

LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP AS KEY FACTORS IN THE NIGERIA POLITICAL CRISES: THE ISLAMIC MODEL

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Abstract

The Nigeria state has not find it so good in its political history since independence fifty-five years ago. While the political scene has been characterized with military incursion into politics, the democratic dispensation is bedeviled with its peculiar problems majorly on corruption, civil unrest, terrorism and so on. The root cause of all these among others could be traced to leadership and followership problems. This paper, therefore, attempts to diagnose the causes of the Nigerian political crises within these factors and aims to find solutions to them using the Islamic paradigm. The paper recommends that leaders and followers should have faith and fear of God, and be ready to emulate the leaders and followers of the early days of Islam in the interest of the nation.

Keywords: Leadership, Followership, Political Crises, Nigeria, Terrorism

Introduction

The Nigerian state at one time or the other has produced leaders; some have performed creditably well while some have performed below expectation. Their success or failure is, no doubt, a contributory factor to either the success or failure

of the Nigerian state. So are the followers, whom they ruled, have their own share in the success or failure of the Nigerian state. Like all cultures, the Nigerian culture places parameters around the concept of leadership. That is, leadership in Nigeria has unique properties that are not found in any other culture.

Nigeria is one of the states that owe their existence to the imperialistic activities of Britain, which by virtue of her superior technology and economy subjugated people from diverse nationalities and organized them to construct Nigeria in 1914 with the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates and the colony of Lagos. Nigeria is the most populated country on the African continent with over 140 million in population (NPC, 2006). It is a heterogeneous country with diversity of cultures and tribes of about 250 ethnic nationalities with the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo as the dominant tribes. Its rich and fertile soil speaks of its economic viability, wealth and prosperity.

Prior to the coming of British colonialists, there existed different traditional administrative systems that provided leadership in different parts of Nigeria like the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo and other minority's traditional administrative systems. By the time Nigeria got her independence from Britain in 1960, its artificial origin coupled with other factors, had bequeathed its number of fundamental problems, one of which is the challenge of integrating the various entities and strange bed fellows that were lumped together by the colonialists. To unite and integrate these different ethnic groups, there is a need to have a strong, intelligent, honest, charismatic and transformational leadership, amidst hitherto diverse followers.

It is against this background that this paper sets out to examine leadership and followership as key factors in the Nigeria political crises with a view to finding a practicable solution using the Islamic paradigm.

Conceptual Definition of Term

- i. **Leadership** - According to Fasan (2004), leadership is a process of influencing the behaviours of others in an organisations by a leader in an attempt to get the best out of them. Ikunlayo (2004), describes leadership as a process taking the lead while others are made to follow by examples. Monday (2000); Gordon (2001); Ogunbiyi (2002) Sharplin (2002), are all of the opinion that leadership is a process of assuming the number one position in a given organisation and thereby using the position to control, direct and influence their subordinates in such organisation for the purpose of transforming the organisation better than it was before the appointment of such leader
- ii. **Leader** - According to Awoyinfa (2011:3), a leader is an individual who takes the lead in any organisation a number one citizen who tends to influence the behaviours of others in such organisation either positively or negatively as the case may be. Furthermore, Awoyinfa (2011:3) quoted M.K.O Abiola to have described a leader as the head of a moving train whose potency depends on how effectively it can move the long attracted coaches to the desired destination or rather as the driver of a big lorry, a captain of a big ship and a pilot of a big aircraft who must not toy with the lives of his or her passengers on board. Awosika (2002), sited in Awoyinfa (2011:3), describes a leader as the engine room of a moving vehicle upon which other parts of the vehicle depend for effective functioning on the road. Above all, a leader could best be described as a pace setter, a director or lineage maker of an organisation upon whose shoulder rests the functionality and effectiveness of such an organisation.

- iii. **Efficient Leader** - Awoyinfa (2011) sees an efficient leader as one who can be assessed by the outcome of his/her performances. He went further to explain that an efficient leader is that leader who is smart, productive and hardworking who may not necessarily be effective.
- iv. **Effective Leader** - Blake (2003), Cartwright and Zander (2004/2005), all see an effective leader as a leader who is focused, dedicated, smart, prudent, hardworking and efficient. They believed that a leader may be efficient but not effective. Hence, the popular saying that: "effective leaders are born but efficient leaders are made". In any case, an effective leader is better than an efficient one because an effective leader combines both efficiency and effectiveness in his/her operations to stand out as a good leader while an efficient leader may be busy doing nothing.
- v. **Leadership in Islam** - In Islam, leadership is a form of guardianship, caring for the welfare of the people, doing what is best for them and guiding them on a correct course, with full conviction that he (the leader) will be called to account for that guardianship on the last day (Okenwa, 2009).
- vi. **Followership** - Followers according to Kellerman (2008:213), are subordinates who have less power, authority and influence than do their superiors, and who therefore usually, but not invariably, fall into line. Followership therefore is the act of adhering to a leader or probably a group of followers (<http://wiktionary.org>)

Leadership Theories

In many circles, there is continuous debate about whether leaders are born or developed. A review of the leadership literature reveals an evolving series of 'schools of thought' from "Great Man" and "Trait" theories to "Transformational leadership"

(see table 1 below). Whilst early theories tend to focus upon the characteristics and behaviours of successful leaders, later theories begin to consider the role of followers and the contextual nature of leadership.

Table 1: Leadership Theories from "Great Man" to "Transformational Leadership".

Great Man Theories	Based on the belief that leaders are exceptional people, born with innate qualities, destined to lead. The use of the term 'man' was intentional since, until later part of the twentieth century leadership was thought of as a concept which is primarily male, military and western. This led to the next school of Trait Theories.
Trait Theories	The list of traits or qualities associated with leadership exists in abundance and continues to be produced. They draw on virtually all the adjectives in the dictionary which describe some positives or virtuous human attribute, from ambition to zest for life.
Behaviourist Theories	These concentrate on what leaders actually do rather than on their qualities. Different patterns of behaviour are observed and categorized as leadership.

	This area has probably attracted most attention from practicing managers.
Situational Leadership	This approach sees leadership as specific to the situation in which it being exercised. For example, whilst some situations may require an autocratic style, others may need a more participative approach. It also proposes that there may be differences in required leadership styles at different in the same organisation.
Contingency	This is a refinement of the situational view point and focuses on identifying the situational variables which best predict the most appropriate or effective leadership style to fit the particular circumstances.
Transactional Theory	This approach emphasizes the importance of the relationship between leader and followers, focusing on the mutual benefits derived from a form of contract through which the leader delivers such things as rewards or

	recognition in return for the commitment or loyalty of the followers.
Transformational Theory	The central concept here is change and the role of leadership in envisioning and implementing the transformation of organizational performance.

Source: (Tabiu, 2014:137)

Each of the theories, according to Tabiu (2014:138), takes a rather individualistic perspective of the leader, although a school of thought gaining increasing recognition is that of a "dispersed" leadership. This approach, with its foundations in sociology, psychology and politics rather than management science, views leadership as a process that is diffuse throughout an organisation rather than lying solely with the formally designated "leaders. The emphasis thus shifts from developing 'Leaderful' organisations with a collective responsibility for leadership.

Although there was little consistency in the result of the various trait studies, however, some traits did appear more frequently than others, including technical skill, friendliness, and task- motivation, application to task, group task, charisma and intelligence. Of these, the most widely explored has tended to be "charisma".

Table 2 below main leadership traits and skills identified by Stogdill in 1974.

Table 2: List of some Leadership Traits and Skills.

Traits	Skills
Adaptable to situations	- Clever (intelligent)

- Alert to social environment	- Conceptually skilled
- Ambitious and achievement oriented	- Creative
- Assertive	- Diplomatic and tactful
- Cooperative	- Fluent in speaking
- Decisive	- Knowledgeable about group task
- Dependable	- Organised (Administrative ability)
- Dominant (desire to Influence others)	- Persuasive
Energetic (high activity level)	- Socially skilled
- Persistent	
- Self Confident - Tolerant of stress - Willing to assume responsibility	

Source: Leadership Skills and Traits (Stogdill, 1974).

Styles of Leadership

Leadership style, more than leadership traits, determines leader effectiveness. Style is related to one's model of organizational behaviour. The leader's style or manner of dealing with the organisation's members and communicating with them contributes to or detracts from the group's overall functioning. Lippitt and White (1939) identified three general approaches to these interactions: Authoritarian/Autocratic Leadership style, Democratic Leadership style, and Laissez-Faire Leadership style.

- (i) **Authoritarian/Autocratic** - An autocratic leader typically centralizes authority, dictates work methods, makes unilateral decisions and limits subordinate participation. This style of leadership decides what will be done and how. He or she relies on legitimate, coercive and reward power to influence others. Sometimes, these leaders are aggressive, parental and dictatorial in their dealings with the group. However, while these approaches often work well in crises situations, a constant use of this style can cause followers to be apathetic and unproductive when the leader's back is turned
- (ii) **Democratic** - Democratic leaders, on the other hand, share the decision making process. The decisions are made after discussions with members. Members tend to be more satisfied and less frustrated when they play a part in the group's functioning. Sometimes the designated leader will still make the final decision after consulting the group members, but they feel more validated if their ideas are considered; and they are usually more motivated to implement the decision.
- (iii) **Laissez-Faire** - This is a style of leadership where members work on their own and the leader keeps his participation to a minimum. Laissez-Faire leaders exert little or no influence on the group. In essence, the group is a

collection of equals. Depending on the definition of leader, some would argue that such a group does not have a leader. Since no one dominates the group, the members rely on each other for direction. This can work if the individuals are capable and goal driven; however, it can fail if the group is unmotivated or immature in the task.

Lewin, Lippitt and White hailed democratic leadership as the best of the three styles, but no one style is esteemed all of the time. Democratic leadership works well when non stressful, moderate conditions prevail, but autocratic leadership is more suitable during a crisis or high stress situation. Even the Laissez-Faire style can work well if the group is self-directed and motivated. The situational theorists would tackle the question of appropriate leadership style twenty years after the initial studies by Lewin, Lippitt and White.

Challenges of Leadership in Contemporary Nigeria

Virtually in all human endeavors, be it in the home, corporate, religious or political setting, leadership is the pivot. Every leader has his primary jurisdiction. For the family head, it is his family members and his immediate environment. For the politician, it is those who voted him into office and the community he leads leader, it is the shareholders of his corporate enterprise who had reposed their trust in him with their life savings. For the clergy, it is his parishioners that look up to him for moral and spiritual guidance. Wambutda (1991) asserts that:

Nigeria is certainly in desperate need of a good leadership, for the constant change in the leadership in our history clearly testifies that we are a people groping in the dark searching and yearning for a more reliable form of government -- government which is fair, just and caring enough to evoke spontaneous patriotism from the citizenry.

Ehusani (2002) writes:

... leadership in many today's communities in Nigeria is a pollution of leadership qualities... what we have as leadership is an adulteration of courage and valor and a shameful display of spineless acquiescence. What we have as leadership is an uncharitable display of material arrogance and a distasteful reminder of group exploitation.

In the same vein, Chinua Achebe (1983) rightly observed that the trouble with Nigeria is simply a failure of leadership.

The challenges of leadership in contemporary Nigeria are numerous, but for the purpose of this paper, corruption lack of leadership skills for effectiveness, emphasis on ethnic origin, weak emphasis on the rule of law, lack of accountability and transparency etc. to mentioned but a few are hereby identified to be the bane of Nigerian national development. No wonder the present administration of President Muhammed Buhari has decided to tackle head long the challenges associated with corruption, transparency, accountability, rule of law and leadership skills for effectiveness among other problematic areas surrounding Nigeria leadership problems.

Followership Models

Kelley (1988) distinguishes followers in terms of their behaviour and personality attributes and defines the different styles of followership by considering two different behavioural dimensions: one dimension measures the degree to which followers think independently and critically, and the other assesses the level of engagement, whether active or passive, in running the organisation. Based on these two dimensions, Kelley defines five basic styles of follower: the sheep, the yes people, the alienated, the pragmatics and the star followers. Each exhibits a different

degree of independent thinking and organizational engagement and differs in their motivations. The following is a basic assessment of each type of followership according to Kelley (1988).

- (i) The sheep are passive in their thinking and engagement and are motivated by their leader rather than themselves
- (ii) The yes people allow their leader to do most of the thinking and acting for them but are generally positive always on the leader's side.
- (iii) The alienated followers are predominantly negative but think more independently. They think for themselves but do not contribute to the positive direction of the organisation.
- (iv) The pragmatics exhibit a minimal level of independent thinking and engagement as they are more , exert energy and get involved when they see where the direction of the situation is headed. The pragma lack in demonstrating critical thinking but are motivated by maintaining the status quo.
- (v) Finally, the star followers think for themselves, have positive disposition and are actively engaged. They agree with and, as the case may be, challenge their leaders.

Dimensions of Attitudes and Behaviours of Followers

Chaleff's (2008) model also focuses on followership in the workplace. Like Kelley, Chaleff conceptualizes organisations can equip the everyday workers with the skills and mindsets required to be effective followers, and develop an even stronger frame work for followership development. Chaleff also names the power that followers exhibit different qualities and distinguishes the power of courage among others. His courageous followers model reveals five different dimensions of attitudes and behaviours:

- (i) The courage to Support the leader.
- (ii) The courage to assume responsibility for common purpose
- (iii) The courage to constructively challenge the leader's behaviours
- (iv) The courage to participate in any transformation needed.
- (v) The courage to take moral stand when warranted to prevent critical abuses.

Styles of Followership

From the above different dimensions of attitudes and behaviours, Chaleff (2008:72), differentiates four styles of followership based on the degree to which followers have the courage to support or the courage to challenge the leader. Like Kelley (1988), Chaleff divides these styles into four groups:

- (i) The resources style of followership exhibits low support and low challenge.
- (ii) (ii) The individualist style represents low support and high challenge. This follower will speak up but typically takes a position opposed to the majority.
- (iii) The implementer style demonstrates high support and low challenge.
- (iv) The partner style is characterized by high support and high challenge, assuming full actions and acting accordingly.

Chaleff (2008) and Kelley's (1988), models are very similar, each identifies the styles of followership by considering the levels of independent thinking and organisational engagement. Chaleff's emphasis on courage is similar to Kelley's perception that followers are essential in limiting toxic leaders, but Chaleff develops a stronger context for evolving and encouraging followers to be more effective. He stresses that the follower potential and purpose to "influence upward" (Chaleff, 2008:82) in order to transform the organisational culture.

The Roles of Followership in Societal Change

Societal change cannot occur without a change in the society's culture and a change in culture occurs through a change in leadership and governance (Doppelt, 2010). Followers can thus serve as an effective process in harnessing societal change, as effective followers impact the adaptive culture of a society through both challenging and supporting leaders. According to Bennis (2010), good followers "see the importance of speaking out" and leaders can trust good followers to tell the truth. Developing good followers is thus an effective practice in transforming societal culture.

In an adaptive culture, people are engaged in the purpose and vision of the society and the issues within the system are named, openly discussed and confronted. "If good followers have the courage to speak out and strengthen their enthusiastic and self-reliant participation in the societal goal (Kelley, 1988), then an adaptive culture is more likely enhanced and is inevitably a less likely place for "toxic leaders". Good followers challenge their leaders and organisations (Kelley, 2008), creating tension that can be effectively managed for successful change if organisations or society understand how to cultivate the courage required. Good followers also exhibit a sense of self-efficacy, a quality that commands the independent, critical thinking of Kelley's star followers (Kelley, 1988).

Adopting the Islamic Model for Effective Leadership and Followership in Nigeria

Islam perceives leadership as a trust based on integrity and justice. It often takes the form of an explicit contract or pledge between leaders and their followers that the former will do their best to guide, protect and treat the latter fairly and justly. Muslims base their behaviour upon the Qur'an and the eternal model of the Prophet

Muhammad (SAW). In reality, each person serves at one time or another as a leader, for according to the Prophet (SAW): "each of you is a guardian, and each of you will be asked about his/her subject" (Sahih Bukhari 3:733).

Muslims must appoint a leader while traveling, praying and engaging in other group activities. Thus, leadership is a process through which leaders guide their willing followers to reach certain objectives. At all times, leaders must remember that compulsion is not an option (Qur'an 2:256).

Muslim leaders must fulfill two roles: Servant leader and guardian leader. Leaders must serve their followers by seeking their welfare and guiding them towards good. The Prophet (SAW) emphasized the second major role: Leaders must protect their communities against tyranny and oppression, encourage God's consciousness (taqwa) and promote justice. Thus, he posited that: "A commander (of Muslims) is a shield for them" (Sahih Muslim, 4542). In both roles, leaders may use certain power bases to effective. Apparently, Islam recognizes the existence of power and also has rules for its use. Leaders must emphasize the five key parameters or Islamic leadership model: Justice, Trust, Righteousness, Struggle for self-improvement and keeping promises.

Islam stresses that the followers must comply with their leader's directive but not to the extent that they become passive bystanders. When caliph 'Umar (RA) suggested fixing mahr (bride gift) at the time of marriage a woman told him that this violated the Islamic principle. Umar (RA) immediately admitted his mistakes.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper, we wish to state categorically that the problem of the Nigerian state with regards to the topic of discussion is contained in the following words of Chinua Achebe:

The trouble is simple and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Achebe, 1983).

Added to that is the problem of followership which of course is a by-product of the contraction that has been forced on the nation right from the colonial period. The solution therefore is to adopt the Islamic options as discussed in this paper in the interest of the country.

Recommendations

First and foremost, we suggest a transforming or transformational leadership as well as caring or servant leadership styles for Nigeria. The theory of transforming or transformational leadership rests on a set of assumptions about the relationship between leaders and followers. In the same vein, like transformational leaders, servant leaders elevate the people, but there is much more as it involves the leader serving followers instead of serving leaders. Thus, every integrated leader is connected with his companions, not in the manner of master-slave relationship but in the true sense of leader-companion relationship.

Islamically, it is advisable that one should not seek authority and office, even though there is nothing wrong in such aspiration provided that one sincerely thinks that he is capable of making a meaningful contribution in the said post. To this end the Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said: "Do not ask to be appointed to an office, for if you are call to it without your asking: you will receive divine help in discharging its responsibilities".

A leader must understand the environment in which he and his organisation would function. For this purpose, a small, yet comprehensive exercise of the famous SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis can be a useful idea to start with.

Good leaders from the Islamic point of view are expected to be just, behave righteously, strive toward self-improvement and never break their words. They are to consult with others when necessary; bear adversity patiently and be humble. Following the Prophet's example, they must extend their activities to non-Muslims. In learning and appreciating multi-culturalism, they should be guided by a critical Qur'anic injunction (49:13) addressed to humanity and expressed as *lita aarafu* - to get to know one another.

If individuals, groups or organisations can recognize the followership concept as discussed in this paper a charge of the methods for cultivating good followers, then they can effectively manage the dance between leaders and followers to enact successful organizational change.

Lastly, the following quotation from Abu Nu'aym who quoted Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) is a good recommendation for effective followership which is what we recommend in this paper:

Whoever desires to follow a straight path should follow the path of those who passed away the companions of Muhammad (SAW). They are the best of his 'ummah, the purest in heart, the deepest in knowledge and the furthest from any false display of piety. They are community whom God chose for His Prophet's company and His religion's conveyance. Try to be like them in conduct and follow their way. They are the companions of Muhammad (SAW). I swear by God, the master of Ka'bah that they were on true guidance.

In terms of loyalty, obedience and trust, the companions were superb and the Prophet (SAW) really enjoyed their companies. It is this generation that we enjoin Nigerians to emulate for the progress and development of this nation.

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