Structural Functionalism and the Inter-relationship between followership and leadership in Nigerian Politics

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Introduction

The major challenge in Nigerian politics is lack of relationship between the voting population and the leaders voted for. Ebijuwa affirming the aforementioned statement by saying Nigeria is the only nation where leaders beg for vote from citizens, only to claim that the same citizens lack the right intellectual resources to understand the complex nature of the affairs of state.[1] Therefore, citizens are deprive of information, neglected from state affairs, and pushed aside, neglecting the structural functionality of inter-relational leadership. Structural-functionalism or simply functionalism emphasized the inter-relationship between leadership and followership as contributing to the maintenance needs of a structured society. The concept of "Jack of all trades" will only produce the result of "master of none." This paper is therefore concern with this "know-it-all" mentality of the Nigerian leadership and decides to discuss the following; structural functionalism, inter-relationship between followers and leadership, and the Nigerian politics.

Structural Functionalism

Structural Functionalism is a macro theory that looks at how all structures or institutions work in harmony to create a striving society (Butler 2006, 2). In retrospect of Butler's definition the researcher defines structural functionalism as

the emergence of every institution, relationship, role, and norm to work-together in constituting a society that serves a purpose, and each is indispensable for the continued existence of the others and of society as a whole. Structural-functionalism's core concepts is harness from system theory. Under the auspices of Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955) it emerged as a clear-cut alternative to hybrid Boasian functionalism a particular brand of radical individualism (Carey 2005, 15). Meier and Clinnard (2008, 95-105), Cole and Safiya (2003). and Kendall (2012, 406), sees structural-functionalism as the solution to individualism and nepotism. Emphasizing inter-relationship as contributing to the maintenance needs of a structured social system.

Macionis (2012, 192) asserts that structural functionalism has a lengthy history in both the social sciences and the biological sciences. "Functionalism's history date back to Aristotle's study of ultimate causes in nature or of actions in relation to their ends, or utility. Developed in 17th-century France, Montesquieu's doctrine of separation of powers is based on the notion of functions that are best undertaken separate from each other as a means of ensuring stability and security" (2012, 193). Aristotle opinion of separation of power is the bedrock of democracy, which gives room for functionalist theory. Structural functionalism became important with the emergence of Deweyan revolution influencing citizens to their civil responsibility of participating in politics. Dewey's concept of politics is a concerted enterprise whose epistemic efforts and outcomes is the deliberate participation of ordinary women and men of common concerns to tackle problematic situation and resolving it through cooperate intelligence (Ebijuwa 2021, 5).

On this backdrop, one may argue that Deweyan concept of political leadership is structural functionalism in nature, where the political sphere consists of a group of people of equal status coming together, but distinct in culture, tribe, gender and religion. This is what Arendt (1958, 233), called the arena of tangible freedom, where everything is decided through words

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and persuasion and not through force or violence and where the citizens are emancipated from whatever hinders them in their full expressions as human beings. The understanding that human being is dependent on each other is the basic concept of structural functionalism. Nihinlola (2018, 21-22) in his inaugural lecture affirms this concept stating that humanity was created to perform three basic task according to the account of Genesis, these duties include: 1. Leadership; to rule over all creatures by subduing the earth (Gen. 1:26,28b), 2. Management; to work by taking care of all the creations of the earth (Gen. 2:15), and 3. Inter-relationship; to relate with other humans created by God both male and female in marriage, academics, ministry, sports and politics (Gen. 1:27b). The implication of these statement reveal the importance of structural functionalism to humanity and to the sustainability of God's creation.

The concept of Emiola Nihinlola is closely associated with the work of Talcott Parsons. The main question that Parsons addresses in his theory refers to processes of how individuals become members of a given society in order to guarantee the survival and maintenance of the social system (Parsons and Bales, 1955).

> According to Parsons, society is a global social system that is based on an integrated value system. The individual person participates in the social system by interacting with others in accordance with the various roles and positions he or she holds in that system. The global social system itself consists of hierarchically ordered subsystems that are characterized by corresponding institutionalized norms. On the one hand, these norms are supposed to be congruent with society's integrated value system and, on the other hand, they determine the expectations and rules attached to specific positions and roles. These are further specified with respect to a set of pattern variables comprising, for example,

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particularistic versus universalistic values. In this respect, the family plays a particularly salient role (Parsons and Bales, 1955, 20).

Drawing heavily on Parsons contends, structural functionalism promotes socialized and specialized roles for male and female to maintain inter-personal relationship. More precisely, gender-related role specialization is characterized by instrumental or task-oriented roles for males and expressive or person-oriented roles for females. Again, these gender-specific complementary roles are supposed to maintain the equilibrium of the family system as well as the social system as a whole. This function was important to the survival of the whole system. Systems that could not adapt their functions ceased to exists. Thus, Merton describes social system as a set of inter-relate entities connected by behaviour and history. Stating that a system must satisfy the following criteria: first, one can specify a set of identifiable elements. Second, among the elements, one can specifically identifiable relationship, third, certain relationship imply others (1996, 129-130). Parsons (1955, 88), viewed society as a system. He argued that every social system has four basic functional prerequisites: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance. These functional prerequisites form the core to any surviving nation (society), among whom adaptation is the basic.

Adaptation: understanding that relationship between the system and its environment is the bedrock to the survival of any nation. In order for any nation to survive, the political systems must create a synergy between the led and the leadership. Structural functionalism creates room for inter-dependence and inter-relationship to any political system to strive, building personalities while building the nation.

Goal Attainment: the goal of Nigerian polities is to forge an egalitarian nation, to inculcate the right types of value and attitudes for the survival of the individual in the society. The training of the mind, not just for facts but for building valuable

concepts and the acquisition of appropriate skills, and competencies, to the promotion of relevant and balanced knowledge of facts about local and world phenomena (NCE 2013). Structural functional established these goals by encouraging regular contribution towards national and international issues. Goal attainment can only be achieved through deliberate functional interdependency.

Integration: integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though the individuals belong to different communities, castes, religions, cultures and regions and speak different languages, yet recognize their oneness due to societal life and principles. Teklu (2020, 270) asserts that the evidence that our territories and sovereignty constitute our bond plays the role in the expression of our characteristics as Africans. Legal norms define and standardize relations between individuals and between institutions, and so reduce the potential for conflict. When conflict does arise, it is settled by the judicial system and does not therefore lead to the disintegration of the social system.

Pattern Maintenance: refers to the maintenance of the basic pattern of values, institutionalized in the society. Institutions that perform this function include the family, the educational system and religion. Greenfield and Martin (1988), argues that the imposition of territorial boundaries that did not reflect existing social networks has led to the ongoing struggles of the African nation to transcend ancient ties of blood, language, region, and custom and build a strong center from which to modernize their society. Structural functionality maintains the patterns while laying a collective foundations of growth to society.

Functionalists believe that society is held together by social consensus, or cohesion, in which members of the society agree upon, and work together to achieve, what is best for society as a whole. Emile Durkheim suggested that social consensus takes one of two forms:

1.   Mechanical solidarity: this is a form of social cohesion that arises when people in a society maintain similar values and beliefs and engage in similar types of work. Mechanical solidarity most commonly occurs in traditional, simple societies such as those in which everyone herds cattle or farms. Amish society exemplifies mechanical solidarity.

2.   Organic Solidarity: In contrast, organic solidarity is a form of social cohesion that arises when the people in a society are interdependent, but hold to varying values and beliefs and engage in varying types of work. Organic solidarity most commonly occurs in industrialized, complex societies such those in large cities and states.

The functionalist perspective achieved its greatest popularity among American sociologists in the 1940s and 1950s. The primary concepts within Functionalism are collective conscience, value consensus, social order, education, family, and the media. Durham propound that each aspect of society is interdependent and contributes to society's stability and functioning as a whole. For example, the government provides education for the children of the family, which in turn pays taxes on which the state depends to keep itself running. He divided structural functionalism into segment of the society.

Collective conscience and value consensus: Functionalists believe that without collective conscience/shared values and beliefs, achieving social order is impossible and social order is crucial for the well-being of society. They believe that value consensus forms the basic integrating principle in society, and if members of society have shared values they therefore also have similar identities, this helps cooperation and avoids conflict. Value consensus also ensures that people have shared goals, roles and norms.

Social Order: Functionalists believe that there are four main basic needs that an individual requires in order to exist in society. They also believe that these four basic needs are essential for maintaining social order. They are: food, shelter, money and clothing.

Functionalism and Education: Durkheim believes that education transmits society's norms and values. Education brings together a mass, and changes them into a united whole which leads to social solidarity. Parsons (1961) believes that education leads to universalistic values and that education performs a link between family and the wider society which in turn leads to secondary socialization. Education also allows people to train for their future roles in society. Schools instil the value of achievement and the value of equality of opportunity. Education helps match people with jobs suited to them.

Functionalism and Family: George Peter Murdock believes that the family provides four vital functions for society: sexual, politics, economic and educational productivity. The family is the primary point of socialization in that it provides children with values and norms. Family also stabilizes adult personalities. A family unit provides emotional security for each person in the relationship.

Functionalism and Media: The media operate in the public interest by reflecting the interests of the audience. It portrays public opinion. The media understands that society has a wide diversity of culture and this is shown by the different amounts of stories it covers.

Functionalism and Crime and Deviance: Durkheim shows us that there is such a thing as society, and that it is this entity called society that creates crime and deviance. Crime and deviance are socially constructed, they are not natural, obvious, or theologically inspired categories. They are concepts that were brought into the world solely by humankind. Moreover, Durkheim goes beyond this and shows us how socially

constructed definitions of crime and deviance are linked into a wider social structure.

Functionalism and Religion: Religion contributes to the social structure and well-being of society. It does this by teaching values and consensus. Emile Durkheim argued that all society's divide into the sacred and the profane (non-religious). Durkheim found that totenism was the most basic form of religion with small groups using symbols such as plants or animals. Durkheim saw social life as impossible to achieve without the shared values and norms achieved through collective conscience. Religion comes with values and norms that are shared between groups. This helps strengthen the integration of society. Parsons argued that religious beliefs provide guidelines and that these guidelines establish general principles and moral beliefs which provide stability and order for society.

Functionalism and Politics: Parsons believed in value consensus. Power is used to achieve collective goals, that is, material prosperity. Everybody benefits from power (a variable sum of power). Authority is usually accepted as legitimate by the majority as it helps to achieve collective goals. The goals can only be achieved through interdependence and inter-relationship between leadership and followership in Nigerian political system.

Inter-Relationship between Followership and Leadership

The usual ways of looking at leadership and followership are no longer useful. In a world of instant communication, rapid technological advancement, and globalization, the traditional view of the leader as commander-in-chief, director, or 'bossman' simply does not permit national, state, communities, or organization to adapt to contemporary environmental changes. The time has come to embrace a different and more effective way of dealing with leadership and followership (Stech 2018, 14). Structural functionalism create a system for

interconnectivity, interdependence and interrelationship between leadership and followership. Jaussi et al (2018, 25) defines followership as the actions of someone in a subordinate role. It can also be considered as a specific set of skills that complement leadership, a role within a hierarchical organization, a social construct that is integral to the leadership process, or the behaviours engaged in while interacting with leaders in an effort to meet national objectives.

As such, followership is best defined as an intentional practice on the part of the subordinate to enhance the synergetic interchange between the follower and the leader. Javier and Thaba (2018, 5) posits that the leader works with people. Leaders want followers who are positive and self-motivated, who take action to get things done, who accept responsibility, and who excel at required tasks. Followers want to be included in national issues, issues that concerns their well-being such as food, shelter, closure of border, and security of lives and property. The closure of border in Nigeria halted all trade transactions to the neighboring countries, which contributed to inflation of goods and services, high cost of living and increases insecurity and in-turn created poor condition of living for the citizens (www.thisdaylive.com 2020/12/12).

Commenting on the border issue, Eghagha of the guardian newspaper asserts that the privileged leaders of Nigeria take all social and economic benefits of the nation. While leaving the crumbs for the masses (www.guardian.ng). He adds that leadership should be inter-relational, interdependence and inter-connected, therefore a synergy is needed between leadership and followership for proper achievement of national objective. This synergy is called interrelationship. Inter-relational leadership is a model of leadership that suggests the effectiveness of a leader is related to their ability to develop positive relationships within an organization. It also relates to the process of people working together to achieve the greater good or accomplish a positive change in the organization.

It has been noted that without followers there are no leaders. However, researchers and practitioners alike have routinely overlooked the importance of followers in the leadership equation. Leaders are defined as individuals who influence others to adopt certain ideologies and ways of acting upon the world. Gardner (1986) listed five components productive inter-relational leadership must possess in Nigerian political system which includes:

1. Inclusiveness: Inclusiveness in structural functionalism, applies to a leader who is aware of their own biases and preferences, and actively seek out and consider different views and perspectives from their followers to better inform their decisions. Being an inclusive leader means the following: a. understanding oneself and others, b. understanding organizational culture; c. understand the fundamental belief that everyone can make a difference, d. building and preserving relationships within the organization, e. carefully listening to all points of view.

2. Empowerment: unlike its political understanding, empowerment in structural functionalism is the process of sharing power and allocating more autonomy and responsibilities to future leaders through a specific set of leader behaviors that entails enhancing the meaningfulness of work, fostering the decision making of the organization. As a leader, empowerment brings the following attributes: Self-esteem, positive impact of being a team player, fundamental belief that everyone has something to offer for the greater good, contributions of a team that are solicited and valued. Encouragement of others and promoting self-leadership at all levels.

3. Purposeful: leadership means making decisions as part of the overall strategy to enable followership. Structural functionalism posits a collectively accomplishment of task; consistently evaluating the decision and actions of oneself. If leadership have a good relationship with followers, performance will

validate skillful leadership qualities. To be a purposeful leader, it is important to incorporate these characteristics into the organization: a. promote a transparent understanding of the overall process in accomplishing the organization's mission. b. Promoting an attitude that is positive, optimistic and helps everyone. c. Supportive of an environment that promotes creativity and innovation. d, An environment that involves others in the vision-building process.

4. Ethical: Ethical leadership is "leadership demonstrating and promoting appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships." Ethical leadership is putting people into management and leadership positions who will promote and be an example of ethical conduct in their actions and relationships in the workplace. Being ethical in the workplace as a leader must include the following characteristics: thorough decision-making, encourage socially responsible behavior, high standards of behavior for each person that helps everyone, focus on the development of one's character, and actions that benefit others versus actions pursued for self-gain.

5. Process-Oriented: when giving a specific task or assignment, the first step is identifying a process to carry out and complete the mission. Structural functionalism inter-relational leaders creates an environment where future leaders are empowered, keeping a team engaged and encouraging the team throughout to meet the end goal. Some examples of being a process-oriented leader include: understanding community/ environment, encouraging high-quality effort, collaborate throughout and reflection at the end, understand the process is as important as the outcome, and the ability to give and receive feedback.

Inter-relational leadership is a relatively new concept that focuses on the process of getting people together to accomplish change, make a difference and create a synergistic environment where every person can feel empowered and welcome. So, as a

leader it is important to remember that having an inclusive mindset, providing opportunities for empowerment, creating purpose within, practicing ethics through servant leadership and teaching what process means to accomplish the mission are the building blocks to creating an energetic, powerful political system.

Nigerian Political System

Politics has been identified as the bane of underdevelopment in Africa. Africa is a continent of over a billion people, yet the questions of underdevelopment, mal-governance, and a form of political life based upon patronage are characteristic of many African states, including Nigeria the giant of West African region (Tailor 2018, 32). Nigeria as a country is situated in West Africa. With a population of over 211 million people, easily recognized as the most populous nation in Africa. With a geographically land mass of 923,769 square kilometers and is situated between the Sahel to the north and the Gulf of Guinea to the south in the Atlantic Ocean.

Nigeria borders Niger in the north, Chad in the northeast, Cameroon in the east, and Benin in the west. Nigeria is a federal republic comprising 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, where the capital, Abuja, is located. The largest city in Nigeria is Lagos, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world and the second-largest in Africa (Blench 2014). Ajayi, Kirk-Green et al (2022) describes Nigeria as heterogeneous nation with diverse people with hundreds of cultures and languages, including Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Ijaw, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, Fulani, and et-citra.

Nigeria is rich in natural resources, notably for large deposit of gas, minerals and grade oil. However, the failure of governance in Nigeria political system manifests in the declining capacity of leadership to recognize the impact of the led, generating into systemic risks such as election fraud, terrorist attacks, herder-farmer conflict, armed banditry, and police brutality. Odinga

(1992, 138) notes that Nigeria political system is lance with leadership crisis, ethnic challenges, intro-national agitations, zonal diversity and party squabbles. Sub-lining the previous statement Nigeria political system is also attained through bribery, intimidation, electoral violence and vote buying. Many Scholars such as Davies, 2005, Walecki 2006, Saliu 2005, Fredric 2005, Ojo 2006 affirms that money politics and vote buying are the reasons for poor leadership choice of Nigerian. The problem with this situation is that the electoral process is often compromised resulting in elections not being free and fair. Thus, producing leaders who cares little or nothing for the followers.

Structurally, for a political system to be functional in any society, there must be a culture of participation from the followers, not simply on elections and democratic processes alone or holding political office-holders to account as the proceduralist are. But for sense of free speech, impactful input and unrestricted communication demands that the citizens embrace a certain culture or set of attitudes that fires the spirit of inquiry or curiosity in the consciousness of the citizens. It is important to note that those who embrace this thought processes are the ones that will be ready to accept the epistemic culture needed for a change of attitude to a life of curiosity. In other words, those that accept this epistemic habit of change as the preceding discussion asserts, are those that are willing to challenge prevailing opinions and ready to accommodate others.

Structural functionalism acknowledges the multiplicity and diversity of perspectives in a plural society where matters are deliberated through unfettered communication in a democratic arena where cooperative undertaking is the foundation. So, when in a country like Nigeria the citizens are clamouring for restructuring of the state and some calling for referendum to determine the way forward in a society where the resources and opportunities are skewed towards a particular ethnic group and the government is saying something otherwise, then the

government is saying she has monopoly of knowledge/wisdom. According to Ojerinde (2011, 12), if the government is unwilling to accept the views of her citizens on the policy options and direction of their society and she is offended by the contributions of her people, then there cannot be progress.

 Structural functionalism demands a dialogic situation between leadership and followership, any government or individual that determines the aspirations, and needs/welfare of her citizens without talking to them does not have regards for the people. To assume that the needs of different communities are the same is to insult their collective will of the Nigeria people. Okoh and Awara (2021) asserts that when the views of the people are restricted in this way, as it is done in many dictatorial states in Africa, those who do not share the same aspiration with the government in power are left out in the scheme of things. In this situation, it is easy for the people to challenge those in leadership position at the slightest provocation. Hence, the Biafra agitation, the Niger Delta declaration and many more.

Implications of Structural Functionalism to Nigerian Political System

The major provocative concern of Nigerians is the monopoly system of the political leadership. The main stress of structural functionalism is that followership and leadership are inseparable in nation building. Nigeria as a national system consists of all kinds of social groups like family, clan, moieties, poor and rich, physically challenge and able bodies, learned and illiterate, black and fair, young and old, healthy and sick, orphans and kinship. The inter-relationship among these groups constitute the core structure of any society. Structural functionalism therefore posit the operational platform for inter-relational leadership in the Nigerian political system. Thus, the implication of the foregoing discourse under-list the following that:

The Nigerian political system imbibes the culture of "government of the people," as politics is the people government. Structural functionalism encourages self-governance, which is enables the people to govern themselves through popular participation in the government. Also structural functionalism guaranties the sovereignty of the people. According to Omeregbe (2014, 35), the people are the sovereign, while the rulers are their servants. The word "minister" is the Latin word for "servant", and that is what the ministers in a political system are.

Since the leaders are servants of the people, they are therefore accountable to the people. Accountability to the people is one of the hallmarks of inter-relational leadership, affirming this Owolabi.(1999, 10) postulates "a regime, in fact, can lay claim to being democratic, if and only if, the regime allows for maximum participation of the people and gives maximum accountability to them. Owolabi goes on to say that the two principles of participation and accountability are the moral foundations for any political leadership structure. Saying nationality dies hard where there is no participation and accountability between leadership and followership, its vital for the leaders to be accountable to their subjects.

In the principles of structural functionalism the power belongs to the people and its from them that leaders derive their power to lead. It is a system of government which vests power on the people who delegate this power to the leaders during election, and can withdraw it from them if they are misusing it or failing to use it. The people here is the judge of their leaders. Owolabi on the issue affirms that by vesting on the people the power to elect their ruler and the power to remove them from power, functionalism has an in-built resistance against oppression and tyranny (90).The guarantee and protection of fundamental human rights is one of the foremost advantages of democracy, especially the rights to freedom in the various ways it is expressed in society. For example, freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, freedom of movement,

freedom of association, freedom of religion (freedom of worship), are given free expressions in functionalist system without fear of arrest or punishment.

The government is freely criticized if it makes a mistake or does something that is unpopular to the people. Citizens are free to travel to any part of the country, travel outside the country and comeback any time, without inhibition or official control. Citizens are free to practice any religion of their choice, form, or belong to, any association they like, so long as such an association does no harm to other people and does not disturb public peace. Citizens are free to express their opinions on any issue, and the press is free to publish anything provided what it publishes is true. Truth is not suppressed or inhibited in a functionalist society.

Equal opportunity given to all citizens is another 1mportant benefit of functionalism. Owolabi (36) opines that structural functionalism gives all citizens equal opportunities to achieve whatever they want to achieve, without special regard to class, or birth. All citizens have equal opportunities to develop their talents and actualize their potentialities to become anything. Anybody can become anything in a functional society by dint of hard work and the development of one's natural talents.

Bryn-jones (2002, 2-3) concurring with Owolabi saying It is not only the individuals that benefit from this principle of equal opportunity, the society itself benefits from it, because the principle enables the citizens to develop their respective talents and use them to serve their country. The society at large thus benefits from the developed talents of its citizens.

Human dignity is enhanced in a functionalist society through the respect for and protection of the fundamental rights of man, especially the rights to freedom and equality. Structural functionalism promotes two fundamental rights, first that nobody should impose himself or his rule on other fellow human beings without their consent. This is in respect of

human dignity, for, all men are of equal human dignity since no man is creationally superior to any other man. No human being can claim ontological superiority over other human beings. Secondly, no human being can claim to have the right to rule other fellow human beings (Owolabi, 37).

The principle of the Rule of law is another very important positive aspect of structure functionalism. It implies equality of all citizens before the law with no regard for "nobility of birth" or high social status. It recognizes no 'sacred cows' and maintains that no citizen is above the law. Rousseau (1963) a structural functionalist argues that rule of law is the highest principle of functionalism because it places all persons on an equal plain. In general, the rule of law implies that the creation of laws, their enforcement, and the relationships among legal rules are themselves legally regulated, so that no one including the most highly placed official is above the law.

Conclusion

So far so good, structural functionalism approach acknowledges the importance of inter-relationship between leadership and followership. Advocate that Nigerian politicians create a connecting bridge between the human dignities of every individual member of the nation. As lowly as the child, the widow, stranger, prisoner, and the vulnerable. Structural functionalism promotes intercultural intelligence, giving opportunity for all cultures, tribes, and ethnicity to seen, heard and giving due regards, without any bias and tribalism. More so the permission of free speech, where followers are free to express themselves without fear of being reprimanded or jail. In other words, structural functionalism entreats the Nigerian leadership to be relational in their system of governance.

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