest in August 2024 led to destruction of lives and properties worth millions of naira.

Furthermore, political instability can lead to discouragement of foreign investment growth in the country. Frequent violence and conflicts in the country have paralyzed foreign investment in flow and growth. The environment with relative peace security and stability will attract foreigners to the country while insecurity and political instability will discourage foreign investors from investing in the country. Another effect is that of the religious sectional and political conflicts in the country has led to the influx of refugees and displaced people. Inhabitants of the war affected zones have to flee to either the neighboring states or communities or neighboring countries as refugees. The refugees and internally displaced persons constitute problems and disorderliness in the society. The consistent political instability in the country has weakened the confidence of the masses on government and governance. It has weakened the credibility and integrity of Nigerian government and her citizenry among the international communities, it has scared tourists. It has provided ways and means for political criminals and corrupt individuals to embezzle government fund for selfish gain. Isife (2020) admitted that the flourishing Nigerian tourist sites like Obuda Cattle ranch, Yankari Game Reserve, Oguta Lake, Ikegosi Springs, Gurara falls, Mambilla Plateau Presidential Hotels, Recreation parks and many others have become history due to constant political instability in Nigeria.

Political instability have made those in government unable to pay full attention to the infrastructures and sectors like roads, basic amenities, health system, education and industries. This has resulted in low life expectancy and massive migration of Nigerians to other countries. Political instability has paved way for the menace of armed robbers, bandits, kidnappers, herdsmen and terrorists to remain adequately unabated.

Ways of curbing Political Instability in Nigeria through Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and Counselling is seen as research on humanities and social sciences seen as a systematic and organized educational helping service professionally given by as professionally trained Counsellor or therapists to a learner of any age within or outside the school walls at appropriate level. The reason is to help an individual understand himself, situation and environment, discover interests, potentialities and opportunities in life and learn how best to effectively utilize his assets as well as minimize his weakness, to live a maximum productive life (Mumuni & Abidogun 2023) Guidance and Counselling is very crucial in the stabilization of the national politics for national development. The following are some of the ways to curb political instability through Guidance and Counselling.

Guidance Counsellors can help politicians who are psychologically depressed: With establishment of Counselling centres at strategic location in legislature residence can aid the politicians in having access to professional counsellors where they can get assistance.

- Politicians can make rash statements and decisions that can steer up protests and cause political instability. Guidance Counsellors can help and guide the politicians in their decision making. Through interactions with them,
- With the knowledge of principles of Guidance and Counselling, Counsellors can use skills and techniques acquired to can assist politicians in curbing the problem of political instability in Nigeria.
- All the individuals that steer up protests, violence restiveness and political instability are all family members from different families including the politicians. To curb political instability in the nation, Guidance Counsellors should organized family Counselling to have a talk with these individual at the family level. With the help of the Counsellors, the politicians' lives could be shaped. They can be encouraged to desist from such activities that are frowned at by the society such as embezzlement, Kidnapping, arm robbery, and so on.
- The Guidance Counsellor can use cognitive restructuring behavior modification skills to curb political instability in Nigeria. Cognitive restructuring refers to the mental restructuring of an individual. Group counselling can be organized by the counsellor. Where, politicians can be advised to guide against godfatherism in the politics. Godfathers dictates what the sponsored politician should do or should not do to the detriment of the voters who voted them into powers.
- Guidance counsellors in collaboration with the National Orientation, Agency should organize and give massive orientation exercise for all Nigerians through various enlightenment programmes. This is to intimate the public on the need to shun all forms of political instability. People should lean to treat corrupt political leaders as thieves, instead of reverencing them and according them chieftaincy titles and raising their egos.
- Guidance Counsellors can be used to sanitize the public and politicians against the quest for second tenure. Second tenure system in Nigeria has been adopted by presidents, governors, chairpersons and so on for them to be re-elected into the seat. During Counselling, the Counsellor can discourage the politicians from embezzling public funds, rigging of election and use of human being for ritual to gain a position.

Conclusion

Political instability is caused by a variety of factors. Political instability is a deviation from the regularity of political exchange streams. It is usually caused by the common man not having his expectations met. The place of Guidance and Counselling in human development can never be overemphasized. There is need to redesign the Guidance and Counselling curriculum in relation to the economic, social, political and cultural diversities in the country and fast track the implementation to foster national ideology and patriotism among youth which is an instrument of national development and unity. Political leadership requires sound educational training, administrative skills, competence and managerial ability which can be acquired from systematic Guidance and Counselling programmes through training in seminars, workshop and conference. Nigeria need to evolve a sound political arrangement that will aid in the achievement of political stability, religious tolerance and peace through rational power sharing in the politics. By understanding and addressing the root causes of political instability such as economic crises, lack of sense of belonging among ethnic groups and citizens, corruption, unequal distribution of income, bad economy, bad government and so on, societal can work towards building a stable political future and nation building/ development.

Recommendations

Political instability has become so pronounced in Nigerian polity and has continued to eat deep into Nigerian political space. This stems from different political understandings, interpretations and applications by different people in government. To attain political stability for the development of the nation, the following recommendations are made.

- i. Government should aim at addressing the problems of the masses by giving youth gainful employment skill acquisition programmes should be established by the government to make youths to be self-employed so they can contribute to the stability of and development of the nation.
- ii. The national resources and values should be distributed equally and government should ensure that there should be no marginalization over any geo-political zone in the country.
- iii. Salaries and benefits of politician or political office holders should be reduced to avoid competition over political posts that will lead to instability in the nation imagine a political leaders or low maker taking home. Two hundred and twenty- one thousand, six hundred naira annually (N221,16,000) annually as income. Nigerians should not see politics as a business to enrich themselves but as a call to serve.
- iv. The politicians should endeavor to maintain political stability in Nigeria. They should avoid statements that can generate religious and ethnic protest that could lead to protests.
- v. Leaders at both national, state, and local levels should be models to the citizens to promote peace and stability in politics for national building.
- vi. Government should ensure that financial leakages in ministries, departments and agencies are blocked by making sure that political office holders are more accountable and transparent in the discharge of their duties to avoid embezzlement of public funds.
- vii. Specialized courts should be set up by the government to handle corruption cases to avoid unnecessary delays in the conventional courts.

- viii. There should be constant and continues check on the politicians to make sure there is positive change towards the stability of the country's politics to maintain peace for national development.
- ix. There should be straining of more counsellors who should be able to impact on the youth the values that may be required for political stability and national development.

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