

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: JNHST-046

Title : Democracy Without Development: Leadership Failure and Nigeria's Democratic Paradox

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance	✓			

Reviewer's ID: JNJST-04

Detailed Reviewer's Report

Overall Evaluation

This manuscript examines the relationship between democracy, leadership, and development in Nigeria, arguing that the country's persistent developmental challenges are rooted less in the existence of democratic institutions themselves and more in the quality of political leadership that operates within those institutions. The study focuses on the post-1999 democratic era and seeks to explain why continuous civilian rule has not translated into meaningful socioeconomic progress. Using a qualitative research design based on secondary sources, the paper employs Elite Theory as its principal analytical framework and contends that elite capture, institutional

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weakness, corruption, and leadership failure have prevented democratic governance from producing substantive developmental outcomes.

The topic is important and highly relevant to contemporary debates in African politics, governance studies, development studies, and democratic consolidation. The question of why formal democratic institutions often coexist with weak developmental outcomes remains a central concern in both academic and policy circles. The manuscript demonstrates familiarity with the Nigerian political context and engages with a broad range of literature on democracy, governance, leadership, corruption, and elite domination. The central argument is generally clear and remains consistent throughout the paper.

One of the strengths of the manuscript is its effort to bridge discussions of democratic governance and leadership studies. Rather than treating institutional weakness as an isolated phenomenon, the paper places leadership quality at the center of the democratic-development nexus. The use of Elite Theory provides a useful lens through which the persistence of governance failures and developmental stagnation can be interpreted. The discussion is generally coherent and logically structured, moving from conceptual and theoretical foundations toward a broader analysis of Nigeria's democratic experience.

However, while the manuscript raises important issues, it remains largely conceptual and descriptive. Many of the claims concerning leadership failure and developmental outcomes are asserted through secondary literature rather than demonstrated through systematic empirical analysis. The paper occasionally repeats similar arguments across multiple sections, particularly regarding elite capture, corruption, institutional weakness, and democratic failure. In addition, the distinction between literature review, conceptual discussion, and analytical findings is not always clear, resulting in some overlap across sections. Nevertheless, the manuscript addresses a significant issue and offers a useful contribution to ongoing discussions about democracy and development in Nigeria.

Strengths of the Paper

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The manuscript addresses a subject of considerable scholarly and practical significance.

Nigeria's democratic trajectory since 1999 continues to attract substantial academic attention, and the question of why democratic continuity has not generated corresponding developmental gains remains highly relevant. By focusing on leadership as a mediating variable between democratic institutions and developmental outcomes, the paper introduces an angle that enriches existing discussions on governance and democratic performance.

The theoretical foundation of the study is another notable strength. Elite Theory is appropriately selected and applied to the Nigerian context. The discussion of Pareto, Mosca, Michels, and Mills provides a useful framework for understanding how political and economic elites may shape democratic institutions in ways that undermine accountability and inclusive development. The theoretical argument aligns well with the broader narrative developed throughout the manuscript.

The paper also demonstrates extensive engagement with relevant literature. The author incorporates a wide range of contemporary sources addressing democracy, governance, corruption, leadership, institutional performance, and development. This engagement helps situate the study within broader scholarly debates and reflects a commendable effort to build an interdisciplinary perspective.

Another positive aspect is the clear organization of the manuscript. The progression from the introduction to the literature review, conceptual discussion, theoretical framework, and concluding analysis is generally logical. Readers can easily follow the central argument regarding the disconnect between procedural democracy and substantive development.

Areas for Improvement

While the manuscript adopts a qualitative approach based on secondary sources, the methodological section is relatively brief and would benefit from greater detail. The author states that thematic content analysis was employed, but the process through which sources were selected, coded, analyzed, and interpreted remains unclear. A more explicit explanation of

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the analytical procedures would strengthen the study's methodological transparency and scholarly rigor.

The paper would also benefit from a stronger distinction between literature review and original analysis. Much of the discussion relies on summarizing existing scholarship and policy reports, making it difficult at times to identify where the manuscript's own analytical contribution begins. While the synthesis of literature is useful, the paper could more explicitly demonstrate how it advances understanding beyond existing studies.

A recurring issue throughout the manuscript is repetition. Similar discussions of elite capture, corruption, weak institutions, leadership failure, and democratic stagnation appear in multiple sections, often using comparable language and examples. Consolidating some of these discussions would improve readability and allow more space for deeper analytical engagement.

The argument would be further strengthened by incorporating more concrete empirical illustrations. References to corruption, institutional weakness, electoral manipulation, and developmental deficits are important, but the analysis could benefit from more detailed case examples drawn from specific administrations, policy failures, governance reforms, or institutional crises. Such illustrations would provide stronger empirical grounding for the paper's central claims.

The discussion of development outcomes could also be broadened. Although poverty, unemployment, corruption, and governance deficiencies are addressed, the analysis remains largely political. Greater attention to developmental indicators, public service delivery, infrastructure outcomes, education, healthcare, or regional disparities would provide a more comprehensive assessment of the development dimension of the democratic paradox.

Another area that deserves further attention is the consideration of alternative explanations. The manuscript attributes developmental stagnation primarily to leadership failure and elite domination. While this is a persuasive argument, additional discussion of other structural factors—such as colonial legacies, resource dependence, global economic pressures,

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federalism, security challenges, or demographic pressures—would create a more balanced analytical framework.

Finally, the manuscript would benefit from careful language editing. Although the overall argument is understandable, there are grammatical inconsistencies, awkward sentence constructions, punctuation issues, and occasional typographical errors throughout the text. A thorough proofreading process would improve clarity and readability.

Final Recommendation**Accept with Minor Revisions**

This manuscript addresses an important and enduring question in African politics and governance studies. Its central argument regarding the role of leadership quality in shaping the relationship between democracy and development is both relevant and theoretically meaningful. The use of Elite Theory provides a coherent analytical foundation, and the discussion demonstrates a solid understanding of the Nigerian political context. Although the paper would benefit from greater methodological clarity, stronger empirical illustration, reduced repetition, and careful language revision, these issues are largely matters of refinement rather than fundamental weaknesses. Subject to minor revisions, the manuscript has the potential to make a useful contribution to the literature on democracy, governance, and development in Nigeria.