

## GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENS' WELL-BEING

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*Abstract: This paper examined good governance as a panacea for the citizens' well-being. The well-being of the citizens is the essence of government. In other words, government exists to ensure the well-being of the citizens. The well-being of the citizens can only be assured and guaranteed when there is good governance and reverse would be case in the midst of bad governance. Of all the forms of government, democracy has the greatest potential to offer good governance because it is people's government and as such people have greater opportunity to participate one way or the other in the governance process making it possible for them to influence decisions that would be to their favor. It therefore means that for good governance to be enthroned in a polity; the people have great responsibility to bring it about by not being docile but to be seriously interested in participating in the governance process and system. Secondary method of data collection was adopted in this paper and analysis of data collected was done through the descriptive method. The paper found out that bad governance is responsible for the lack of the citizen's well-being. The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is structural functionalism. The paper recommended among other things that for the well-being of the citizens to be guaranteed there should be the encouragement of good governance by all and sundry.*

*Keywords: Government, Citizens, Democracy, Bad Governance and Governance Process*

### Introduction

The place of good governance in citizens' well-being cannot be overemphasized. This is because government and governance exist to ensure the well-being and welfare of the citizens. It is important to state that it is only good governance that can bring about citizens' well-being. According to Heywood (1992:35), "the principle of utility is, furthermore, a moral principle; in that it suggests that the rightness of an action, decision or even government policy can be established by its tendency to promote happiness". This shows that the people want happiness and expect government to make and execute policies that can bring about their well-being because it is only then they can be happy. Heywood went further to assert in line with the views of utilitarian thinkers like Bentham and Mill that human beings were thought, therefore, to be utility maximizers, seeking the greatest possible pleasure and the least possible pain or unhappiness. With this, it is very obvious that citizens prefer government and governance system that can promote their happiness to the ones that have the tendency to inflict pain on them. It is apt to state that in a truly democratic state, the citizens have responsibility to take part in bringing about government and governance system that can promote their happiness. This they can do by being active in politics and governance. According to Michel (2011), "citizenship participation in governance contributes to a better democracy". In a similar vein, Zuofa (2020:281) opined that "citizenship participation in governance makes contribution that can influence the decision of the government and at the same time seen as a means of empowerment for the citizens". The above views were corroborated by Merole (2016) when he averred that "the

principle of citizenship participation holds that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process". From the foregoing, one can assert that the well-being of the citizens cannot be guaranteed when the citizens do not participate in politics and governance. When those in charge of governance know that the people are politically active and can hold them to account for their actions, they are likely to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the citizens, this is because it is the majority of the citizens that voted them into positions of authority and can be voted out at the next available opportunity if they are not interested in the well-being of the citizens. This explains why citizens' participation in governance cannot be divorced from good governance, it is on this note the United Nations include participation as one of the factors used to measure good governance. Governance is said to be good when the citizens have unfettered access and opportunity to participate in it.

It is based on the foregoing that good governance is seen as a panacea for citizens' well-being and this explains why citizens across the globe and world governance bodies advocate for good governance. This is because to a very large extent the well-being of the citizens translates automatically to the well-being of the state particularly because the citizens are part of what make up the state. The problem with some governance systems is that those in charge are more interested in themselves than the citizens they are supposed to govern. They operate in ways that are antithetical to the welfare and well-being of the citizens. When the citizens' welfare and well-being are ignored and not attended to, the end result will be high level of poverty, inequality, unemployment and insecurity and all these lead to general level of underdevelopment which in turn further worsen the condition of the citizens. This type of governance system is known as bad governance. This paper is designed to assess the role of good governance in the well-being of the citizens.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopts structural-functionalism as a theoretical framework. Herbert Spencer and Talcott Parson are the major proponents of this theory. This theory is an offshoot of the general systems theory of David Easton. The basic thrust of this theory is that there are structures in the political system that performs different functions. And it is the nature of the performance of the functions by the existing structures that determine whether there would be good governance or not. There are many structures in the political system and they include: Executive, Judiciary, Political Parties, Pressure Groups, etc. All these structures have assigned functions to perform. The nature of governance cannot be divorced from these structures because they are the basis for governance. It is therefore to be stated that when these structures perform the functions as they are meant to perform, it will aid good governance that will ultimately bring about citizens' well-being and the reverse would be the case when the structures do not live up to expectation in terms of performing well their assigned functions and when this is the case it will bring about bad governance which cannot promote citizens' well-being.

It is important to state that understanding the effects of the structures on the political system and by extension governance, one needs to dig deep to understand the personality traits of the individuals occupying those structures because it is the individuals that would carry out the functions of those structures. This explains why the structures in the developed countries are performing their functions more efficiently and effectively than those in the developing countries. This has also impacted positively on the citizens of the developed

countries more than the citizens of developing countries and this has equally manifested in the rat race of the citizens of the developing countries in their quest to migrate to developed countries.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

It is very imperative and germane at this juncture to clarify major concepts in this paper, this is necessary because the clarification of the concepts would aid the understanding of the subject matter of the paper. The concepts to be so clarified and examined are: governance, good governance, and citizens' well-being. The place of governance in the life of man and the state has made it to attract the attention of scholars across the globe as well as many international organizations. The well-being or otherwise of man is a function of governance. In other words, governance determines whether the citizens' well-being would be guaranteed or not. According to Hyden and Court (2002:15-16), Kooiman and his collaborators argue that governance is composed of "purposeful action to guide, steer, and control society". They went further to assert that Kooiman and his collaborators recognized that this is not achieved with a single measure, but is a process that takes time and involves both governmental and non-governmental organizations. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1997 policy paper, governance is "the exercise of economic, politics and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences". Governance can be said to be the process or act of harnessing and utilizing both material and human resources by those responsible for doing so for the benefit of the people and society. The actual act of governance is the responsibility of certain people particularly those in authority while others can be of assistance one way or the other. The ultimate goal of governance is the well-being of the citizens. To Dwivedi (2002:37), the term governance denotes "a system of values, policies, and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political, and social affairs through interaction within and among the state, civil society, and private sector". World Bank (1992) defined the term governance as "the exercise of political power to manage nation's affairs". This shows that there are certain people that are entrusted with the responsibility of governance and the onus is on them to seek assistance and collaboration from some non-state actors to be able to effectively and efficiently discharge their governance functions to achieve the goals that are meant to be achieved. This brings us to the basic elements of the term governance. Hyden and Bratton (1992:38) suggested four basic elements: degree of trust, reciprocity of relationship between government and civil society, degree of accountability, and nature of authority wielded". The elements of governance as identified by Hyden can be said to be attributes of governance that can make it be in a position to ensure the well-being of the citizens and as well positively transform the society.

In a similar vein, the World Bank (2007) has key indicators of governance which include: respect for human rights and basic freedom, regular free and fair elections, the separation of power as checks and balances, decentralized government structures, free political organizations, free media, existence of civil society, and existence of watchdog institutions such as anti-corruption, auditor general, ombudsperson, civilian control of the armed forces, all emphasizing accountability and transparency and central values and standards of behavior. These indicators apart from being indicators of governance can be said to be

the necessary ingredients of good governance. This is because it is only when these indicators are present in any governance system that it can be able to ensure the well-being of the citizens. Bad governance cannot guarantee citizen's well-being because majority if not all the identified indicators are absent in a bad governance system.

Having examined governance as a concept, at this juncture the concept of good governance would be examined. Good governance can be said to be a governance system that has all the necessary ingredients that are properly utilized and applied in the governance process in such a way as to enable it guarantee the well-being of the citizens and society. Good governance has been defined by various scholars and world governance institutions. According to African Development Bank (1999), good governance is the "one that embodies and promotes effective states. Good governance is about effective and efficient structure providing optimal support for the citizens in leading a safe and productive life in line with their desires and opportunities". This definition reiterates the fact that it is only through good governance that the citizens' well-being can be guaranteed. There are certain features that are associated with good governance that make it so well positioned to effectively bring about the well-being of the citizens. This explains why the United Nations opined that good governance is measured by eight factors and they are: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability. Any governance system that has these attributes no doubt can be said to be good. On the issue of participation, it connotes freedom of the citizen to take part in how government is formed as well as how government should run to their satisfaction. Participation of the citizens take various forms which include: voting in election, expressing opinion to government agencies and officials on things that are of great importance to them, holding rallies and protests and so on and so forth.

On the rule of law, it is defined by Akingbogun cited in Alonge (2005:13) as "the respect for the general order of law, it is an appeal for obedience to law, just as custom and traditions are observed in a community. In essence, the rule of law is based on the philosophy of legality and impartiality". The United Nations Security Council cited in Bjornlund (2014:5) defines the rule of law as when all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards". When the rule of law is strictly observed and adhered to in the governance system, it provides opportunity for the people to be well served because there is justice in the actions and activities of government officials and its agencies. Transparency means openness in the conduct of government business. Those in positions of authority hold the positions on behalf of the people and as such they are meant to conduct the business of government in such a way as to allow the citizens to know and understand what is going on in government. When those in government are transparent definitely they would be in a position to serve the people better and the people in turn would be in a position to support the government. On the issue of responsiveness; according to Sharma et al (2013:953-954), "responsiveness means the state of being responsive i.e. answering, replying. In a democracy, the citizens expect civil servants to be responsive to their requests and demands". They went further to assert that a citizen who asks something of a government has the right to expect a response and to be treated as a legitimate source of demands. The concept of responsiveness denotes not only for the government officials to respond to the need and demand of the citizens but also in

a timely manner. It means that whatever government officials need to do for the citizens they should do as fast as possible. This explains why Sharma et al (2013:954) opined that “responsiveness is a procedural requirement for good government. Government and public administration do not have the right in a democracy to exclude citizens from expressing their demands for public; nor do officials have the right to exclude someone from a fair hearing concerning his claims. These institutions do, however have the right and duty to reject claims with no basis in law”. Consensus has to do with an agreement made by a group. It means generally accepted opinion. Consensus is built on issues when people are happy with the governance system. When the citizens are aware that a particular government is satisfying their wishes and aspirations, they would not have any choice than to support such a government.

Equity and inclusiveness are related to the other factors in the sense that they are part of the necessary ingredients of good governance. Equity does not necessarily mean equality but it has to do with given people their due share and also the provision of level playing field for all players. Inclusiveness has to do with carrying everybody along in governance. This means not excluding a section of people in governance in terms of appointment and provision of necessary infrastructure. Equity and inclusiveness give people sense of belonging which will make them to be happy and see the need to support government. Effectiveness and efficiency constitute another factor that determines whether there is good governance or not. This reflects in the services provided by the government; services are not just to be provided but they are to be provided effectively and efficiently. Effective and efficient services are what the citizens desire and appreciate. The last but not the least is accountability. According to Olowu (2005:140), “accountability refers to answerability for one’s actions or behaviors”. Accountability is a very important issue in the public sector because the officials of government are there to serve the interest of the people and as such can be questioned regarding their duties and responsibilities. When the public servants are aware of this scenario, they are supposed to conduct themselves in a way that can satisfy the people and not be found wanting in case they are called to account for their stewardship. This scenario can lead to efficient and effective service delivery by public servants. This explains why Olowu (2005: 140-141) opined that accountability is essential for the efficient functioning of all organizations and especially of governmental organizations in a democratically governed state”. Having examined and clarified the concept of good governance, the next concept to be examined and explained is the concept of citizens’ well-being. What does citizens’ well-being connote? Some scholars use the term well-being and welfare as if they are the same and they are not. This brings us to the distinction between welfare and well-being as far as the citizens are concerned. Well-being can be said to be an end while welfare is the means to achieving that end. For example, welfare packages of government are directed towards bringing about citizens well-being. According to Motila, Maitra and Prajapati (2021:120), “welfare refers to a range of government programmes that provide financial or other aid to individuals or groups who cannot support themselves. Welfare programmes are typically funded by taxpayers and provide means to cope with financial stress during rough periods of their lives”.

The concept of well-being has been viewed and explained by different scholars and different schools of thought. Sen and Nussbaum cited in Motilal et al (2021:120) see well-being as “the ability to live a life that one values for oneself”. For them, it means that whenever people live life that they desire, it can be said that their well-being is guaranteed.

Viewed from this perspective, one can say that citizens' well-being can be seen to be happiness. It means that what the citizens ultimately need is their well-being and if government guarantees their well-being, they will be willing to support the government for greater societal progress and development. Ingrid Robeyns in her book, *Well-Being, Freedom and Societal Justice* cited in Motilal et al (2021:121) discusses the use of the term "well-being" in the context of the capability approach and refers to it as "how well the life of a person is going for that person".

### **The Role of Good Governance in Citizens' Well-Being**

The role of good governance in citizens' well-being cannot be overemphasized. This is because from time immemorial, people formed government so that government will do for them what they cannot do for themselves. The social contract theory by J.J. Rousseau, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes made us to understand that when people got fed up with life they were living in the state of nature which Thomas Hobbes described as solitary, nasty, brutish, poor and short, they decided to surrender their personal right to govern themselves to a leviathan or constituted authority so that they would in turn protect their lives and properties and ultimately ensure their well-being.

It is important to note that the well-being of the citizens can only be guaranteed through good governance. According to Diamond (2004:222), "the deepest root cause of development failure is not a lack of resources or international isolation. Rather, it is a lack of good governance – the inability or unwillingness to apply public resources effectively to generate public goods. Public goods benefit the entire community". He went further to explain and identify public goods which include physical infrastructure- roads, bridges, ports, sanitation, portable water, electric power, telecommunications, public transport – and social, economic and political infrastructure- schools, clinics, markets, courts, vaccination programme, improved agricultural techniques, a neutral and capable state bureaucracy. From the foregoing, it is very imperative to state that public goods and other welfare packages are what the citizens need to live the type of life they desire which ultimately constitutes their well-being. And the public goods are meant to be provided by government. It also shows that the public goods can only be provided in countries where there is good governance. This explains why good governance assures and brings about citizens' well-being and societal development generally. When there is the citizens' well-being in place, the citizens will find it easy to support government in various ways such as payment of taxes, obey laws, etc., and this further would in turn put the government in the right pedestal to further provide and maintain public good. The nature of citizens' well-being and general development in different countries is dependent on the nature of governance. This is because as there is good governance, there is also bad governance. While good governance ensures the provision of public goods and citizens' well-being and societal development, bad governance does not guarantee citizens' well-being and development. This explains why people in many developing countries risk their lives to migrate to developed countries. This is because many if not all the developed countries are witnessing good governance and their citizens are well taken care of and public goods are not in short supply.

### **Challenges Facing Good Governance**

While good governance is desired by virtually all citizens of different countries because of its tendency to bring about citizens' well-being, a lot of factors have been noted to serve as challenges to its realization in countries where it is not in existence. These factors include but not limited to the following: corruption, non-adherence to the rule of law, lack of adequate citizens' participation in politics and governance, lack of transparency and accountability, electoral malpractices and weak state institutions. Good governance cannot take place in an atmosphere of corruption. Corruption has been noted to be number one enemy of good governance. This is because according to Johnson et al (2010:140) while explaining effects of corruption, opines that "in elections and legislative bodies, it reduces accountability, representation in policy-making and strangulates the rule of law". This view was corroborated by Shehu (2007:4) when he asserted that "in public administration, corruption results in unequal provision of social and economic services; in public sector, it undermines economic development by generating considerable distortions, inefficiency, and rent seeking activities". In countries where corruption is prevalent and pervasive, good governance would be a distant dream because virtually all the ingredients of good governance would be bastardized and, in that situation, the well-being of the citizens cannot be guaranteed. This explains why issue of corruption has been of serious concern to citizens of countries where it is widespread.

Non-adherence to the rule of law is another challenge facing good governance. Adherence to the rule of law is one of the ingredients of good governance. A governance system that upholds the rule of law stand a better chance of providing welfare packages to the citizens and ultimately ensures their well-being. This is because justice and fairness are part of what make up the well-being of the citizens apart from welfare packages from the government. When the citizens know that they are treated fairly without discrimination and injustice, it will make them to see the need to support the government in every way. But the reverse would be the case when there is non-adherence to the rule of law. This is why governance system without adherence to the rule of law will ultimately lead to chaos because injustice will make people to be dissatisfied with the system and as such will revolt against the system. Good governance cannot thrive in an environment of non-adherence to the principles of rule of law.

Lack of adequate citizens' participation in politics and governance is also a challenge to good governance. Good governance cannot be achieved in an environment where there is low citizens' participation in politics and governance, this is because when there is effective citizens' participation in politics and governance the people stand a better chance of electing leaders who will take their needs and aspirations seriously and try as much as possible to satisfy them. They will also hold government officials accountable; when government officials know that they are to be held accountable it will make them to operate in such a way as to act in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the citizens. According to Ragamunickan (2013), Radzik-Maruszak and Batorovo (2015) cited in Zuofa (2020:281), "it is citizenship participation in governance that ensures transparency and accountability because it is a social democratic and socio-economic change as desired by the people. In addition, citizenship participation guarantees that the citizens are part of the democratic governance. But the reverse would be the case when there is lack of adequate citizens' participation in politics and government, aspiring political leaders will rig themselves into positions of power and authority and also have the tendency of operating in a corrupt manner which will not make them to serve the interest of the citizens.

According to Irvin and John cited in Zuofa (2020:281), “citizenship participation pursues cultural, economic, political and social development including the provision of opportunities, resources, services and security. Citizenship participation produces better decisions and thus professionalization benefits the rest of the society”.

Transparency and accountability are known to be part of the ingredients of good governance. When the political leaders imbibe the spirit of transparency and accountability, it will make them to conduct the business of government in such a way as to be able to provide welfare and well-being of the people. This is because they will allow the people to be aware of the happenings in government and can make their suggestion and support. But lack of transparency and accountability which is part of the challenges of good governance will make political leaders to operate the public sector as if it is their private affair and such would not be able to provide the people with their welfare and well-being. Leaders who operate without recourse to transparency and accountability hardly take people into consideration in governance. According to Olowu (2005:141), “public accountability underscores the superiority of the public will over private interests for those engaged in the provision and delivery of services to the general public. For this reason, it is often argued that where there is no accountability, the public administrative system runs amok”. Without transparency and accountability there cannot be good governance.

Electoral malpractice is another factor that constitutes a great challenge for good governance. Electoral malpractice has to do with the manipulation in the electoral process to produce results that do not reflect voting during elections. It is done to give victory to those who do not deserve to win by virtue of actual voting. When elections are rigged, the beneficiaries may not have the tendency to provide good governance to the people because they do not depend on the people to win elections and occupy governmental positions. When elections are free and fair there would be connection between the people and the leaders because the leaders would know that without the people through their vote they would not emerge as leaders. This will make them to try as much as possible to provide the people with their needs.

Weak state institutions also negatively affect good governance; in fact there cannot be good governance in an environment of weak state institutions. This is because the institutions are easily amenable to be manipulated to benefit some influential individuals to the detriment of the masses. In this case, instead of the institutions functioning to the benefit of all, they benefit only few in the state. Under this condition, injustice and inequality is the order of the day which is antithetical to citizens’ well-being.

## **Conclusion**

Because of the potentials of good governance to produce citizens’ well-being, virtually all citizens of every country as well as world governance institutions have been clamoring for good governance to be enthroned in all the countries. This is because not every country is experiencing good governance. Citizens of countries where good governance is not in place are suffering untold hardship manifesting in poverty, hunger, unemployment and lack of public goods. The effects of these are manifesting in security challenges which is spreading from one part of the country to another because of globalization. This explains why many international organizations are interested in ensuring that there is good governance in virtually all countries of the world in order to bring about the citizens’ well-being in all



ramifications because with it there will be relative peace and security in the world which is panacea for sustainable development.

### **Recommendations**

The place of good governance in the well-being of the citizens as well as the development of the country cannot be overemphasized. This explains why there is clamor to have good governance enthroned in all countries. It means that good governance is a virtue that must be struggled for to be able to bring about citizens' well-being, it is apt to state that countries where there is good governance people made it possible. This paper makes the following recommendations that would ensure good governance in countries where it is absent:

**Political Education:** According to Osuji (2020:16), political education has to do with the process through which citizens are exposed to the nature and workings of the institutions of governance, and are made to understand issues of party politics, democracy and public affairs. The docility and nonchalant attitude of citizens is a recipe for bad governance. The posture of this set of citizens may be as a result of lack of political education. The citizens must constantly be educated politically to be able to play their roles efficiently and effectively in the political arena. This will make them to be able to vote during elections and also be in position to demand accountability from government officials.

Proactive measures should be in place to discourage corruption and also fight corruption when it occurs. It has been observed that fighting corruption cases in courts has become so expensive to the extent that it leads to wastages of scarce government fund that is supposed to be devoted to bringing about public goods for the good of the citizens. On this note, countries should device means of preventing incidences of corruption; this will go a long way in reducing corruption.

**Independent Judiciary:** The judiciary exists to interpret the law and also serves as an avenue for dispute resolution. The rule of law which is a cardinal requirement for good governance can only be guaranteed when there is judicial independence. When everybody is made to be equal before the law, it reduces impunity by government officials and this will make them to discharge their duties without fear or favour and according to the laws of the land. Independent judiciary will also make it possible for government officials who steal and commit other offences to be appropriately sanctioned and this will serve as a deterrent to others who may want to toe similar path.

**Citizenship Participation in the Political and Governance Process:** Democracy has been defined by Abraham Lincoln as "government of the people, by the people and for the people". This means that democracy is people's government, if it is people's government it requires involvement of the people in the whole of the governance process. The needs of people can be taken more serious and efforts made to meet them when they get themselves involved in governance one way or the other.

**Free, Fair and Credible Elections:** Studies have shown that there is a correlation between elections and governance. This explains why Egugbo (2015:16) opines that "the nature and pattern of elections in any state reflects to a very large extent in the nature and pattern of governance". This is because if leaders emerge from a flawed and rigged elections, they are not likely to govern in a way that meet the needs of the people because they are not the ones that elected them and may not depend on them to be victorious at the polls subsequently. But the reverse would be the case when leaders emerge from free, fair and credible elections, such leaders would want to put people into consideration in the

governance process by trying as much as possible to satisfy their needs and aspirations because without that they stand the risk of being voted out in subsequent elections. This explains why it is imperative and desirable to have free, fair and credible elections because outcome of such elections can positively impact governance which ultimately will help to promote the well-being of the citizens.

Institutions of the state should be encouraged and strengthened to be able to perform their functions effectively and efficiently without fear or favor no matter whose ox is gored. This to a large extent will promote good governance because the people will benefit optimally from the optimum performance of the state institutions.

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