



NEXUS BETWEEN STATE AND IDEOLOGIES: A CASE OF CHILD'S RIGHT UNDER COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In Nigeria, politics is not in tandem with Aristotelian version of man as a social animal. He asserted that man cannot live without entering in a relationship and fulfilling obligations. Thus, there is no path from individual suffering to individual happiness will affect many persons Without a comprehensive policy initiative anchored on appropriate state character and ideological dispositions, the child's rights will continue to remain the evidence of dearth of social insecurity in Nigeria. This scenario indicates that there are still a lot to be done to militate against the unfolding thoughts and practices. The review reveals that there has been disregard for ethical conduct and the tendency to suppress information, deny changes that are relevance and factual refused to accept blames and ignore real problems by creating new ones. For instance, in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, where free movements have been banned and social distancing greatly promoted in a bid to flatten the spread of the Coronavirus. In some cases, some of them have tested positive to COVID-19. Nigeria's House of Representatives has also called on the Federal government to stop state governments from repatriating almajiri children. Also, traditional and religious institutions have a vital role to play, considering that the practice is deeply rooted in the ideological, cultural and religious sentiments and biases. The paper recommends that governmental actions can only provide the capacity for reforms; it will require the collaborations of relevant stakeholders, including the Northern elites, for meaningful impact to be achieved and sustainability guaranteed.

Keywords: State, Ideology, Rights of child, Nexus, Almajiri, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

There has been a public outcry and apathy on the performance government in carry out duties and obligations. Citizens who are the electorates of public officials are deemed treated as means to an end but not an end in itself. The trends have been a pervasion against Jeremy Bentham's philosophy of proving greatest happiness to the greater number. This assertion posits that the basis of governance is anchored safety, protection of lives and livelihoods. This backdrop is more glaring in modern times. This scenario indicates that there are still a lot to be done to militate against the unfolding thoughts and practices. Seemingly, the way and manner in which organizations and institutions operates significantly determine



by civilization and ideological disposition of the people. . This paper examines how State and Ideologies impacted negatively on the rights of Nigerian Child under COVID-19 Pandemic.

State

The concept of State generates over the years chain of controversies. A historic form of organization is the State. This could be attest to early works of Marx and Engels in in an article, the origin of State and private property. For instance Marx described State as executive Committee of the bourgeoisie. Studies have shown that State has been an evolving phenomenon in the life of nations and nationhood. When the State becomes dominant in the art and process of governance, individuals and groups begin to resist the dominance through ideological processes. The state is a dynamic phenomenon in the life of societies and nation states. Pecsckke refers state as geographically delimited society endowed with supreme authority for the establishment of universal common good. In the view of Barne, state is a politically organized body of people occupying a definite territory and living under a government entity or almost entirely free from the persons within it. States as institutions of governance continue to evolve over times. State has been conceived as an organism that predicates on the dominant ideology. Therefore, there is always a relationship between the behavior of the state and the prevailing ideology. However, state in a Capitalist society domineer tendencies. These features includes tendencies has indexes such as special interest, selection process is informed by class interest, policy formulation with the interest of the few and above all, ideological hegemony.

The above assertions could be credited to the works of Collins C. Wright in an article titled “the power elite published in 1956”. Mills identified three categories of the political elites comprised of the President and the members of the Cabinet, Secondly, the Business elite which comprised of Captains of industry Lastly, the Military and paramilitary elites made up of both serving and retired. These elites mostly hijacked the state operations.

Ideology

The term ideology appears to have been put into used as an intellectual discourse at the beginning of the 18th century (Oke, 2005). At the initial stage, ideology was conceived to be a general features or phenomenon of civilizations and Societies. However, as events unfold themselves, ideologies become linked or associated to many spheres of human existence. Ideologies considerably influenced reasoning and activities of many institutions ranging from politics, religion, socio-cultural and legal frameworks. In the Political scene, ideologies have been developed to provide roadmaps for connecting politics with prevailing socio-economic conditions found in the society in consideration. There has been also the basis of interest groups in national and nationhood.

Moreover, arising from this background is the fact that ideologies are interest laden with less attention to objectivity. Added to the scenario is the issue of targeting against any opposing views expressly or impliedly? Ideologies are the radiating forces that influenced and propelled the life and over all activities of individuals and groups including regions and



nations. Yet another disturbing feature of ideologies is the continuous distortion or deceptions or both. It also sees opposing views as rivals and virtually incorrect. Thus, Ideology is a complex system of ideas for instituting or justifying a given set of political or any other interest and goals. It therefore connotes that ideologies are expressions of attitudes that radiate and navigate between rights and wrong on one hand and also between change and values of institutions and belief systems expressed as values and thought processes.

Child's Rights in Nigerian

There are many problems faced by children in Nigeria: Despite the high level of profit in the oil sector and through the exploitation of other natural resources, distribution of wealth is unequal and the country's overall economic situation remains unsatisfactory. A large majority of the population still lives in extreme poverty; this is especially true of persons living rural regions. Poverty has a negative impact on the lives of young Nigerians: creating widespread malnutrition, sickness, limited educational opportunities, etc. Handicapped children suffering from physical and mental deficiencies and difficulties are often victims of entrenched discriminatory practices in Nigeria. In effect, there are an insufficient number of shelters and boarding schools for disadvantaged and physically handicapped children. Those who are physically challenged are not welcome in scholarly establishments, while others are denied access to such institutions due to their financial situation. Infrastructural shortcomings stemming from the dearth of funds and absence of laws for their provision are further exacerbated by discriminatory attitudes towards the disadvantaged.

Right to Health

In Nigeria, the rate of mortality for children under the age of 5 remains excessively high, with the probability of dying before one's fifth birthday being greater among boys than girls. Children living in rural zones are exposed to a particularly high risk of early death: due to inadequate sewage systems, lack of clean water and woefully deficient health services. Malnutrition is the principal cause of death among Nigerian children. Many of them suffer from moderate or acute dietary deficiencies, which serve to stunt their growth. Other common causes of death include neonatal maladies, malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, etc.

Right to Education

The quality of instruction leaves much to be desired, though the country has taken several important measures to remedy its educational system. There have been significant developments in school infrastructure, sanitation and administrative management, and health and hygiene have been promoted. Other actions have also been taken to improve the quality of teaching. Child abuse Corporal punishment is still an acceptable social practice and is widely utilized by both families and schools. Those who defend its traditional use often argue that such punishment is vital for enforcing good discipline among children. Violence is very common in Nigeria, and children are frequently the victims.



Child Marriage

Child marriages are forbidden in Nigeria by law. Nevertheless, they still occur on a regular basis in certain impoverished regions of the country, most notably in the north. Parents view child marriage as a means for the child, and for all of the family, to escape the precarious conditions of their existence. Child marriage has negative repercussions on children's health and overall development, and prevents them from fully exercising their rights. Young girls who marry early in life invariably abandon their schooling and are thus extremely limited in terms of their social interactions.

Right to Descent Livelihood

Studies have shown that 23.22 percent of children in Nigeria were in extreme poverty while 70.3 percent of children in the country were in overall poverty. There is also pronounced child deprivation in education, health, nutrition, child protection or water and sanitation. Current total for children under age of 15 stands at 31 million

Discussions

A cursory examination of African political scene does not in any way refute the preponderance of leaders who seems to be generally incapable of meeting the essential needs particularly pursuing the rights of children (Bamisaye, Awofoso, 2011). Most of the leaders have disregard for public opinion especially the children. In very recent times, Africa at large and Nigeria in particular, there have been emerging paradoxical situation with an ever-increasing demand and alignments at various the levels of governance on one hand and that of the citizens on the other (Ige, Lewis, 1978). This scenario is more glaring when it comes to saving of lives and livelihoods of citizens and children. There are new and unprecedented demands from the citizens on provision of palliatives and outright condemnation of the state operations. Blames and counter blames become very rampant in the national life. The National and sub national governments are complaining about the attitudes of citizens for not obeying the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) including the World Health Organizations (WHO) laid down protocols. The citizens are blaming the government for not providing them with palliatives. The citizens on their part continue with unprecedented demand for palliatives by outright criticism, especially failure to fulfillment of obligations as promised by the government.

In view of these trends, the circumstances calls for analysis of reasons which have given rise to it as well as suggestions for further appropriate steps and actions. The effort is indeed tasking on the both the sides of government and the citizens. These events have been saddled on the already existing problems linked to abuses of social contract, especially the rights of a child (Ige, Lewis, 1978). A hard decision the government of Nigeria has to take is the dilemma of lockdown to avoid been infected by the dreaded COVID-19 Virus and sustaining livelihoods of the citizens.



Broadly, these issues are universally recognized and acknowledged. However, it will be very paramount to examine several cases and incidences with direct bearing on the rights of the child in Nigeria. These include among others issues ranging from widespread sense of disillusion with institutions of governance. Hence, these issues culminated into lack of confidence and trust on the mechanisms adopted by the government in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. The essence of these gestures is to provide a roadmap for guidelines and actions. Hence, it has created grave concerns among the citizenry particularly the street children and orphans affected by Lockdown and the Terrorist attacks and religious beliefs and practices anchored on ideologies. This scenario requires a shift that will change the narratives on the well-being of children in Nigeria body polity

Sequel to the above, in 2003, Nigeria adopted the Child Rights Act to domesticate the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The act was known as the Children's Rights Act of 2003 expands the human rights bestowed to citizens in Nigeria's 1999 constitution to children. Although this law was passed at the Federal level, it is only effective if State assemblies also codify the law. The bill was first introduced in 2002, but did not pass because of opposition from the Supreme Council for Shari'a. The act was officially passed into law in 2003 by Former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the Children's Rights Act 2003, in large part because of the media pressure that national stakeholder and international organizations put on the National Assembly. As of 2009, the Child Rights Act was codified into law in 19 States out of 36 in f Nigeria's 36 states] There are four states in Nigeria in where the legislators have passed the law, but the governors have not instituted the act into law.

In order to enforce the Act, the National Child Rights Implementation Committee was created. Committees were also established for some of the states which have ratified the act. The committee listed five top priorities for addressing the needs of children: establishing safe water supply and sanitation, working on the HIV/AIDs epidemic, creating job opportunities for women so they are better able to take care of the children, providing universal basic education, and making the primary health care system better. A 2010 report notes that the capacity for monitoring and sufficiently implementing the act is low.

Another way in which the Child Rights Act proves difficult to enforce is because it contradicts other national laws. Even though the Child Rights Acts defines a child as anyone under eighteen years old, this conflicts with another Nigerian Law, the Young Person's Act, which designates a child as an individual below the age of fourteen. In contrast, The Young Person's Acts deems an individual ages fourteen to seventeen "young people". The definitions created by these two separate laws are in tension with each other and pose issues in matters of interpretation. Although the provisions within the Child Rights Act should be seen as overruling any other law, the fact that the Child Rights Act is not ratified in all Nigerian States makes it difficult. Thus, there has been an increased presence of beggars both children and youths at every public place, places of worships, filling stations, restaurants, super markets in most northern states in Nigeria.



Furthermore, the issue of that brought to limelight the gross violation of child's right in Nigeria is the Almajiri phenomenon, a Hausa word meaning immigrant child in search of Qur'anic education. The problem has been worsened by the economic crisis under Covid-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic the children are sent out early in life to seek Islamic knowledge outside their environment. They are placed under Islamic teachers known simply as Mallams under whom they are supposed to learn the rudiments of the religion. In most cases, and due to the high level of poverty and the large number of children the Mallams have to cater for, they are often not able to take adequate care of the children; thus, the children, especially the Almajiris are sent out to search for their livelihood. Almajiri phenomenon is common in the Northern part of Nigeria. The 'Almajiris' are referred to as 'street children' due to the way they wander along the streets begging for food, clothes and other necessities. They are very vulnerable to be infected by Coronavirus with lockdown, movement was restricted and the Mallams who heavily depend of gift could not feed the children. Unfortunately, under the period of COVID19, the obligation to given to them by the Mallams or the member of the larger society could not afford to feed them especially under the current economic crisis.

The Almajiri are innocent children who have become unfortunate victims of societal neglect, let loose to drip and get drown in the unfathomable sea of corruption, ignorance and poverty; and thus often hypnotized, hoodwinked, coerced or simply hijacked to play active roles in many of conflicts. The only responsibility the parents owe these hapless children is to bring them to the Qur'anic School and they are then left to their fate. Some of them are forced into the act of begging and doing menial jobs. They have large population that runs to several thousands and are prevalent in almost all the villages and cities in this part of the country.

Put into perspective, Nigeria has about 13.2 million out of school children. In West Africa, Nigeria accounts for 45 per cent of out-of-school children. 69 per cent of the out-of-school in Nigeria is from Northern Nigeria, with 60 per cent of them comprising of girls. The number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has increased from 10.5 million in 2010 to 13.2 million in 2015 (UNICEF, 2014). Conflict experts hold that having vulnerable children in cities across a nation that is fighting an ideological war is a terrible risk. For instance, it has been widely reiterated that the reason Boko Haram insurgents has continued to wage war against the Nigerian state is as a result of a robust recruitment source. The Almajiri system has created a mass of vulnerable younglings who are susceptible to the antics of conflict promoters upon the promise of material reward or psycho-social brainwashing.

In Nigeria, politics is not in tandem with Aristotelian version of man as a social animal. He asserted that man cannot live without entering in in a relation and fulfilling obligations. Thus, there is no path from individual suffering to individual happiness will affect many persons Without a comprehensive policy initiative anchored on appropriate state character and ideological dispositions, the child's rights will continue to remain the evidence of dearth of social insecurity in Nigeria. There has been disregard for ethical conduct is the



tendency to suppress information, deny changes that are relevance and factual refused to accept blames and ignore real problems by creating new ones. For instance, in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, where free movements have been banned and social distancing greatly promoted, the children especially the Almajiri system is greatly threatened. Hundreds of Almajiri children have been deported from across different states of the federation; in a bid to flatten the spread of the Coronavirus. In some cases, some of them have tested positive to Covid-19

It is in view of the above that the. Nigeria's House of Representatives has also called on the Federal government to stop state governments from repatriating Almajiri children. The most unfortunate aspect of the violations is the fact eleven (11) States in Northern part of Nigeria could not domesticate the child's Act. It is obvious that the North would have been a great beneficiary to the implementation of the fact, yet States in the North out of ideological and political conviction and gains has shown severe apathy in the adoption and enforcement of child Act. Thus, Almajiri population according to UNICEF report in August, 2014 stood at 1.5 million. North-East with Almajiri population of 2.7 million, 13.2 million were out of school children. About 3,500 children were recruited and used by militants in the North- East (UNICEF, 2014).

Recommendations

Childs rights requires collective action which should involve both the federal and state governments to map out a holistic policy action. Also, traditional and religious institutions have a vital role to play, considering that the practice is deeply rooted in the ideological, cultural and religious sentiments and biases. Governmental actions can only provide the capacity for reforms; it will require the collaborations of relevant stakeholders, including the Northern elites, for meaningful impact to be achieved and sustainability guaranteed. Nigeria Government and subnational governments should declare a state of emergency non-implementation and enforcement of Child Act Nigeria Government should through relevant agencies advocacy project Basic Civic Education anchored on right ideological practices should be made Compulsory in schools Relationship between individuals and total society is far more intimate and far more organic. We cannot transform a society without changing the attitudes and practices of the members and their lives.

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