

**"GOVERNANCE GAP IN NIGERIA: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT"**

**GOVERNANCE GAP IN NIGERIA: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES: IMPLICATIONS  
FOR SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT**

**BY**

**UGOCHUKWU I. OFFOR PH.D**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**

**NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY,AWKA**

**PATRICIA E. NWARU**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**

**NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY,AWKA**

**CHUKWUMAM. ONUNKWO**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**

**NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY,AWKA**

**ALOYSIUS O. EZEANOLUE PH.D**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**

**NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA**

**ABSTRACT**

This study examined Governance Gap in Nigeria: Causes, Consequences and Implications for Societal Development. Two research questions guided the study; descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 23000 academic staff of the public universities in South-East Nigeria. The sample comprised of 400 academic staff of the universities. The sample was composed using the simple random sampling . Data collected were analyzed using mean. Findings of the study showed that causes of governance in gap in Nigeria are corruption, ethnic and

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religious bigotry, poor economic policies, none enforcement of rule of law, poor infrastructural development, systemic inefficiency, weak institutions and poor educational structure . The consequences are poor national image, poor living conditions of the citizens, poor economy, weak economic and political system, deep seated systemic corruption, poverty and inequality, impunity and partial justice, undermining sustainable development goals and public and private sector non-functionality. The study concluded that become a bane to national development and the citizens of the nation failing to achieve their aims. Given this, this study that has undertaken to examine the causes and consequences of governance gap in Nigeria succinctly concluded that Nigeria if not properly managed in terms of its governance will continue to witness different dimensions of governance consequences which will have effects on the citizens of the nation. The study recommends that that government in Nigeria should enforce the principles of separation of power to enable checks and balances as this is the only way to make sure that each government agency, organs and institutions are working to meet the demands of the people in terms of governance. It is also through this that corruption and other systemic malfeasance is curbed.

**Keywords: Governance gap, Public Sector, Private sector, Social development.**

## INTRODUCTION

The role of education in governance can never be over emphasized given that it is argued that education is a catalyst for bridging governance gap in any society, and helps to achieve the basic objectives of good governance. Even more, it is argued that quality education enhances the chances of bridging governance gap, and quality education provides learners with the opportunity to become economically, socially and morally productive as well a justifiable income and ultimately contributes to a peaceful and democratic society. Education is a very important factor in human development, and it brings about critical thinking, fosters change in human life, in teaching someone how to make important decisions, boosts creativity, enhances individual's potentials and importance to the society, and has been ultimately explained to be a passage to progress (Chirazze, 2023). The importance of education in human begins, which includes the change it brings to the society and helps people for future success in their chosen

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fields, and these changes could be learnt formally in school, and is very important for the overall development of individuals in the society.

Nonetheless, Education is defined as that force which plays a key role in shaping and changing populations into productive and creative workforces, tolerant communities, and socially-responsible citizens, and this is why government in every nation invests heavily in education as the pre-requisite for change (Bayley,2022).Education is also conceptualized as the most important agency for learning social values, without which values will not be learnt. Education is the process through which knowledge is acquired, skills are developed, and values and traits are internalized through experiences; and education is an important source of economic and technological development in society to create a true democratic atmosphere (Kumar, 2015). United Nations Education Report (2023) also posits that education contributes to the reduction of inequality, empowers people to live a more healthy and sustainable lives- this indicates that education is at the forefront of the United Nations campaign , and this is because of the potentials it holds for children across Africa and other parts of the world.

However, it is important to understand that governance entails proper management of the citizens of a nation that concerns meeting their needs and fostering a serene environment for mutual co-existence, as it is a major concept in this study. Mehraj (2020) underscores that governance is understood to mean the Process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. Governance is an active concept, and it encompasses fast changing political, social and economic milieu together with the international environment and conditions of operational governance (United Nations Economic and Social Commissionfor Asia and Pacific Report,2019).However, modern concept of governance is participatory, responsive, consensus-oriented, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.

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According to World Bank (2020), Governance is related with efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework, and this type of administration is one that is considered to be citizen friendly, transparent, citizen caring, responsive and respecting human rights at large. In this era of globalization, there are many streams of discourses doing the rounds within realm of political economy and political sociology at the national and international levels; democracy, development and participatory governance are one of such streams, while governance, reforms and development are another stream (Website of South Africa National Party,2024).

For some scholars, governance entails the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, and it comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences. in governance, citizens are rightly concerned with a government's responsiveness to their needs and protection of their rights (Fukuyama,2013).

In general, governance issues pertain to the ability of government to develop an efficient, effective, and accountable public management process that is open to citizen participation and that strengthens rather than weakens a democratic system of government (Singh,2023). Therefore, governance reflects the worldwide thrust towards political and economic liberalization; such a governance approach highlights issues of greater state responsiveness, and accountability, and the impact of these factors on political stability and economic development.

Ultimately, it is important to understand that governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making, a bureaucracy imbued with professional ethos acting in furtherance of the public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and a strong civil society participating in public affairs (Fukuyama,2023). More so, poor

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governance is characterized by arbitrary policy making, unaccountable bureaucracies, unenforced legal system, abuse of executive power, a civil society engaged in public life and deep seated corruption.

Despite the importance and contributions of governance to the society, some countries of the nation, most especially developing nations are still experiencing noticeable gap in their nation's governance. Gap in governance span different aspects of governance and citizens living and constitutes a serious issues of concern across different strata of the society and aspects of citizens day to day living. Bergsten et al (2019) posits that governance gap occurs when leaders are not able to understand how many governance issues are related leading to their failure to address the issues associated with the citizens.

Kastiel (2022) notes that issues surrounding governance gap is a trillion dollar annual problem, and poor governance and weak institutions are recognized as a major problem of governance in some nations of the world. Moreover, Booth (2023) argues that governments pursue policies that are disconnected from citizen needs and wants, a situation that consequently leads to a policy gap. In some other situations, governments suffer from short-term political thinking that raises distrust in public institutions because of disappointing results, and this leads to a planning gap that negatively affect the citizens (Dialoke,2017).The result of short-term thinking is that governments of nations are trillions of dollars in debt, and unable to effectively fund smart government solutions, even those with high potential returns, leading to a financial gap in their purse and poor Gross Domestic Product (Kasali,2020). Thereis even some governance gap that has to do with the inability of the government to provide policy-makers with timely, comprehensive, or accurate information, constituting an information gap (Yagboyaju,2019). However, the result of policy, planning, financing and technology gaps is crumbling infrastructure, a multiple trillion dollar infrastructural gap problem that takes it very negative toll on the citizens of nations.

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The concept of governance gap has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in the context of developing countries. According to Grindle (2017), governance gap refers to the difference between the ideal or expected standards of governance and the actual practices or outcomes of governance. This gap arises when there is a failure or inadequacy in the governance system, leading to a mismatch between the needs and expectations of citizens and the delivery of public goods and services. Kaufmann and Kraay (2018) defined governance gap as the difference between the actual level of governance and the expected level of governance. They argue that governance gap is a major obstacle to economic development and poverty reduction, as it leads to inefficient allocation of resources, corruption, and lack of accountability. The researchers define governance gap as the difference between the formal rules and institutions that govern a country and the actual practices and behaviors of government officials and citizens. Hence, governance gap is a major challenge for developing countries, as it undermines the effectiveness of development interventions and perpetuates poverty and inequality. The governance gap can arise due to various factors, including weak institutions, corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, and poor decision-making. According to Rothstein (2018), corruption is a major driver of governance gap, as it undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of government institutions. He argues that corruption is not just a matter of individual behavior, but rather a systemic problem that requires a comprehensive approach to address.

The concept of governance gap has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly in the context of European countries. Despite being considered as one of the most developed and stable regions in the world, Europe has not been immune to governance gaps. Governance gaps in Europe have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the need for more effective and responsive governance. One of the most significant governance gaps in Europe is the democratic deficit. This

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refers to the gap between the formal democratic institutions and the actual practice of democracy. According to European University Institute (2020), the democratic deficit in Europe is characterized by a lack of transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making processes. For example, the study found that many European countries have inadequate freedom of information laws, which limits citizens' access to information about government decisions and actions. Another governance gap in Europe is the gap between the formal rules and institutions and the actual practice of governance. According to a study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020), this gap is characterized by a lack of effective implementation of laws and policies, corruption, and a lack of transparency and accountability. For example, many European countries have inadequate anti-corruption laws and institutions, which limit their ability to prevent and investigate corruption. The governance gap in Europe has also been exacerbated by the migration crisis. The migration crisis has highlighted the need for more effective and coordinated governance in Europe. Many European countries have inadequate migration policies and laws, which has led to a lack of transparency and accountability in the management of migration flows. The governance gap in Europe has also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the need for more effective and responsive governance in Europe (Rothstein, 2018). Many European countries have inadequate public health policies and laws, which has led to a lack of transparency and accountability in the management of the pandemic.

The governance gap in Nigeria, particularly under the Tinubu administration, is a pressing concern that has far-reaching implications for the country's development and the well-being of its citizens. One of the most significant examples of this governance gap is the removal of fuel subsidies, which has had a devastating impact on the economy and the lives of ordinary Nigerians. The removal of fuel subsidies was announced by President Tinubu on May 29, 2023, during his inauguration speech, and it sent



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shockwaves throughout the country. The sudden increase in fuel prices led to a sharp rise in the cost of living, with prices of commodities, especially food, skyrocketing. This has had a disproportionate impact on the poor and vulnerable, who are already struggling to make ends meet. The fuel subsidy removal is a classic example of a governance gap, where the government's policies are not aligned with the needs and aspirations of its citizens. This is in contrast to developed countries like the United States, where the government's policies are designed to promote the well-being of its citizens and protect the most vulnerable members of society. In the United States, for example, the government provides a range of social safety nets, including unemployment benefits, food stamps, and Medicaid, to support low-income families and individuals. These programs are designed to help people get back on their feet during times of economic hardship, and they have been shown to be highly effective in reducing poverty and inequality. In contrast, the Nigerian government's decision to remove fuel subsidies without providing adequate support to low-income families and individuals has exacerbated poverty and inequality. This is a clear example of a governance gap, where the government's policies are not aligned with the needs and aspirations of its citizens. The governance gap in Nigeria is not limited to the fuel subsidy removal. It is a systemic problem that is rooted in the country's political and economic systems. The government's inability to provide basic services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure is a clear example of this governance gap.

In Nigeria, Governance gap is one factor that has been argued to be plaguing the nation with multiple cases and consequences. Uchenna (2024) argues that Nigeria governance gap span around corruption, poor and unstable economic policies in Nigeria, None enforcement of rule of law, poor democratic consolidations, poor infrastructural development, systemic inefficiency, weak institutions and poor education system, and



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other intricate issues that has continued to constitute a serious gap in Nigeria governance system.

Adiza (2015) posits that corruption is the bane of good governance in Nigeria and efforts to curb corruption for the nations to move forward all round has been met by stiff resistance; for instance, the huge resources put into the implementation of policies geared towards good governance in Nigeria, there have not been visible changes in the living standard of the citizens, due to gross corruption. Thus, corruption is one of the major reasons for the poor economic performance, decaying infrastructures, the rising cost of living and poverty in Nigeria. The fight against corruption is that of the survival of the nation itself. In other instances, poor economic policies have continued to plague the nation, leading to inflation, hunger, unemployment and other socio-economic negatives. Ozili (2023) argues that poor economic policies which floating of FX and removal of fuel subsidy without any adequate arrangement is a very poor government policy and has created a serious economic gap with deep seated negative outcomes on the citizenry in recent times. The implications of this socio-economic governance gap is that majority of the citizens has been thrown into debt, hunger and other kind of economic hardship as a result of government insensitivity to the plight of the citizens (Naidoo,2023).A typical example of this poor governance gap as a result of economic policy is the trigger; a chain reaction, causing higher transportation costs and ultimately contributing to inflation due to increase in fuel prices, and prices of goods and services have risen, affecting the purchasing power of consumers in the country.

In Nigeria, rule of law and poor enforcement of government policies, and weak institutions has become a weak link to poor governance; in this situation, the rich and mighty in the society get away with whatever thing they do without any consequences that is accrued to it. Chukwuma (2024) cites how politicians in Nigeria get away with election rigging, killings and other malfeasance because of their influence in the society

**"GOVERNANCE GAP IN NIGERIA: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT"** and control over law enforcement agents. This triple faced issues of poor enforcement of rule of law, non-compliance to democratic principles and weak institutions contributes to over 50 % of governance gap in Nigeria and needs to be addressed urgently for the country to move forward (Akande,2022).

It is instructive to know that poor governance cum governance gap has plethora of consequences which either affects the citizens and their living conditions or as well takes its toll on the government. Some of the outcomes of governance gap are poor national image, poor living conditions of the citizenry, poor economy, weak economic and political system, deep seated systemic corruption, poverty and inequality, impunity and partial justice, Undermining Sustainable development Goals, and public and private sector non-functionality. Adetiba (2022) notes that these causes and consequences are conspicuous and needs to be properly addressed if Nigeria as a nations must move forward and finds self among the great comity of nations and failure to do this will continue to causethe nation to dwindle. Given this deep seated issues bedeviling this nations, this study consequently examined causes and consequences of governance gap in Nigeria.

### Research Questions

1. What are the causes of governance gap in Nigeria?
2. What are the consequences of governance gap in Nigeria?

### Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The population of the study comprised 23000 academic staffs in the 10 public universities in South-East Nigeria. Simple Random sampling technique was used to obtain 5 out of the 10 public universities in the region. Then purposive sampling was used to obtain one faculty from each of the

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universities with the record number of undergraduates' students. Then, simple random sampling technique was used to obtain two departments from each of the faculties to give rise to 10 departments. Finally, simple random sampling was used to obtain 100 students in each of the 10 sampled departments to give rise to 1000 academic staffs in the universities.

To establish the reliability of the instrument, trial testing method was used on 50 undergraduates of Delta state University, Abraka, which was outside the study area. The reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha for each of the subsections. At the end of the analysis, the scores obtained were 0.83 for the causes of governance gap in Nigeria and 0.81 for the consequences of governance gap in Nigeria. The results showed high reliability of the instrument. The instrument has two parts, A and B. Part A sought information on the respondents. Part B sought information required to answer the research questions. It has 1 & 2 and these were concerned with information regarding research questions one and two. Part A contains 15 items while part B also contains 9 items, making a total of 24 items. The four point response mode of strongly Agreed (SA = 4 points), Agree (A = 3 points), Disagree (D = 2 points) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1 point) was adopted in the study. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help of 20 research assistants, who were paired for each of the 10 faculties. Administration of the questionnaire was done during the first semester of 2022/2023 academic session. All copies of the questionnaire distributed were collected back because of on the spot delivery method and collection technique applied. Mean was used to analyze the data. The four point response mode used, informed the use of mean 2.50 as the cut-off point for decision. The decision rule was that mean scores of items of 2.50 and above were regarded as positives while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as negative.

## Results

### What are the causes of governance gap in Nigeria?

Corruption, poor and unstable economic policies in Nigeria, None enforcement of rule of law, poor democratic consolidations, poor infrastructural development, systemic inefficiency, weak institutions and poor education system

**Table1: The following are the causes of governance gap in Nigeria**

S/N	Items	- x	Dec
1	Corruption	3.0	Agreed
2	Ethnic and Religious Bigotry	2.95	Agreed
3	Poor economic policies	2.92	Agreed
4	None enforcement of rule of laws	3.0	Agreed
5	Poor infrastructural development	2.9	Agreed
6	Systemic Inefficiency	2.87	Agreed
7	Weak Institutions	2.90	Agreed
8	Poor Educational Structure	3.0	Agreed
Cluster		23.54/8 2.94	Agreed

Data in table 1 shows that respondents affirmed that there are notable causes of governance gap in Nigeria. The cluster mean of 2.94 indicates that respondents agreed that the following are the causes of governance in gap in Nigeria: corruption, ethnic and religious bigotry, poor economic policies, none enforcement of rule of laws, poor

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infrastructural development, systemic inefficiency, weak institutions, and poor educational structure.

**Table2: What are the consequences of governance gap in Nigeria?**

Table 2 shows the consequences of governance gap in Nigeria

S/N	Items	- X	Decision
1	Poor national image	3.0	Agreed
2	Poor living conditions of citizens	2.90	Agreed
3	Poor economy	2.87	Agreed
4	Rigged economic and political system	2.90	Agreed
5	Deep seated systemic corruption	2.80	Agreed
6	Poverty and Inequality	2.99	Agreed
7	Impunity and Partial Justice	3.0	Agreed
8	Undermining Sustainable development goals	2.87	Agreed
9	Public and Private Sector non-functionality	3.0	Agreed
<b>Cluster</b>		<b>26.33/9</b>	<b>Agreed</b>
		<b>2.92</b>	

Data in table 2 shows that respondents affirmed that governance gap has many consequences. The cluster mean of 2.92 indicates that respondents agreed that governance gap has the following consequences such as poor national image, poor living conditions of the citizens, poor economy, rigged economic and political system, deep seated systemic corruption, poverty and inequality, impunity and partial justice, undermining sustainable development goals, and public and private sector non-functionality.

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**Discussions**

From the analysis and interpretation of data, the following findings were made:

Corruption, ethnic and religious bigotry; the study of Adighije (2020) found that there are causes that cause poor leadership and governance of the people in Nigeria, and they include systemic corruption in governance, and weak institutions and ethnicity in Nigeria governing system that enthrone incompetence instead of competence. This study finding is in agreement with that of the present study. Poor economic policies, none enforcement of rule of laws, poor infrastructural development; Another study by Chino (2021) also agrees with some aspects of this study in that it found among others that Nigeria governance is drawn back by poor economic planning, and poor infrastructural decay that has kept the country in the dark. Systemic inefficiency, weak institutions, and poor educational structure were all found to be causes of governance gap in Nigeria; a study by Abdul (2019) also partly agrees with this findings that poor governance in Nigeria is as a result of weak institutions and incompetence found in the system that does not allow the system to function properly.

The study also found that the consequences of governance gap include poor national image, poor living conditions of the citizens; the study of Ogumka (2020), also agree with these findings in that the study found that Nigeria misgovernance has contributed enormously to its image among comity of nations, and this has contributed to the shabby treatment of its citizens in diaspora. The study also found poor economy, rigged economic and political system as the consequences of governance gap; Abdul (2019) in a study found also, and agree with this finding that apart from the causes of governance gap, that the consequences are much, and takes its negative toll on the citizens of the nation, and it includes poor economy, and a corrupt political system that has contributed to the systemic inefficiency in Nigeria. Deep seated systemic corruption, poverty and

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inequality, impunity and partial justice were also found to be among the consequences of governance gap in Nigeria; the study of Isiak, Adebisi and Bakare (2015) agree with this findings when they made a similar finding that systemic corruption, poverty and inequality, impunity are all product of poor governance in their study. Other consequences which the study uncovered in Nigeria include undermining sustainable development goals, and public and private sector non-functionality; Ogbeidi (2019) also made similar findings in a systematic review when it found that some of the drawbacks in Nigeria system of government include undermining sustainable development goals, and public and private sector non-functionality.

**Conclusions**

Nigeria as a developing nation has continually grappled with governance issues that span rule of law, economy, security and other intricate areas that is related to weak and non-functional institutions. This has become a bane to national development and the citizens of the nation failing to achieve their aims. Given this, this study that has undertaken to examine the causes and consequences of governance gap in Nigeria succinctly concludes that Nigeria if not properly managed in terms of its governance and as it concerns key governance area will continue to witness different dimensions of governance consequences that will have effects on the citizens of the nations. At such, there is no gainsaying that this study is timely and seeks to address serious governance mishap in the nation that has thrown it into serious socio-economic and political quagmire.

**Implications to Societal Development**

The implication of this study stems from the fact that if a study of this nature is not conducted to uncover the numerous causes and consequences of governance malfeasance in Nigeria, the country will continue to languish and not be able to meet up with its goals of Sustainable Development Goals that is needed to achieve measurable development in



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Nigeria in 2030. Thus, it is pertinent to underscore that this study helps to uncover these challenges and as well point the responsible government and agencies on the best direction and strategy to adopt in fixing this governance gaps.

Hence, it is pertinent to argue that this study is timely and its importance can never be over emphasized given the need for the nation to improve its organs of governance and transcend its present position in terms of development indices among comity of nations.

More so, this study if not conducted will not open up the line of interactions and policy implementation on taking governance seriously in the country in order to ameliorate hardships, and meet the basic demands of the citizenry that is the governed.

**Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that government in Nigeria enforce the principles of separation of power to enable checks and balances as this is the only way to make sure that each government agency, organs and institutions are working to meet the demand of the people in terms of governance. It is also through this that corruption and other systemic malfeasance is curbed.
2. It is recommended that the government take the 17 point Sustainable Development Goals serious as this is the major means for the country to achieve the goals of governance.
3. Judiciary must sit up and uphold the rule of law, and curb political rascality, looting and corruption as one of the major means of keeping the government officials in check, and as well have them perform their functions properly.

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