



Aluko, Henry A. ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7282-5306>, Aluko, Ayodele and Ogunjimi, Funke (2022) Democracy and Administration of Social Justice in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment of the Fourth Republic. Open Journal of Political Science. pp. 181-194.

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Democracy and Administration of Social Justice in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment of the Fourth Republic

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How to cite this paper: Aluko, A., Aluko, H. A., & Ogunjimi, F. (2022). Democracy and Administration of Social Justice in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment of the Fourth Republic. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 12, 181-194.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2022.122011>

Received: February 10, 2022

Accepted: March 26, 2022

Published: March 29, 2022

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Abstract

This study examined democracy and administration of social justice in Nigerian fourth republic. The aim of the study was to critically assess how Nigeria's democracy and administration of social justice has fared in bringing about the much-craved people-oriented development in the fourth republic. The study is documentary research which employed content analytical approach in analysing secondary data; with "John Rawls Theory of Justice" employed as its model of analysis. One of the most worrisome challenges of Nigeria's relay-race towards development has been the inability of Nigeria's political system to adhere to social justice in administration of public affairs. The study found that Nigeria's democratized fourth republic is infested with obscene social injustice and inequality in power sharing, government decisions on citing of industries, infrastructural development, with lopsidedness in the recruitment/appointment of public office holders which has been exclusively Northern region skewed. The study reveals that the "Federal Character Principle" etched into the 1999 Constitution to address inherent cleavages of inequalities has been thrown overboard, as a particular ethnic group has seized power at the peril of development of all others. The implications of an abused democracy and social justice system are not just deleterious to the citizens today, but more so for generations to come in terms of sustainable development. The paper therefore calls on the Nigerian government to learn, embrace and practice the intrinsic operational principles of an ideal democracy that seeks to promote justice, equity, accountability, respect for fundamental human rights, rule of law and other good governance values that would usher Nigeria into a higher development trajectory.

Keywords

Social Justice, Inequality, Democracy, Federal Character, Governance, Leadership, Ethnicity, Polity, State

1. Introduction

Democracy generally depicts a form of governance in which supreme power and authority reside in the people but exercised in the end through an institutionalised system of elected representation. Unequivocally, democracy has become the quintessential form of governance in the world today, recognized as the only ethical and authentic way through which a society can be properly administered (Asaju, 2016). Thus, in all societies of the world today, particularly in third world countries like Nigeria, the general concern has moved past which political system is appropriate, but rather when will the polity become democratised or fully democratic. Perhaps, this is because democracy goes beyond forming political parties, contesting general elections and having a civilian government in power; to profoundly embrace a system of government pre-eminently anchored on equality and social justice.

Avail to say that democracy is based on the ability of a nation to provide channels for discussions, consultations, mobilizations and the responsiveness of the government to the needs and aspirations of the citizens; for it is only when the interests of the people are equitably represented, with their needs and aspirations satisfactorily furnished that meaningful development is made. On the foregoing note, Enuke (2019) underscores the quintessence of equality and social justice as the heartbeat of democracy. He further argues that democracy is:

A deliberate and determined move towards the creation of a society bound together by shared sentiments and outlook. The creation of an ordered and stable society which guarantees security of lives and property of individuals; cultivation and inculcation in the citizens a democratic temper, an attitude of service and trusteeships, a sense of civic responsibility, a spirit of fair play and tolerance of other people's opinions and interests; absence of arrogance and arbitrariness and a sense of honest, faithful, selfless, impartial and objective service, dedicated, selfless, disciplined, patriotic, and highly motivated leadership style.

Hence, it can be innocuously argued from the foregoing that good governance forms the philosophical groundwork upon which democracy and social justice are built. This would then imply that social justice is the surest foundation on which to build a good and successful government. Accordingly, social justice is generally defined as the fair and equitable distribution of power, resources, and obligations in society to all people, regardless of race or ethnicity, age, gender, ability, status, sexual orientation and religion (Ayala, Hage, & Wilcox, 2016).

This gist of social justice coincides with the meaning of governance as the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management and distribution of a country's social and economic resources. Avail to say that the nature and manner of this distribution makes governance a bad or a good one and as well depicts the actual existence of real democracy.

Lamentably, one of the most worrisome challenges of Nigeria's relay-race towards development has been the inability of Nigeria political system to adhere to social justice in administration of public affairs. The grossly underdeveloped circumstance of the Nigerian polity, despite its enormous resources and huge potentialities has remained an enigma which has long been under intense academic debate in Management and Social Sciences palace. Some scholars (Etim & Ukpere, 2012; Babatunde, 2015) argue that the major explanations for the failure of all development programmes in Nigeria have been the intermittent military intervention in politics which has derailed Nigeria's full return to democracy. Others (Cheesman & Fisher, 2019; Wright, 2020) contend that Nigeria had never experienced democracy, that neither during colonial rule nor since independence has Nigeria been a democratic country, rather that Nigeria strove to be a democracy but was never one. Hence, they argue that the problem is and has always been the colonial legacy of false-hood democracy deprived of social justice. They avow those Nigeria like most African states were forced to democratize by the colonial masters then, for imperialism and now, in order to be able to access foreign loans and aid, without further attempt to domesticate western liberal democracies to enhance its benefits for Nigeria and Africa.

Some other scholars (Ogundiya, 2010; Asaju, 2016; Onuoha & Nwachukwu, 2016; Yagboyaju, 2019) rather took a nuanced stand between both sides of the argument. They posit that it's not a hyperbole to contend that Nigeria's return to electoral democracy in 1999 has not made significant impact on the economic and social well-being of the people. Their argument is that the colonial epoch and even the record of the military is a bit better than that of civilian dispensation; arguing that the periods of civil rule (1960-1966, 1979-1983 and 1999 to date) failed to produce any positive or better results. They opine that the problem is inherent and a causality of our own making (both the leadership and the led). That instead of the ideal democracy hinging on equity and social justice; what we have is political assassinations, ethno-religious conflicts, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment and general economic and political decay which have been the major dividends of democracy since 1999 when the country returned to democracy.

Thus, the nuanced opinions converged that democracy as is currently practised in Nigeria has yielded foul-tasting effects, associated with the nature of the Nigerian state and the character of its leaders. Nevertheless, one of the major weaknesses of these existing studies is that most of them were unable to properly scrutinize and address in concrete terms "why Nigeria's democracy miscarried in engendering equity and social justice in its governance system". It is there-

fore the focus of this study to critically assess how Nigeria's democracy and administration of social justice has fared in bringing about the much-craved people-oriented development in the fourth republic, while interrogating the factors that has undermined social equality and social justice in our purported democratic dispensation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Issues of Social Justice and Inequality in Nigerian Democratised Forth Republic

Primarily, democracy is the polity, which is pre-eminently based upon equality and social justice, such that neither one party nor the other should be supreme, but that both stand under the same footings. Thus, as succinctly put by John Stuart Mill "Democracy is the government of the whole people and the greatest good is the happiness of the greatest number of the people". It therefore depicts a governing system where ultimate sovereignty and/or the supreme controlling power is rested on the aggregate of the community, with every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of the ultimate sovereignty but take an actual part in the process and proceeds of governance (Ayala et al., 2016).

Historically in Nigeria, when the military was disengaged from the polity to launch the much-desired democracy in the fourth republic with the 1999 democratization process, Nigerians expressed a sigh of relief and freedom from the totalitarian and dictatorial military rule. The Nigerian 1999 democracy was institutionalized on those universal principles of justice, equity, freedom, liberty, accountability, openness and transparency in government, public participation, accountability and transparency, rule of law, etc. according to which a good government must be run (Asaju, 2016). But over twenty (20) years later, Nigerians have not significantly reaped the dividends of democracy which were promised to be delivered on a platter of justice and equality, as upheld by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Rather, Nigerian democracy has more likely promoted inequality rather than equality. Serve to say that Nigeria's democratized fourth republic is infested with obscene social injustice and inequality in resource control and power sharing, also in government decisions on citing of industries and infrastructural development, with recruitment/appointment of public office holders' Northern region skewed.

2.2. Resource Control and Power Sharing

Resource control and allocation in Nigeria is replete with tensions over political and economic marginalization of some ethnic nationalities. Enuke (2019) avows that democracy in Nigeria is unconvincing and in terms of tangible outcome has failed to meet the socio-economic expectations of the people. Ogundiya (2010: p. 205) was quite vociferous in his assertion that "There can be no genuine democracy in a country where citizens are grossly unequal in wealth and the poor who are invariably the majority, are dependent on the wealthy minority". He further

argues that what exists in Nigeria is “Plutocracy” because wealth is power; and where political power is inevitably in the hands of the wealthy, democracy ceases to be democracy in reality.

Overtime since 1999, arising from party ideologies and ethnic biases, power has rotated with a particular ethnic line. [Enuke \(2019\)](#) asserts that Nigerian leadership in the fourth republic has become a recycling business of a group who idealize themselves as “Born to rule”. Hence, the bureaucratic melodrama arising from benching a given region and/or ethnic group against the other is now the trending gimmicks of power play, culminating in humongous imbalance and hegemonic power control both socio-politically and economically. One of the most staggering issues of ethicized resource control branded by political and economic marginalization of some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, is the ethicized transfer of resources from one region for the development of another and the underdevelopment of the region where the resources are based or extracted from.

2.3. Citing of Industries and Infrastructural Development

More questionable and repugnant is why a refinery has not been established in Port-Harcourt or any other South-southern States from where all the crude oil is extracted, but refined and outrightly expended in Northern Nigeria? The reality is that proceeds accruing from the resources of the South are for the development of the North, while the entire South-south is underdeveloped in terms of infrastructural development. This has not been swallowed hook-line-and-sinker by the people of South, particularly South-south with spiked level of militias in the region whose oil well are tapped and environment grossly contaminated, only for the proceeds to be invested in the development of the North, to others detriment.

[Trovalla and Trovalla \(2015\)](#) posit that the imbalance in infrastructural development in Nigeria has murdered the humaneness of democracy in Nigeria and its peace of social justice. In response, so many ethnic groups have developed some level of Militias with threats of secession, such as the Biafra-induced IPOB, clamoring for settlement of their grievances through a referendum in the Nigerian states that were part of the old Eastern Region. Likewise, the Niger Delta Militias, the O’odua People Congress (OPC), Bakassi Boys, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Egbesu boys, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) Arewa People’s Congress (APC), the Shiites, etc. are all metamorphoses of inequality in distributive outcome and power sharing in Nigeria.

2.4. Recruitment and Appointment of Public Office Holders

One of the most glaring reasons full democracies has continued to elude the Nigerian system, is the in-depth lack of social justice in the conduct of public affairs as contained in Section 14 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The “Federal Character Principle” etched into the 1999 Constitution to address inherent cleavages of inequalities has been thrown overboard, as a

particular ethnic group has seized power at the peril of development of all others. Asaju and Egberi (2015: p. 52) succinctly emphasize that “It was in realization of some inherent cleavages of inequalities, that the federal character principle was introduced”.

Hence, the essence of the federal character principle was to ensure that in power relations and power sharing, government decisions on citing industries, building roads, awarding scholarships, recruitment or appointment or employment of public office holders, admission and revenue allocations, etc. reflect federal character. To this end, Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution provides that:

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 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 states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.

Taribo (2014) explained that though the intentions of the initiators of federal character were noble, guided by Nigeria’s historical experiences and the reality of the Nigerian situation; however, the principle is obviously volatile in practice, as its inappropriate ethicized application makes it susceptible to the same ills it was designed to expunge. Consequently, this has engendered geopolitical imbalance and denials among ethnic groups thereby aggravating ethnic contestations in Nigeria. The inability of Nigeria political system to adhere to social justice in administration of public affairs has made appointments Northern region skewed, especially in the present administration. A notable issue under the federal character is the brutality of the police against protestants (Chisom, 2021). Democracy should pay attention to the interests of the people in an ideal situation but evidence from studies showed that the Nigerian leaders are mostly against the freedom of expression. Incessant arrest of freedom fighters such as Sunday Igboho and Omoyele Sowore among others attests to the fact that the leaders are not open to public scrutiny.

2.5. Summary

The narrative above suggests that Nigeria is yet to embrace true federalism and democracy as presented by Enuke (2019). The lack of ethnic bias in appointment and provision of basic amenities indicates that governance is not focused on the prosperity of the state, rather, a fragmented approach to satisfying self and relevant stakeholders. Democracy will thrive and the country will develop if governance is void of bias and with genuine interest of the nation at heart.

3. Reasons Why Nigeria’s Democracy Has Miscarried in Engendering Social Justice in the Governance System

The symptoms and causes of dishonest, biased, partial and unjust governance

are obviously corruption, ethnic and religious impositions, to mention but a few. However, among these anomalies in the matter of governance, the most critical issue of all (whose influence would most certainly nib the other issues in the bud) is leadership.

3.1. Leadership Ineffectiveness

Leadership depicts the great importance placed on the caliber of people that are empowered to spearhead or run various public institutions and control resources; vis-à-vis the approach or pattern of leadership they portray in ensuring an effective and productive public service (Adebayo & Bharat, 2016). In analysing the plethora of leaders that have spanned the Nigeria leadership ladder, Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2018: p. 81) were assertive that “selfish, mediocre, tribal leaders and opportunistic small money-minded people masquerading as leaders have continued to regenerate in Nigeria”. Over time, Nigeria has become a mockery of the so-called “Giant of Africa” and an epitome of unproductiveness, ineptitude, mediocre, parochial and ethnic-drunk leadership; thus, the preference of self-preservation over national interest continues to undermine Nigeria’s attempt to liberate itself from the clutches of underdevelopment.

In the fourth republic and more recently in this present dispensation, leadership ineptitude is breaking up the corporate existence of the Nigerian state, such that the present executive capacity characterized by the “Cabal system” apparently has no direction, no vision and no agenda. Moreover, the legislative arm of government that would have provided adequate checks on abuses of power by the executive and recklessness of the opportunistic politicians is also inefficient and ineffective. More worrisome and disheartening is the judicial arm, which is supposed to be the last hope of the common man and the beacon of social justice/equality; rather, it has become a mere puppet in the hands of greedy politicians who want to usurp political power illegitimately.

Ogundiya (2010) succinctly notes that in the Nigerian context, it is no exaggeration that the notion of the judiciary as *primus inter pares* is one that has been bastardized. This explains most of the questionable Appeal and Supreme Court electoral contest rulings in recent times, particularly with that of Imo state as an obvious example of social injustice; where a gubernatorial candidate Hope Uzodimma who was neither the first runner-up, nor the second runner-up, was declared the winner of the 2019 Imo state gubernatorial election.

Leadership ineptitude and insensitivity most certainly is also about the wrong leadership recruitment, to which Onwe, Abah and Nwokwu (2015) assert that due to politicized recruitment and selection, the Nigerian governance process lacks scientism and does not enthrone merit system. This is because the people who stand for election in Nigeria are not qualified candidates by the requirement of the law; but the very fact that the Electoral Commission is inclined to leadership ineptitude, has paved way for the enthronement of top administrative and executive leaders who lack qualification and are mediocre. This has aggravated a

lot of Nigerians in a country where there are millions of Professors and enlightened men in all sectors of the country. But what we have is leadership that is piled-up with illiterates, unenlightened, not exposed, daftly minded aging men.

Suffice it that Nigeria's recruitment/appointment/election process is faulty, and when the means of enthroning public leadership is faulty, that country is bound to have a faulty leadership and a dysfunctional polity. This whole reality affects the style of leadership and frustrates any effort towards the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria and the attainment of the much-desired sustainable development.

3.2. Endemic Corruption

Corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria's political system and as vividly put by Nyukorong (2014) corruption describes any organized, interdependent system in which part of the system is either not performing duties it was originally intended to perform, or performing them in an improper way, to the detriment of the system's original purpose. Hence, corruption can occur in many forms. It can affect the "physical" being in terms of disintegration or by decomposition, with its attendant unwholesome and loathsome connotations, and it can affect the "moral" being by the "perversion" or "destruction" of integrity, particularly in the discharge of public duties by bribery or favor and other forms of illicit gains. Olasehinde, Abah and Nwokuwu (2015) went further to juxtapose corruption in Nigerian leadership concomitantly with sadism. He reasoned that much of the explanation of the "carefree" attitude of typical Nigerian leader has to do with sadism. In its simplest meaning, sadism is a state of the mind by which an individual derives joy in seeing other people suffers. This despicable euphoria derived from others suffering, makes most public servants in Nigeria irresponsible to the demands of the public they are meant to serve.

The foregoing assertion makes a truism of the cliché that "You must first and foremost remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye". President Muhammadu Buhari on assumption of office declared an Anti-graft war against all forms of corruption and to this effect; the Presidency has enrolled series of anti-corruption programmes and Agencies to advise the incumbent administration on prosecution of "War Against Corruption" and the implementation of required reforms in the Nation's Criminal Justice System. However, the President has been criticized by Nigerians and the International community of leading a selective war against corruption (Ezika & Okpata, 2019). He is also accused of appointing certain corrupt officials as members of his cabinet; likewise, his so-called Anti-graft War Agencies are also accused of lack of transparency as the recovered loots of public funds are not properly accounted for.

3.3. Religious, Political and Ethnic Impositions

Religious politics and ethnic imposition depict the gradual Islamisation of Nige-

ria directly and indirectly by the present administration, taking away the secularity of the Nigerian State as contained in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Nigerian Constitution pre-supposes that an individual has freedom to practice religion of his or her choice without government interference. Momoh (2016) asserts that this is where secularism comes into play. The argument is that secularism is a legal position in the supreme law of Nigeria, stating that religious belief should not influence any public and/ or governmental decisions. In other words, secularism is a documented position in the Nigerian Constitution relating to political belief in the separation of religion and state, such that while people are allowed to practice whatever they believe in as their religion, the government must not allow that to influence leadership, public policy or power relations/control.

It is mind-boggling that today, the Southerners are already besieged by the psychological warfare of Islamisation. The introduction of Ruggar settlement saga perpetrated by the present administrations is deemed to have some sort of religious undertones. Likewise, the latest border closure trending in Nigeria, with the borders indirectly still open to African Muslims coming in preparatory to conquer Nigeria as a land for the Muslim. No wonder the entire (Non-Muslim) Nigerian citizens are gripped with fear of total Islamization of the country, as an agenda of the present administration. This is what ethnic politics by extension, is bringing to the Nigerian polity, to the degradation of meaningful democracy and effective administration of social justice in the Nigerian state.

3.4. The Nexus

The argument in this section examined the major factors responsible for the premature state of democracy in Nigeria—leadership ineffectiveness, endemic corruption and several impositions ranging from political to religion. To summarise the argument in line with the definition of Abraham Lincoln, “government of the people, by the people, for the people” indicates that democracy is effective to the extent to which leadership is right. When the leader does right, the other elements fall in place, and this explains the concept of effectiveness in leadership. As argued by Prasad (2017), intelligence, purposefulness, and public interest is the key to successful leadership in democracy. Firmness of purpose will ensure that the leader is focused on the good of the state alone which eliminates bias and any form of unjust impositions as mentioned earlier.

Although corruption seems undefeatable, the leader is the chief executor of the will of the people and the constitution. Purposefulness will see deliberate effort to do right at all times while also enforcing it on other public office holders and making them accountable (Arodoye, Izevbigie, & Omo-Ikirodah, 2017).

4. Methods

This study is documentary research which employed content analysis, anchored on secondary data to create a nexus between democracy and administration of

social justice in the Nigerian fourth republic. Accordingly, John Rawls Theory of Justice is the theoretical model of analysis; propounded in 1971 by John Bordley Rawls who in the liberal tradition, was an American moral and political philosopher. Rawls "Theory of Justice" is a modern political approach that attempts to provide a moral alternative to Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill's "Utilitarianism", which further addresses the problem of distributive justice. Hence, the major tenets of the theory are premised on equality and social justice; defined as basic fairness in multidimensional interactions between humans and their institutions, whereby the purpose of such varied interactions is to balance democracy with striving for security and societal stability (Onuoha & Nwachukwu, 2016).

4.1. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive case study to examine the state of democracy and the administration of social justice in Nigeria. This approach provides the author the opportunity to examine the facts on governance in Nigeria, its causes and the possible solutions to the problems highlighted. It also availed the researcher the opportunity to assess the impact of different people and groups on the nature of democracy and social injustice in Nigeria. Using a descriptive case also helped to focus on key concepts relevant to democracy and social injustice.

4.2. Data Analysis

Content analysis was employed as the data analysis method. Considering that the study used a descriptive case design, content analysis aligns with the design perfectly and helped to provide accurate interpretation of findings in studies the examined. The method provided a systematic approach to the identification of patterns and major themes from previous discussions and records on democracy and social justice.

4.3. Rawls Theory of Justice

Rawls Theory of Justice is explained under two underlining principles viz: the principle of basic liberties and its equalities; then the principle of socio-economic equity (Mbah, 2015). The first principle holds that "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar arrangement of liberties for others". This first principle is more or less centered on fundamental rights such as: political equality which is the political liberty/right to vote and be eligible for public office; concomitant with freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and thought; freedom of person along with the right to hold personal property; freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure; etc. all of which are absolute and may not be violated; and all these according to Onuoha and Nwachukwu (2016) are defined by the concept of the rule of law, which is enshrined in the constitution of any democratic state.

Effectively, chapter 5, section 33 to 46 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria stipulates the basic liberty of “Right to life”, “Right to dignity of human person”, “Right to freedom of expression”, “Freedom from discrimination” to mention but a few, which are the torchlight of Rawls first principle. However, the proper application of these basic liberties and its equality is only but a mere rhetoric and more disturbing is its violation in the guise of political, religious, ethnic and social deeds. The central insight of this first principle is crystal clear that ensuring human rights and the due process of law which are two most important dimensions of justice, could transform a static state (such as Nigeria) a state that has become a political entity of winning the political war and losing the beauty of democracy and the peace of justice (Mbah, 2015).

Likewise, analysing Nigerian democracy and administration of social justice with Rawls second principle obviously depict that Nigeria has had a long-excruciated account of dancing around democracy, but still has a very long way to go to get it right. The second principle holds that “the distribution of wealth must be to every one’s advantage, and at the same time, position of authority and offices of command must be assessable to all”. Hence, the distribution of wealth, income and the hierarchies of authority must be consistent with both the liberties of equal citizenship and equality of opportunity (Ethan, 2018). This fundamental principle is certainly entrenched in Section 14(1) of the 1999 Constitution which states that, “The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice”. This is further strengthened in Section 16 (1 and 2) that:

The state shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this constitution—Harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy; Control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity... the state shall direct its policy towards—The promotion of a planned and balanced economic development; That the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; That the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.

Also, in Section 14 (3-4) of the Nigerian constitution there exists a concept known as federal character, which is a doctrine/principle that as a rule protects minorities. It is meant to ensure equitable allocation of the nation’s resources and equitable representation of citizens politically, economically and in social positions within the country; such that no section or segment of the country’s

population is marginalized or oppressed. But in reality, it appears to have legalized parochialism and segregation in socio-economic distributions all in the form of ethnic balancing. John Rawls Theory of Justice emphasizes that without a deep commitment of the leadership to justice as the basic principle of fairness/equality in policy making, policy implementation, as well as resource allocation, the potentials for democratic advancement would continue to elude the polity (Ethan, 2018).

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study leave nobody in doubt that the practice of democracy and administration of social justice in Nigerian fourth republic, is in the breach than in its licit observance. Needless to say, the Nigerian state still has a very long way to go for the polity to significantly reap the much-desired dividends of democracy. However, this is not to say that there is no semblance of democratization, particularly as there is much noise in the fight against corruption and legislative oversight. But that those universal principles of justice, equity, freedom, liberty, accountability, openness and transparency in government, public participation, accountability and transparency, the rule of law, etc. on the basis of which ideal democracy is built, is still non-existent.

The implications of an abused democracy and social justice system are not just deleterious to the citizens today, but more so for generations to come in terms of sustainable development. The imminent consequences are expected to have malignant multiplier effects in terms of underdevelopment, vis-à-vis mammoth rise in the level of unemployment, poverty and criminality. More than ever before, the concomitant rise of these tripartite quandaries in Nigeria would paradoxically molder the nation's reputation both internationally and as the "Giant of Africa". Hence, urgent concerted measures should be taken to address the identified quagmire in Nigeria's democracy and social justice administration.

6. Recommendations

This study therefore recommends that in order to enthrone a stable, viable and enviable democracy in Nigeria, John Rawls first and second principles of Justice should be given immediate attention. This is because its proper application would go a long way in eschewing social inequality, ethnicity, tribalism, economic marginalization, poverty and most significantly corruption and bad leadership in Nigeria. Hence, it is not enough to rave about constitutional reforms and restructuring, as we must concomitantly cure both the symptoms and the sickness. Nigeria can get it right if she learns to embrace and practice the intrinsic operational principles of an ideal democracy that seeks to promote justice, equity, accountability and respect for fundamental human rights, rule of law and other good governance values that would usher Nigeria into a higher development trajectory.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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