

**Can Lamb And Lion Tango? Investigating Nigeria's Practice of Public Administration and Peculiar Challenges from Structural Functional Theory**

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<p>Journal Volume &amp; Issue: Vol.5, No.1 (Feb, 2024) pp. 78 – 105</p> <p>DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.46404/panjogov.v5i1.5362">https://doi.org/10.46404/panjogov.v5i1.5362</a></p> <p>Received: 12 April, 2023 Revised: 17 January, 2024 Accepted: 20 Feb, 2024 Published: 28 Feb 2024</p>  <p>Copyright: ©2024 by Jimma University, Ethiopia. Under Open Access Journal, the creative common attribute 4.0 international license permits any interested person to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work provided that the original work and source is appropriately cited.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><i>There is a gap in scholarly literature that has yet to be filled by scholars regarding the practice of public administration, challenges, and viable policy roadmaps for urgent governance situations in Nigeria. Anchored on functionalism, this study specifically examined the historical, phenomenological, and philosophical investigation of Nigeria's practice of public administration, the challenges of Nigeria's public administration, and how the politics-administration dichotomy influences Nigeria's practice of public administration. The type of data sought established the study through the qualitative method. Data were collected through primary and secondary means, and content analysis was performed. Drawing from interviews with professional administrators, this study revealed how corruption, godfatherism, irresponsible and irresponsive leadership, poverty, and procedural violations troubled public administration. Also, Nigeria's public administration is characterized by a politics-administration dichotomy with its negative inputs and resultant effects. Due to the pervasive effect of these challenges, the country is not a developmental state and lacks appropriate governance structures that can usher in sustainable development (SD). Nigeria should be made a developmental state through robust development policies and effective implementation by responsive political leadership and administrative practices devoid of corruption, godfather politics, and procedural violations.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Developmental State, Governance Structure, Politics-Administration Dichotomy, Procedural Violation, Weaponization of Poverty and Inequality</i></p>
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**Introduction**

Public administration practice and practice of public administration sound alike, yet they are not the same and could be somewhat confusing. Distinctively, public administration practice is the activity performed by the government in administering the public, but the practice of public

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administration entails public administration in action or the act of administering the public *via* policy implementation. Public administration practice could be seen as the noun, while the practice of public administration is the verb. However, in its plural form, public administration practices include policies, programs, reforms, principles, and others that are used for effective public administration. The central focus of this study is the practice of public administration, which in Nigeria, like every other federalist polity, takes place at the local, state, and federal levels. Presenting a historical perspective, Abonyi (2005, p.1) stated:

*At the very beginning, public administration took a different dimension and meaning from what is obtainable today. In medieval Europe, for example, it was all about the King and the way he ran the whole state affairs. All the employees were working at his discretion or rather helping him to execute his directives.*

The Royal Government in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France was a personal government. All political actions were taken in King's name (Gladden, 1972). This was somewhat of a selfish style of administration as the gamut of the activities was centered on satiating and assuaging the whims and caprices of the King. So, Nigeria must have wrongly copied the old practice of administration. This leads us to the question: Can lamb (public administration) and lion (aforesaid and other challenges of public administration) tango? This study contributed to existing literature by interrogating the foregoing.

The culture of self-centered administration has been the prevalent public administration practice in Nigeria. Leadership has constantly revolved around the chief executive, loyalists, and cronies. Thus, Nigerian public administration is not people-oriented. The question is, why this obnoxious trend? The point is on who truly wields absolute power, which, according to Onah (2009), belongs to the people, and a democratic society should be based on the predominance of the majority's will/interest. The primary policy objective of every responsible administration should be to grow the economy and improve the living conditions of the people (Dike, 2009, p.27). So, part of the innumerable problems of Nigeria's public administration are a lack of sound administrators, displaced priority, and the hijacking of absolute power from the electorate who gave legitimacy to the government. Thus, this paper contributed to knowledge by examining

other critical challenges hampering Nigeria's practice of public administration through expert opinion and documentary evidence.

Researchers of public management have done considerable work on public sector performance (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004; Raudla *et al.*, 2016; Talbot, 2010), but the challenges bedeviling the practice of public administration; the historical, phenomenological cum philosophical discourse on the practice of public administration; and influence of politics administration dichotomy especially in the Nigerian context are scarce if not empirically unknown. This study was situated within the structural functionalism theory with threefold questions: What constitutes the historical, phenomenological, and philosophical practice of public administration in Nigeria? What are the challenges facing the practice of public administration in Nigeria? What does the politics-administration dichotomy entail, and how does it influence the practice of public administration in the Nigerian context? This research examined the above fundamental questions.

### **Study Objectives**

The specific objectives were to: i) Conduct historical, phenomenological, and philosophical investigations on Nigeria's practice of public administration; ii) Examine peculiar challenges disturbing Nigeria's practice of public administration and, iii) Interrogate the concept of the politics-administration dichotomy and how it influenced Nigeria's practice of public administration.

### **Review of Literature and Theoretical Foundation**

Although public administration is concerned with strict implementation of the policies/resolutions of government through its agencies or any other proxy acting under its direction (Chioke, 2022a, p.59), public sectors of many sovereign states of the world have faced acute pressure meeting up with their expected value creation responsibilities (Ndukwe *et al.*, 2022); and in addition, they appear highly incapacitated in ensuring effective service delivery (Chioke *et al.*, 2020; Idike *et al.*, 2020; Ukeje *et al.*, 2020) due to human capital development related issues (Chioke *et al.*, 2023; Zayum & Agbodike, 2021). It is certain that:

*When an outsider enters a new ecological system, even if the public administrator is more skilled and professional, he does not necessarily function as effectively as those who have familiarized themselves with the environment over centuries. The newcomer is likely to look more ridiculous if*

*he is too arrogant to realize that he has something to learn from the natives (Rodney, 1972, p.46).*

This is the problem with Nigeria's practice of public administration because the leaders snubbed the chances of learning from the indigenous technocrats who understand local needs and politics. Concerns have, therefore, been on the lack of proper understanding and management of public organizations, which culminated into a significant challenge for the capacity of public bureaucracies to attain the will of the state through competent administration. Consequently, one must seek to adequately understand the rudiments/nitty-gritty of public administration in various countries worldwide. Considering Nigeria's practice of public administration and possibly beyond,

*It can be understood that public administration has two definitions - the field of study and the activity point of view. Public administration as a field means the study of administrative actions to gain better insight. In short, this is more of theory than practice. Public administration as an activity is the implementation of the knowledge gained in the discipline (Chioke, 2012, pp.20-21).*

As an activity in Nigeria, it should be primarily concerned with executing plans for sustainable growth and development. In order to ensure sustainable development (SD), as Chioke (2023) argued, questions about leadership, public accountability, and other problems must be scientifically understood. For one to fully appreciate the role of Nigeria in South-South relations, it is necessary to understand the character of the Nigerian state, its level of development, the basic thrust of its foreign policy, its role in the regional and world systems and internal forces that impinge on her development (Chukwuemeka, 2022, p.3).

Public administration is the machinery for implementing government policies (Adebayo, 1984, p. 4) for value creation. Cabral *et al.* (2019) contend that value creation is the collaborative efforts of the players in the public and private domains. Hence, Okigbo and Nsiegbunam (2000, p.7) posited: "Public administration is the management of scarce resources to accomplish the goals of public policy." The onus is on public administration to ensure the management of scarce resources while collaborating with private sectors to guarantee value creation. Cabral *et al.* (2019) submitted that both public and private sectors create public values, but as observed by

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Kivlenience and Quelin (2012), tensions among competing interests hamper its proper distribution, and as such, there is a need for harmonization among the players (Ndukwe *et al.*, 2022). Competing interests among the actors in local politics directly affect good governance, especially when the government, *via* its public administration, fails to perform its obligations effectively. Therefore, Eberinwa *et al.* (2022) rightly submitted that there is good governance when the government rises up to its responsibilities.

Since the public administrator is seen as the guide of the administration of government, there is, therefore, the question of who guards the guardian (Bello, 2022). Regarding this, administrative ethics/code of conduct is vital to guard the guardian – public administrator. Again, laws are made for organizing and coordinating human and material resources of public organizations. If the laws are not enacted and maintained, public organizations would go to extinction. To maintain order in society through public administration, principles, laws, and codes of conduct must be followed. Against this backdrop, Bello (2022) contends that ethics are accountability standards by which the public scrutinizes the work conducted by the members of public organizations. Put differently, "ethics are considered as internal personal checks, that is, a sense of personal responsibility, while accountability is the process of applying external checks on public administrators (Rosenbloom & Kravchuk, 2002, p.556)." Operationally contrived, ethics are both internal (personal) checks and external checks (moral values and public service code of conduct) that guarantee public accountability.

Administration occurs due to the complexity of people and existing public facilities, and public administration is the implementation of state goals/policies (Chioke & Ewuim, 2022). There are pertinent issues depicting that the relevance and/or essence of government cum practice of public administration in many countries tilt towards development. To understand this, one gleans as follows:

*The essence of government is to provide goods and services for the welfare of the people, maintain peace and security against internal insurrections and external aggressions, maintain law and order through law enforcement agencies, solving unemployment problems by creating jobs for eligible job seekers, regulating economic activities in order to protect the economy from economic desperadoes as well as ensure economic growth and development, protect and preserve the rights of the citizenry, maintaining*

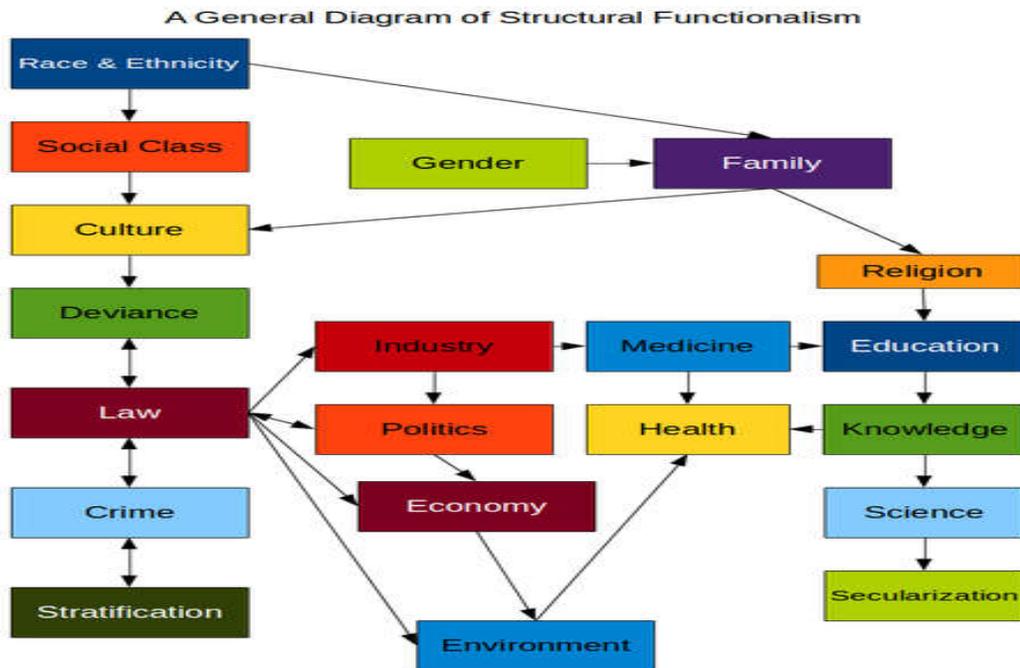
*interrelationship with other nations of the world (Eberinwa et al, 2022, p.60).*

Accordingly, “the duties and functions of the administrative pillars (bureaucrats) vary greatly from one establishment (public sector) to another due to the onerous task given to those public sectors by the constitution (Chioke, 2012, p.19).” Traditionally, the duty of the public sector is to enhance/improve citizens' welfare through goods and service delivery like education cum health (Ramadhani & Vain, 2022), which are non-excludable and non-rival (Malkin & Wildavsky, 2016). Non-excludable suggests that no beneficiary can be excluded from accessing those goods, and by non-rival, it means that the production costs of those goods do not increase with consumption (Ramadhani & Vain, 2022). Regarding this, “the public interacts with public administration in several roles as client, customers, contractor, regulate, participant, and litigant as well as in street-level encounters (Rosenbloom & Kravchuk, 2002, p.473).” So, organizations’ functions are not the same but must be engineered toward attaining the goals saddled upon by the interplay of politics and administration (Chioke, 2022). There are debates that politics and administration are not the same in practice. In Nigeria, there seems to be a tiny demarcation between politics and administration in practice, which is the emphasis of politics and administration dichotomy theorists.

### **Structural Functional Theory/Functionalism**

According to Gómez-Diago (2020), structural functional theory emerged in the early 20th century and is associated with authors like Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Herbert Spencer, and Robert Merton, who dominated American social theory in the 1950s and 1960s. Structural functional theory perceives society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological as well as social needs of the people in the society (Chioke, 2022b). As a theory, functionalism focuses on the functions performed in society by social structures such as institutions, hierarchies, and norms (Gómez-Diago, 2020). The basic rationale in functionalism includes social structures, functions, manifestations, and underlying roles (Paul *et al.*, 2017). Functionalists say that society is comprised of structures. There are inputs into these structures that can make or mar societal functions through the practice of public administration. This study interrogated the inputs into governance structures that mar the society.

For further inquiry, the conceptual model of functionalism surfaces below:



Source: Wikibooks (2023)

This diagram shows that various institutions in the country are interdependent and may not survive without an interplay. It implies that "When one institution in society changes, other institutions accommodate that change by changing as well, though the ultimate effect is to slow overall change (Wikibooks, 2023)." Herbert Spencer popularized a common analogy that presents parts of society as organs that work for the proper functioning of the entire body (Urry, 2000). However, the intermingling cum interplay of several societal structures has introduced diverse challenges in Nigeria's public administration. Functionalism revolves around terms like the concept of structures and functions. Almond (1960) aptly contended that all systems perform two basic sets of functions – input and output. How? These functions are performed through the instrumentality of a functional public administration with adequate conventional public governance practices. The argument of functionalism is that society operates in the way the human body does (Chioke, 2022b) so as to enable proper functionality of the body as a whole (Urry, 2000) when an adequate enabling environment has been created. The units of the society are the governance structures and technocrats/administrators that are germane for creating public values and meeting societal exigencies and emerging needs. Public administration and the

bureaucracies in which it excels are part of the social institutions. Why? Public administration in Nigeria and beyond solves social and governance-related problems in order to attain socioeconomic cum political wills of the state.

The theory of structural functionalism is suitable for analyzing this study's broad aim as this study is on the existing social structure or governance structure (institutions) that enables the practice of public administration and the attendant social functions. Holmwood (2005) asserted that functionalists perceive that society should be seen as a system of co-dependent parts. In the present analysis, bureaucracies, for example, are of social structure (institution), and government at all levels in Nigeria constitutes the governance structure. Therefore, it is important to explore the challenges of these structures. The government in Nigeria includes the executive, legislature, judiciary, and other important parts, making up the whole. Based on the existing social contract, it is the expectation of the public that these organs execute various public policies that are socioeconomic in nature in proportion to their statutory functions. Fundamentally, this study's theoretical framework views the state, organization, and the world as a complex and composite system with interrelated parts (Chioke, 2022b; DeRosso, 2003; Lenski, 2005). As a complex system, Nigeria is not devoid of critical challenges that hinder the smooth operations of public administration and mar the chances of Administrators (both past and present) performing optimally. Applying functionalism, this study succinctly examined the issues hampering the effective practice of public administration, which are believed to have emanated from the interplay of governmental/societal institutions.

### **Materials and Methods**

The research method is a scientific way to obtain data for specific purposes (Darmadi, 2013). The scientific method means that research activities are based on the characteristics analogous to science: rational, empirical, systematic, and so on. The author applied qualitative design/method in presenting and analyzing the cardinal questions and objectives that guided the paper. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem. This forms part of the justification for the author's use of the qualitative method of data collection. Data were collected through interviews, textbooks, journal articles, inaugural lecture materials, and author's observation. Interviews were adopted to examine the peculiar challenges confronting the practice

of public administration as perceived by participants, which spread across Nigeria's federating units through Facebook in order to minimize the cost of traveling. Using the purposive sampling technique, Bureaucrats whose identities were not disclosed were interviewed. Interviewee 1, 2, etc., were used to demarcate their views.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria: A Historical, Phenomenological Cum Philosophical Investigation**

Examination of the medieval governance practices seen on the international scene portrays the similitude in the practice of public administration prevalent in third-world countries like Nigeria. Pertinently, "civil service of the modern ages keep documents for future government references, but contrary to that of the ancient ages, the documentaries are for the effectiveness of administration for the comfort of the public, and not for an individual's (King's) satisfaction" (Abonyi, 2005,p.2). Given this prominent philosophy from the ancient Western world, wherefrom Nigeria copied its practice of administration and administrative practices, this study observes that Nigeria failed to see leadership from a managerial function perspective. Imperatively, "The managerial function of leading is simply the process of influencing people so that they will contribute to the goals of the organization (Ibeme, 2020,p.434)." Nigeria is bedeviled by poor governance structures, which have hindered the effective practice of public administration. These structures produced the culture of criminality, ethnicity, parochialism, godfatherism, and other associated ill structures existing in the Nigerian public sector. Levy and Spiller (1994) perceived the governance structure as a mechanism societies use to prevent regulatory discretion and solve conflicts that may arise, given the constraints on regulatory discretion. Their definition aptly captured the current structure of governance lacking in Nigeria, yet nothing tangible has been done in that regard. There is an abundance of:

*Arguments as to whether Nigeria is a failed or failing state. However, almost all stakeholders, especially those interested in sustained growth and development, agree that Nigeria is not working. Since political independence in 1960, except for a few dotted years, the country has been on the decline economically, politically, and socially (Nwankwo, 2022, p.5).*

Governance structures are of great essence to any organized political setting, but the problem is that Nigeria is far from being an effectively organized polity.

The military came into Nigerian politics and administration in 1966. Furthermore, “with the advent of the military culture in Nigerian politics, things degenerated quickly, and Nigeria became the abyss of chaos and disorder (Nwankwo, 2022, p.28).” Nigeria, even though she still exhibits characteristics of sovereignty, has since stopped existing in the minds of her citizens, as evidenced by the high level of apathy and unpatriotic displays by her electorates, especially genuine agitators seeking political independence. Resultantly, citizens’ engagement and participation are not noticed, and Nigerian public administration is on the side of a poorly structured economy as Nigeria still wallows in a mixed economy wherein the state is predominantly domineering in the nation's economic affairs while the private sector is merely being tolerated. It could thus be deduced that the extent of public-private partnerships in Nigeria is low and, therefore, inadequate to engender sustainable development. This appears to be prevalent in other African climes, especially Kenya. Collaboratively, "Kenya historically has had a liberal political economy in which the state is prominent in economic affairs while the private sector maintains a privilege" (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). This feature has allowed for crony capitalism, wherein the political elite own large private companies and benefit from inside deals (including land deals) unknown to the average citizen (John & Ambreena, 2013). The success of a developing state means that there must be a distinction between its bureaucracy in charge of economic growth and all the most powerful interest individuals so that it can set and attain huge economic targets (Meyns & Musamba, 2010). Why? Onah (2020) contends that every sovereign state has essential principles that form the basis of its existence and the objectives it aims to achieve for the good of the people. The worst is that the Nigerian federating partners are slaves benefitting from the crumbs that fell from the federal government (Chioke, 2021b).

Nigeria's public administration seems to have disequilibrium between competition policy and competition law. To draw meaningful lessons from this, a distinction between the two interrelated jargon needs to be clarified. Khemani and Dutz (1996) defined competition policy as "those government measures that directly affect the behavior of enterprises and the structure of the industry." The objective of competition policy is to promote efficiency and maximize welfare. There are two elements of such a policy. The first involves ensuring the existence of a set of policies that encourages competition in both local and national markets. This would include a liberalized trade policy, relaxed foreign investment and ownership requirements, and

economic deregulation. The second is legislation that prevents anticompetitive business practices and unnecessary government intervention – competition law. An effective competition policy fosters establishing a business environment that improves static and dynamic efficiencies, leads to efficient resource allocation, and one in which the abuse of market power is discouraged through competition (Chakravarthy, 2016). Writing the foreword to the book, ‘Pursuing Competition and Regulatory Reforms for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals,’ Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, stated that, "One of the fundamental aims of competition policy and law is to increase competitive market pressures by addressing anticompetitive business practices, as well as anticompetitive State regulations and measures. When these pressures are absent, especially due to monopolies or cartels, higher prices, lower quality products, and economic injustice will prevail." There abound clear evidence that there is the humongous absence of competitive market pressures, thereby giving room for the undesired presence of monopolies, inflation, and quantity in place of quality as exemplified by lower quality products that have flooded the Nigerian markets and economic marginalization championed through divide and rule policy.

### **Peculiar Challenges Troubling the Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria**

It takes two to tango, so agreement makes the law. The question is: Can the practice of public administration and challenges tango? They neither mutually coexist/agree nor tango because they are not birds of the same plumage that congregate for identical purposes. The following different ordeals have contributed to making it impossible for diverse ethnic nationalities that are constituents of the former Southern and Northern Protectorates of Nigeria to agree in the best interest of all, irrespective of tribe and political affiliations.

Data for this study spotted corruption. On its effect as regards the practice of public administration, Interviewee 1 noted:

*Corruption impairs the growth and development of human resources needed to ensure high-quality public sector performance in Nigeria. It can do no good but drag the level of economic development in nations like ours, where mediocrity has eroded merit, and nobody cares about it.*

Nigeria's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows that Nigeria's problem is acute corruption, worse than the world's recent dreaded pandemic, COVID-19. The Buhari administration

promised to fight corruption, but it did nothing significant, as evidenced by the CPI ranking in Table 1, which painted the country with lurid colors.

Table 1 Nigeria - Corruption Perceptions Index

Date	Corruption Ranking	Corruption Index
2022	150 <sup>o</sup>	24
2021	154 <sup>o</sup>	24
2020	149 <sup>o</sup>	25
2019	146 <sup>o</sup>	26
2018	144 <sup>o</sup>	27
2017	148 <sup>o</sup>	27
2016	136 <sup>o</sup>	28
2015	136 <sup>o</sup>	26

Source: <https://countryeconomy.com/government/corruption-perceptions-index/nigeria>

Another cankerworm identified in this study is godfatherism. In Nigeria's democracy, the godfather syndrome as a structure is damaging (Umahi, 2013) even as the issue of godfatherism in Nigeria's public administration remains critical (Chioke, 2020). On the correlation between godfatherism and the practice of public administration, Interviewee 2 submitted that:

*No meaningful administrative reform can take place in an administration influenced by the non-ruling elites, otherwise known as political godfathers.*

In another strand of response, Interviewee 3 contends that:

*The problem of Nigeria vis-à-vis the practice of public administration and governance is the disease called political godfatherism. It has never allowed our administration to blossom and will not if it is not legally checked.*

Democracy in Nigeria has not been fully established, and the phenomenon of godfatherism has endangered the democratization process and the socioeconomic lives of the citizenry (Ohiole & Ojo, 2016, p. 11).

The problem of irresponsible and irresponsive leadership is part of the major hiccups that have formed a coalition with allied challenges confronting public administration practices and practice

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of public administration. Elekwa (2009, p.64) commented on responsiveness: "good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame." On whether irresponsible and unresponsive leadership affects the practice of public administration, Interviewee 4 wrote:

*When leaders fail to take responsibility for their actions, it can lead to a lack of accountability, which creates a culture of corruption and impunity. Additionally, when leaders are unresponsive to citizens' needs and concerns, it leads to a breakdown in communication and trust, making it more difficult to address issues of public concern. Responsible and responsive leadership is critical for effective public administration and the well-being of society.*

Emphatically, Nigeria has witnessed different leadership challenges in recent times that make the attainment of SD impossible (Chioke, 2023). Drawing from the above, this study aligns with Ukeje (2006), who found that effective bureaucratic leadership is missing in Nigeria's journey to good governance and improved quality of life. Consequently, employment in the civil service should be based on technical qualifications (Chioke, 2012, p.88), but the reverse is the case – mediocrity/nepotism, public administration becomes a means to intangibilities, which leads to low quality of life. This is perhaps the most glaring way of seeing Nigeria's irresponsible cum unresponsive leadership.

Next is the problem of poverty and inequality. Poverty is most noticeable in least developing societies, where about half of its populace lives in abject poverty (The United Nations, 2017). Despite decades of successful oil and gas exploration in Nigeria, the state has remained the poverty headquarters of the globe. Bad governance has not enabled funds realized from successful years of oil and gas exploration to successfully enthrone the improved standard of living of the masses, indicating that the country is relieved by acute poverty. The reason for this could be understood from a resource curse perspective. Interviewee 5 stated how poverty affects the practice of public administration thus:

*In Nigeria, poverty hinders public administration in several ways. For example, poverty can make it difficult for government officials to implement policies/programs effectively because people living in poverty may not have the resources or education needed to fully participate in those programs.*

*Poverty can make it more difficult for government officials to collect taxes and revenues, which limits the ability to fund important public services.*

Differently, Interviewee 6 stated:

*Public administration lays emphasis on four types of resources viz: Human, Material, Financial, and Information resources, and if any of these resources are lacking, there will be a serious problem. Public administration cannot do without financial resources. Human personnel and material information resources cannot work successfully without sufficient finance. An administrator cannot carry out any logistical plan without money. If otherwise, there will be a consequential system in all the spheres of administration/human life.*

What must be done to stem this tide? To arrest the nation's economic tangle, Nigeria needs a transformative leader to build a solid foundation for lasting sociopolitical stability and sustainable economic growth and development (Dike, 2009). This would achieve self-actualization for all. According to Abonyi (2005, p.75), self-actualization refers to individuals growing, maturing, and achieving a deep inner retrospection or self-worth related to their job and organization. Hence, a rethink is needed with urgent attention for effective public administration. Another challenge is procedural violations (disregard for the rule of law) in Nigeria's public sector. Ethics demands that: "Public officials must act according to laid-down rules and procedures and in the event of a violation, the court has right to question the legality of their action (Okigbo & Nsiegbunam, 2000, p.26), but this is lacking in Nigeria. Concerning the effect of procedural violations *vis-à-vis* practice of public administration, Interviewee 7 said:

*When procedures are not followed, it can be challenging to ensure that decisions are made fairly and consistently. This can erode public trust in the government and create a perception that the system is unfair. Additionally, violations of procedures can lead to lawsuits, which are costly and time-consuming for the government.*

Also, to understand the matter, this study raises pertinent questions: How many procedural violations committed by the Administration of President Buhari were questioned and successfully annulled through litigation? How has the present administration fared in terms of

obedience to the rule of law? Under the present political leadership, the administration has not been able to prove beyond reasonable doubt that Nigeria respects the rule of law.

### **Politics-Administration Dichotomy: The Dominant Character in Nigeria's Practice of Public Administration**

Theoretically, "Politics-administration dichotomy is a concept that sees the political and administrative fields as different entities " (Chioke, 2012, p.23)." Collaboratively stated, politics-administration dichotomy as a theory constructs the boundaries of public administration and demonstrates the normative relationship between elected officials cum administrators in a democratic setting (Svara, 1998). Several scholars propagated debates on such dichotomous analogy as follows:

*The administration dichotomy is attributed to Woodrow in his 1887 essay named 'The Study of Administration'. He sees politics and administration as two different fields. Frank J. Goodnow was another ardent proponent of this concept, and in his publication named, 'Politics and Administration' in the year 1900, he believes that while the former has to do with determination of the will of the state and the latter executes the will determined by the former (Chioke, 2012,p.23).*

However, Luther Gulick advocated that it was impossible to separate the two (*Ibid*). The dichotomy was advocated because the dichotomous demarcation of labor and authority between elected and administrative officials increases the accountability and planning ability of public administrators (Demir & Nyhan, 2008). To developed states, this is the reality on the ground, but to African states, more especially Nigeria, the dichotomous division of labor cum authority between elected and administrative officials has not increased the accountability and planning ability of her teeming bureaucrats/technocrats. This is where the matter lies.

Considering the administrative practices in Nigeria and other underdeveloped polities, the following question is cogent and urgent: Does such a dichotomy exist between the twin fields of politics and administration? According to Onah (2005,p.12), "recent experience in the functioning of government indicates the absence of dichotomy between policies (policy-making) and administration." If the dichotomy exists, it means that administrators may no longer project adequate plans that properly serve the purpose of administration. Again, the offices of administrators are indirectly rendered redundant if the planning function is denied them (Chioke,

2012, pp.24-25). Additionally, public administrators contribute to the style, pace, and tone of the execution of policies (Bello, 2022). So, the dichotomy does not and should not even exist. The argument is that if there is no dichotomy/separation of functions of the political and administrative classes, lawlessness/abuse of public offices and inefficiency may arise. As a result, administrative ethics should be adhered to, preventing tendencies of abuse of public offices and the inability of the electorates to hold public officers/administrators accountable. Commenting on public administration, Ewuim (2008,p.175) submitted:

*As a field of practice, it involves the mechanisms through which the wills and aspirations of the state are articulated and crystallized and then translated into tangible actualities. In other words, due to the complexities of the modern government, public administration is no longer limited to only policy implementation. Today's public administration is very much involved in policy formulation. This is because the average public administrator (civil servant) is a professional in his/her own domain who uses his/her technical competence and experience to help politicians articulate and coin the spirit and language of government policies.*

Individually or collectively, public administrators play an active role in formulating public policy (Bello, 2022, p.1). This study thus sees the advocacy cum practice of politics and administration dichotomy as the dominant character and/or venom in the country's practice of public administration for the following reasons.

Although the politics and administration dichotomy is traditionally used to express the demarcation that exists between politicians and bureaucrats (Chioke, 2012; Goodnow, 1900; Wilson, 1941), the term is herein contextualized as the differential that exists between the written code and the practice. Regarding the written code, politics herein symbolizes the political campaign promises/manifestoes, and in practice, administration represents the realities after the campaign – public administration practices. For example, the federal character principle in Sec 14 (3) & (4) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stated that:

*(3) The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to*

*promote national unity and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few State or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies. (4) The composition of the Government of a State, a local government council, or any of the agencies of such Government or council, and the conduct of the affairs of the Government or council or such agencies shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the people of the Federation.*

Invariably, Nigeria, in theory, has no room for sectionalism, an indirect rule system, and a divide-and-rule policy, but in practice, it is deeply rooted in day-to-day activities. According to Achebe (2012), the indirect rule in Igbo land was more difficult and challenging to implement as colonialism was executed through warrant chiefs. In many Nigerian states, indirect rule was subtly retagged, '*local administration*', and forced the Nigerians who would ordinarily reject such kind of colonial yoke. Consequently, Nwankwo (2022, pp.6-7) argued: "the past and present leadership of Nigeria, with all their best intentions for the country, could not address the devastating problem of decayed infrastructure, decline in the provision of social services, rising poverty, unemployment, massive corruption and recently dangerous insecurity challenges and secessionist agitation because they do not know where the rain began to beat the country and therefore, cannot say when and how Nigeria could come out of her present quagmire and hopelessness for the benefit of the majority of her citizens."

### **Discussions**

Nature has its own pattern and is thus uniquely designed to function in the pattern of its maker. Assuredly, "The child at birth is a biological being. He is physically helpless and depends on both parents and others around for everything (Anikpo *et al.*, 2007,p.35)." Due to the governance structure in place, the poor masses, in the same vein, are at the mercy of government for almost everything. They are not getting what they had depended on the government for survival. This is the irony of governance in underdeveloped states, especially with regard to this study's *locus classicus*. Nigeria's practice of public administration has not metamorphosed into a developmental state. A developmental state, according to Nwapi and Andrews (n.d), has shown

commitment and capability to pursuing nation-wide development with clearly defined ideological cum institutional obligations. Johnson in Nwapi and Andrews (n.d) highlighted four key defining elements of a developmental state:

*The existence of (i) a small, inexpensive, elite bureaucracy consisting of the best managerial talents, whose duties would be to identify the industries to be developed and the best means of developing them, (ii) a political system conducive to the bureaucracy to take initiatives without interference from vested interests, (iii) "market-conforming methods of state intervention in the economy", such as the avoidance of overly detailed laws that constrain administrative creativity and the utilization of public corporations, especially the mixed public-private type, to implement policies in high-risk sectors, and (iv) a pilot agency within the bureaucracy, such as Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry, that is characterized by internal democracy, functions like a think tank, and has a duty to coordinate industrial policy formulation and implementation.*

Johnson found the aforesaid elements well-pronounced in the Japanese economic model, which had no precise replica anywhere in the world, including the industrialized polities (Nwapi and Andrews, n.d). So, the developmental state concept was used by Chalmers Johnson to depict solid interventionist strategies used by Japan that produced continued speedy industrialization and/or lasting financial growth (Jewellord & Jesse, 2018). There are two components of the developmental state – the ideological and the structural. The ideological component sees a developmental state as a state that is developmental in orientation. Its goal is to ensure economic development – that is, a high rate of accumulation and industrialization. The structural component speaks to a state's capacity (institutional, technical, administrative, and political) to implement policies sagaciously and effectively (Mkandawire, 2001).

Conversely, given the politics and administration dichotomy and other imponderables, Nigeria had poorly continued its public administration, leading to a state of infrastructural decay with its zoological (zoo-like) underpinnings. Corroborating this, Nwankwo (2022, p.47) contended, "Since attaining independence from Britain in 1960, Nigerian leadership is described generally

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as a Giant Zoological Garden of Africa where irrationality prevails.” This irrationality is perhaps a sequel to the ineffective execution of anti-graft laws and human capital development programs in Nigerian sectors. This implies that Nigerian leaders are politics and administration dichotomists who promised the masses quality education but are not practically interested in education, as shown by the incessant strikes by academic unions.

Public administration and politics are closely intertwined and can hardly be separated for goal attainment and value creation. The two hardly tango in Nigeria, given the political-related issues injected into the polity. Again, the practice of public administration and the challenges thereof do not tango for the imperialistic interest of those who forced the marriage of inconvenience upon the masses. This study spotted corruption as part of the ups and downs, contextually called ‘lion/challenges.’ Corruption has increased to the extent that an average citizen now associates corruption with Nigeria’s democracy (Ogundiya, 2010) and slows the pace of economic development (Ikejiani, 1995). What has corruption done in Nigeria? To Ikejiani (1995), corruption "leads to non – achievement of goals." Permeating all the nooks and crannies of the country's public life, corruption successfully impaired SD. The executive arm of government is responsible for the hindered development through its non-strict implementation of checks and balances (corruption). This has worsened the situation as the corrupter and the corruptee regularly undermine the progress of the country.

Reviewed literature shows that godfatherism is among the challenges troubling Nigeria’s practice of public administration. Godfatherism and administration are now institutionalized in Nigeria’s contemporary politics (Familusi, 2012). Among the detrimental results of godfatherism on state, development is financing non-profitable needs and interests of godfathers (Chioke, 2020), leading to limited state funds and endless war against democracy (Chioke, 2022c). This challenge manifests in Nigeria’s component units, specifically Enugu State. For instance, Ndubuisi (2011) submitted that Enugu State lost a colossal amount of money that would have been used for capital projects to settle political godfathers in the state. Given this, there is a correlation between godfatherism and instability. Studies have shown that the high level of political instability in Enugu State is in lieu of the activities of godfathers (Chioke, 2020; Chukwuemeka, 2012; Ndubuisi, 2011). This affects the practice of public administration cum public administration practices. Thus, there exists a parasitic relationship between godfatherism and politics/administration, which more often than not results in unhealthy political rivalry,

chaos, maiming, banditry, and terrorism as a weapon of political distraction and propaganda – the game plan and technique of the non-ruling elites. This grossly affects public administration and democracy on different fronts.

The history of governance/public administration and the whole gamut of the country's politicking processes after independence shows that Nigeria has produced several irresponsible leaders at both the federal cum state levels. What is leadership? Accordingly, it has been stated that:

*Leadership from a global dimension entails planning the will of the state (public policies), budgeting the amount of materials and money needed for the execution of the will of the state, organizing via the establishment of structures in the form of interrelated functions and determining of the activities required for the attainment of the will of the state, directing by the continuous task of making decisions and embodying those decisions into the general order and interest of the state, coordinating by bringing together different parts of the general order/interest and the human resources involved in it and reporting the activities attained and those yet to be attained to the appropriate authority usually the electorate (Chioke, 2023, p. 101).*

Nigeria has experienced responsible and irresponsible leadership bedeviled by accountability challenges/issues (Chioke, 2023), which ensured that people do not manifestly see leadership as a psychological process of influencing followers (subordinates) and providing guidance, directing and leading the people in an organization towards the attainment of the objectives of the firm (Ibeme, 2020, p.434). Political accountability relationships give managers the discretion to be responsive to the needs/concerns of elected officials and the general public (Lakoma, 2023), which is lacking in Nigeria. Irresponsible leadership is a product of corruption and associated societal ills. The question is: what makes one a responsible leader/administrator and also an irresponsible leader/administrator? As a man, the ability to provide for the children's needs makes him a responsible and responsive man and vice versa. The same applies to leadership in the broader unit of society/the globe. A responsible cum responsive leader is a beacon of hope. If leadership is action, responsible leadership is taking responsible action

(Grahame, 2016). On the effect of the poor leadership recruitment process on Nigeria's development, Nwankwo (2022, p.47) wrote:

*Suppose the quality of the people is high (high moral quotient, high intelligence quotient and high physical quotient – in that order), life in the country will be pleasant to the extent that the people's quality is excellent. If it is low, existence will be as bitter in proportion to the degree of lowness. Depending on the people in the garden, a nation may have a Garden of Paradise, a Garden of Eden, or a Zoological Garden.*

However, the overwhelming presence of irresponsible and irresponsive leadership in the practice of public administration and public administration practices mar the gains of democracy and creates a sort of Zoological Garden with its numerous pathologies.

The study demonstrated that poverty and inequality currently antagonize Nigeria's public administration. It is the purview of this paper that what we see now in Nigeria is the cumulative effects of poverty and inequality occasioned by bad governance. The economic problem of the 1980s, particularly in Africa, Nigeria inclusive, was hinged on the incapability of states to help pilot the helm of economic development and prosperity, as opined by Wade (1990) in Ukwandu (2019). This study submits that part of the problem of Nigeria is the weaponization of poverty and inequality of all forms – contextually seen as deliberately making people poor and unequal so that they can be easily influenced to accept all manner of abnormalities thrown up by corrupt political class. Despite her extensive human and capital resources, poverty increased in Nigeria between 1980 and 2005, showing that the conduct of its economic activities was inadequate (Joseph, 2009). Recently, different indicators in Nigeria show that the majority of her citizens are wallowing in abject penury (Chioke, 2021a,p.19). Generally, there is multidimensional poverty in Nigeria, but:

*Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% in urban areas. Approximately 70% of Nigeria's populations live in rural areas, yet these areas are home to 80% of poor people; the intensity of rural poverty is also higher: 42% in rural areas compared to 37% in urban areas. Sixty-five percent of poor people – 86 million – live in the North, while 35% - nearly 47 million – live in the South (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022, p.xiv).*

This is rather unfortunate as Nigeria is abundantly endowed with mineral deposits, which ought to have translated into tangible results for effective public administration. In Africa, especially Nigeria, the challenge before governance is the problem of poverty. Men are poor, women are poorer, and children have inherited their parents' poverty. The government that impoverished them is wallowing in poverty of the psyche - the worst of them as it affects community development and administration of the general system.

The next problem is a procedural violation. Nobody is above the law, but this is merely in theory, as some cabals/institutions in Nigeria are, in reality, above the law. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) violation of electoral laws/guidelines is just an instance. Therefore, Nigeria must ensure that the "performance of tasks must not violate existing enabling laws and the constitution of the land (Chioke & Mbamalu, 2020, p.393)." This ensures effective public administration, which is the thoughtful use of available resources through leadership that ensures strict observance of processes in public settings within the ambit of statutory provisions. In contradistinction, procedural violation is a big obstacle to public administration as it socializes the public with deviant culture/rebellion. Procedural violation is, therefore, a step towards an ungovernable society (anarchy). Having exhausted the discussion on the identified challenges, the researcher presents a discussion on the next finding of this study.

Nigeria's politics and administration dichotomy is deeply rooted in the hegemonic sense of marginalization – a dangerous ploy leading the country into the Bermuda Triangle. This is Nigeria's most cherished implement allowed to flourish like the palm tree and grows like the cedar in Lebanon. How? During the election, the Northern oligarchy tours around the country campaigning for votes, but when electioneering processes are concluded, the people, especially the Igbo and other nations, become the lamb that must be sacrificed in order to propitiate existing political gods for a smooth ride through the state apparatus/administration for the sacred cows. In terms of politics, Nigerian citizens vote for the Chief executive, but in administration, the marginalized are left out in the decision-making processes, while the sacred cows are faithful/properly administered and taken care of. This leads us to the traditional lens of politics and administration dichotomy. Technically constructed and relayed, there is a huge dichotomy between politics and administration in Nigeria before and even now. This is merely an illusion

for those who benefit from this trend at the federal level. Therefore, the federal government has remained a source of worry to many who believe in one Nigeria because it kept promoting marginalization (Chioke, 2022a). This results from the born-to-rule ideology of the state actors – another form of politics and administration dichotomy that places unnecessary demarcation between two units that ought to be one in practice. "Born to rule mentality relegates the principles of equal rights, equal justice, equity, and fairness " (Chioke, 2020,p.284)." Following the ongoing practice of relegation of the principles of equal rights in the administration of the country, this study agrees with Udentia (2017:9); thus, it was unthinkable to make plans for the future of Nigeria without the participation of the Igbo ethnic group in such activities. In this context, Ewuim's (2008, pp.175-175) treatise is remarkable to mention: "Public administration is the theory and practice which deals with the efficient and economical management of public affairs, which involves the formulation and implementation of government policies to ensure social equity. This implies that the policies of government should be formulated and implemented for the good of every member of the state; and not just for the few elites." This is the missing link in Nigeria's governance/practice of public administration.

### **Conclusion**

Since functionalism speaks about structures that negatively or positively influence the workings of the organization/polity, this paper examined government structures and their influence over public administration in Nigeria as an organization. This study made it apparent that public administration and the challenges in the Nigerian context cannot tango; the challenges have occasioned a lack of robust policy frameworks effectively implemented for national development. This implies that there are public policies in Nigeria that were contrived but not implemented, and some were sometimes poorly implemented due to the interplay of conglomerates of issues raised. Hence, lamb and lion cannot tango to achieve the dividends of federalism and democracy. Viewed from structural functional dimension, this study agrees that the already highlighted problems constantly negate social practices. As argued by Susser (1992), social practices have a functional role in sustaining the system as a whole.

Given the pervasive effect of peculiar challenges disturbing Nigeria's practice of public administration, it is concluded that Nigeria is not a developmental state and lacks appropriate governance structures that can usher in SD. It is thus recommended that Nigeria should be made

a developmental state through robust development policies and effective implementation by responsive political leadership and administrative practices devoid of corruption, godfather politics, and procedural violations. This study *inter alia* provided new insights on how politics and administration dichotomy constitutes major challenge to Nigeria's practice of public administration.

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