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IMPERATIVE OF RULE OF LAW FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ATTAINMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The importance of the rule of law cannot be overemphasized, as it ensures that citizens are treated equally and fairly under the law. However, despite 25 years of uninterrupted democratic governance in Nigeria, adherence to the rule of law remains abysmally low. This situation calls for serious concern due to its potential impact on the nation's progress and development. Therefore, this paper underscores the imperative of adhering to the rule of law to enhance good governance and attain socio-economic and political stability in Nigeria. The paper is guided by the structural-functional theory. Relevant data were drawn from secondary sources, while the method of data analysis is descriptive. The finding of the paper revealed various barriers to effective rule of law practice in Nigeria. These include, lack of constitutionalism and constitutional supremacy, human rights violations, interference with judicial process, disregard for court orders, delayed justice system, weak institutions, lack of access to justice, and corruption. The paper recommends enhanced rule of law and human rights enforcement, strong and sustainable governance structures, efficient institutions, transparency and accountability, judicial independence, women and youth empowerment, access to justice, and advocacy and sensitization of the citizens on fundamental rights to achieve good governance and socio-economic and political stability in Nigeria.
Keywords: good governance, law, rule of law, socio-economic and political stability, Nigeria

Introduction
The rule of law is a fundamental principle of democratic governance. It prevents the arbitrary use of power by ensuring that all actions of individual, and institutions, including the government are conducted within the boundaries set by law that are publicly promulgated. It also ensures these laws are equally enforced and adjudicated upon by an independent judiciary. Therefore, the rule of law is essential for protecting the rights of all citizens and ensuring, fairness, justice, equality and government accountability. In Nigeria, the rule of law is anchored on a Supreme Constitution which subjects all classes and persons including government and its agencies to its provisions. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) in section 1(1) states that "this constitution is supreme and shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of

Nigeria". This suggests that everything must be done according to the law, which applies to all classes of persons. The Constitution also ensures fair hearing of trials in all cases, and guarantees the preservation of rights.

However, despite these constitutional guarantees, the rule of law is not fully practiced, creating uncertainty about Nigeria's future. Challenges such as lack of constitutionalism and constitutional supremacy, interference with judicial process, weak institutions, delayed justice system, disregard for court orders, lack of access to justice, corruption and human rights violations including, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and restriction of freedom of expression poses significant challenge to the rule of law in Nigeria. These issues contribute to Nigeria's consistent low rankings on global rule of law indices. In the recent Rule of Law Index published by the World Justice Project (WJP, 2023), Nigeria ranks 120th out of 142 countries, scoring of 0.41 out of 10. Regionally, it ranked 23rd out of 34 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (p.136). The index offers data organized into eight factors that encompass the concept of the rule of law, such as constraints on government power, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice.

This situation is a deep source of concern due to its potential impact on the nation's stability and development. As rightly observed by Banire (2021), any nation, where rule of law is trampled upon cannot achieve substantial human capacity development or attract sufficient foreign investment that will drive it towards a prosperous future. The United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 emphasizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are based on respect for human rights, effective rule of law, good governance, and transparent, effective and accountable institutions that provide access to justice for all (United Nations Development Programme, 2022, p.10). Given the profound implications of weak rule of law on Nigeria's stability and development, this paper underscores the imperative of advancing the rule of law for the enhancement of good governance and attainment of socio-economic and political stability in Nigeria.

Relevant data for this paper were drawn from secondary sources, such as journals, text-books, reports, newspapers and other internet materials, while the method of data analysis is descriptive. The paper is organized into five sections. The first section is the introduction which provides background information. The second section presents the conceptual and theoretical framework. Section three presents the nexus between rule of law, and good governance, socio-economic and political stability. Section four examines the challenges to the rule of law in Nigeria, while section six concludes the paper and proffers recommendations.

Conceptual Framework

Relevant concepts are defined in this section in order to have a clear focus and understanding of the context in which they are used in this paper.

Rule of Law

The idea of rule of law is regarded as part of modern democratic governance. It protects the rights of all citizens and ensures that the government is accountable to the people. It also provides a framework for resolving disputes peacefully and fairly (Ojukwu, 2023). According to the United Nations (2008, p.1), the rule of law refers to a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law,

equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency. Dicey (1885) offers the first major explanation of what the rule of law entails in a liberal democracy. According to Dicey, the rule of law consists of three inter-connected elements. Firstly, the rule of law means:

> absolute supremacy or predominance of regular law as opposed to the influence of arbitrary power, and excludes the existence of arbitrariness, or prerogative, or even of wide discretionary authority on the part of the government. Englishmen are ruled by the law, and by the law alone; a man may with us be punished for a breach of law, but he can be punished for nothing else.

This presupposes that no person should be subjected to punishment for a breach of a pre-established law, and the proper venue for determining whether such a breach of law has occurred is the courts. This principle has been guaranteed by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Section 36(12), and it has been long stated by the court in the case of Aoko v Fagbemi (1961) ANLR p.400. Thus, powers can only be exercised in accordance with written laws made by the legislature. Secondly, it means "equality before the law, or the equal subjection of all classes to the ordinary law of the land administered by the ordinary law courts". The rule of law in this sense excludes the idea of any exemption of officials or others from the duty of obedience to the law which governs other citizens or from the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals. This presupposes that no one is above the law and that everyone, including government officials, is subject to the same laws. It also means that the law is applied fairly and equally to everyone, regardless of their social status or wealth (United Nations, 2007). Thirdly, the rule of law means the recognition and enforcement of individual's rights. This include a range of legal safeguards protecting individuals from arbitrary action taken by the government, with the courts empowered to act as the custodians of those safeguards (Valcke, 2012). The protection of civil and political rights is therefore an integral part of the rule of law. The Nigerian 1999 Constitution in its Chapter IV on fundamental human rights integrates these rights into our principles of the rule of law. Jibrin (2021) outlines the characteristics of the rule of law as follows:

a) The legitimate authority empowered to make them makes the laws of the land.
b) The laws are publicly declared and known to the community and must be obeyed by all.
c) The laws apply to everybody so all persons are equal before the law including the lawgivers.
d) Members of the society are citizens and therefore have rights that must be protected by the law.
e) That in applying the laws, discretion should not be applied but decisions should be based on the known principles of the law.
f) That the laws apply proactively and not retroactively.

Therefore, the rule of law is an affirmation of the principle that the governance of human society should be based on law rather than the whims and caprices of human beings. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP, 2009) outlines the necessary conditions to achieve the rule of law. These include just legal frameworks, public order, accountability to the law, access to justice and culture of lawfulness. Thus, the following essential points is crucial. Firstly, there must be laws that are consistent with international norms and standards. These laws must be certain, transparent, equitable and responsive to the entire population, and not just the powerful elites. Secondly, public order is paramount to ensure that laws are enforced

equitably, while the lives, property, freedoms, and rights of individuals are protected. It also involves reducing criminal and politically motivated violence and ensuring that criminal elements are pursued, arrested and detained.

Thirdly, accountability to the law is important. This condition involves holding the population, public officials, and perpetrators of past conflict-related crimes legally accountable for their actions. It is also essential to have an independent judiciary free from political influence, and accountability mechanisms to prevent the abuse of power. Fourthly, access to justice is vital to ensure that citizens are able to seek and obtain a remedy for grievances through formal and informal institutions of justice that conform with international standards. These institutions must ensure equality, apply the law effectively, and ensure procedural fairness and transparency. Lastly, it is imperative to foster a culture of lawfulness. This allows the general populace to follow the law and address their grievances through the justice system.

Good Governance

Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. It involves the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes, the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction among them (World Bank, 2000). Good governance, on the other hand, refers to a set of practices and principles that promote effective and efficient governance. It is characterized by participation, adherence to the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability (United Nations, 2016). The Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2022, p.7), a champion of good governance on the African continent, outlines four main pillars of good governance. This include security and rule of law; participation, rights and inclusion; foundations for economic opportunity; and human development.

Furthermore, good governance ensures that political, social, an economic priority is based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of resources. According to United Nations (2007), good governance encourages public participation in government, inclusion in law-making and policy making, and accountability of elected and appointed officials. It also enables civil society to become actively involved in policy making which leads to wide representation of societal interests in decision-making. Therefore, good governance result in laws and policies that better respect cultural diversity contribution to the resolution of social conflicts and tensions, and address the challenges of inequality and poverty.

Socio-Economic and Political Stability

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (9th ed), the term "socio-economic" relates the society and economics. "Socio" is connected with society or the study of society. A society is a particular community of people who share same customs and laws. "Economic" is connected with the trade, industry and development of wealth in a country, area or society, while "political" relates to the state, government or public affairs. Lastly, "stability" means the quality or state of being steady and not changing or being disturbed in any way (Hornsby, 2015). Therefore, socio-economic and political stability refers to the absence of disruptions or upheavals in social, economic and political conditions within a society. These conditions encompass factors such as income, education, employment, healthcare, housing, poverty, inequality. One of the cardinal tenets of democracy is sovereignty of the electorates, and the welfare of the citizens is giving topmost attention and

priority which includes protection of lives and property, appreciable improvement in standards of living. This provides a conducive environment for economic growth, and social development. Furthermore, societies with political stability experience a decreased probability of encouraging major political upheavals, civil unrest or sudden changes in leadership. They are able to prevent violent conflicts, and maintain, law, order, and social cohesion.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is guided by the structural-functional theory. Structural functionalism is a sociological theory that seeks to explain the functioning of society by examining the relationships between its various social institutions and sectors (Glenda, 1996). The theory is rooted in the works of Emile Durkheim (1893), and other notable theorists such as Herbert Spencer (1896), Robert Merton (1949) and Talcott Parsons (1977). Structural functionalism views the society as a complex system with interrelated parts that works together to meet the needs of individuals and maintain societal stability. The theory describes the various parts or constituent elements of a society such as norms, traditions, customs, and institutions like economy, government, law, education, kinship, and religion as interrelated and interdependent.

The organic or biological analogy of the functional theory was popularized by Herbert Spencer who considered the various parts of the society as human body (organs) that works toward the proper functioning of the body as a whole (Urry, 2000, p.23). Thus, for the society to maintain equilibrium and meet the needs of the system, its parts must function effectively. If one part of the system changes, other will adapt to this change, which ultimately slows down overall change in society (Parkyn, 1977). Durkheim (1893) argues that individuals make up society, but in order to study society, sociologists have to look beyond individuals to social facts such as laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals and all of the cultural rules that govern social life. According to Durkheim, each of these social facts serves one or more functions within a society. Therefore, this theory is premised on the idea that individual behaviour follows established norms, which helps to maintain social order.

The theory is relevant for explaining the importance of adherence to the rule of law for good governance and socio-economic and political stability in Nigeria. The rule of law is a principle that underpins and guides the functioning of institutions and structures within the society. It ensures the supremacy of the law, equality of all individuals before the law and guarantees human rights. As a set of norms, it regulates human behaviour, which is critical for maintaining equilibrium of the social system. Therefore, good governance, and socio-economic and political stability in Nigeria is largely dependent on the adherence to the rule of law. The structural theory has been criticized for not being able to explain the existence of societies in the first place. Additionally, it has been faulted for only presenting a simplistic and static model of society focused on order and equilibrium, making it unable to adequately account for transformation and change (Colomy, 1986; Chilcott, 1998). However, despite the criticisms, the theory remains relevant for the purpose of analysis in this paper.

Rule of Law, Good Governance, Socio-Economic and Political Stability: The Nexus

Rule of law, good governance, socio-economic and political stability are inextricably linked. The rule of law is one of the key indicators of good governance (United Nations, 2016). Good governance is enhanced when there is adherence to the rule of law which ensures that the governance processes and decisions are made in accordance with the laws. This adherence prevents arbitrary exercise of power, corruption, and abuse of authority and citizens' rights. It ensures that citizens are equal before the law and have access to justice regardless of their status or background. Furthermore, the rule of law is essential for fostering socio-economic

development of a nation. It supports stable economies and economic growth by upholding property rights, facilitating the elimination of corruption, and maintaining a business environment in which contracts are enforced, and international trade and investment can flourish. Likewise, the rule of law ensures political stability by providing fair and legitimate routes for disputes to be settled (James & van Zyl Smit, 2022). Strengthening the rule of law can therefore enhance good governance and socio-economic and political stability, while neglecting it undermines progress and exacerbate existing challenges.

Good governance and socio-economic and political stability are endangered where rule of law is not respected. Frequent disregard of the rule of law promotes corruption, weaken legal frameworks, and foster social unrest, all of which can hinder economic progress and tarnish the country's reputation. The expected implications of disregard for the rule of law by any given government of a country to the economy are enormous. It erodes investor confidence and discourages both domestic and foreign investment. Given the fact investors typically seek legal protection for their investments and expect fair and transparent legal process, if these expectations are not met, they may hesitate or even choose to invest in other countries with more favourable legal frameworks.

The components of rule of law such as human rights, assists in maintaining social stability (This Day, 2024). It promotes equality, ensure access to basic needs, foster social cohesion and enhance good governance. The rule of law creates an environment in which the full spectrum of human creativity can flourish, and prosperity can be built. There can be no democratic setting in absence of rule of law, which governs the system and limits the powers of those in charge. Overall, rule of law is fundamental to peace and security and political stability, which are necessary for achieving economic development, and to protect people's rights and fundamental freedoms. It is foundational to people's access to public access to public services, curbing corruption, restraining the abuse of power, and to establishing the social contract between people and the state.

Challenges to the Rule of Law in Nigeria

Nigeria is a democratic state with a constitution that enshrines the principles of the rule law. The 1999 Constitution establishes a federal system of government, separation of powers, and guarantees human rights. It established institutions, such as the judiciary to ensure that the rule of law is upheld. However, despite these constitutional safeguards, Nigeria faces significant challenges relating to the rule of law. These challenges include:

Lack of Constitutionalism and Constitutional Supremacy

A major challenge to the promotion of rule of law in Nigeria is lack of constitutionalism and constitutional supremacy. According to Chukwuma and Ebai (2013), the problem in Nigeria has not been the absence of constitution, but rather the ease with which constitutional provisions are abrogated, subverted, suspended, or brazenly ignored. The non-adherence to the basic principles and provisions of the constitution in a democratic state, like Nigeria, undermines the rule of law. According to Olasunkanmi (2018), any political system that does not adhere to the principles of constitutionalism will create a disconnection between the state and the citizens, making it increasingly difficult for the citizens to rely on the state. This is because lack of constitutionalism gives room arbitrary exercise of power. The authority of the powerful individuals, which ought to have been limited by the legal and institutional means to ensure that the rights of the citizens are respected, often become unchecked. This situation, therefore, facilitates human rights violations, endemic corruption, profiteering by the ruling elites and resistance to transparency and accountability. As a result, there is widespread loss of confidence in state institutions and processes. The society becomes an arena of various

conflicts and the promotion of common good is thereby sacrificed. The lack of constitutional adherence erodes public trust and leads to a cycle of instability and inefficacy in governance.

Human Rights Violations

Violation of human rights, including suppression of press freedom, arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial killings, torture by security forces remain a serious concern in Nigeria. Jibrin (2021) highlights a pervasive culture of intimidation by the country's security forces, stemming from a long-standing disregard for the rights of citizens dating back to colonial times. This culture has made ordinary Nigerian see security agents as potential threats, rather than protectors. The reality therefore creates a sense of insecurity for the ordinary Nigerians, rather than a sense of security. Instances abound where innocent citizens have been unjustly detained, arrested, tortured and persecuted by the government, which is antithetical to rule of law. For instance, the right to freedom of expression is a fundamental human right which is contained in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Section 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended. The exercise of this right is essential for guaranteeing human rights, democracy and the rule of law. However, the freedom of information and press freedom is stifled, thereby undermining the media's role in a democratic society. The Press Attacker, a civic technology tool of the Centre for Journalism and Innovation Development (CJID) that tracks, verifies and documents incidents of press freedom violations in Nigeria disclosed that in 2023, a total of 108 cases of press attacks were documented (Aikuola, 2024). The recent arrest and detention of Daniel Ojukwu for revealing corruption involving senior Nigerian officials is also illustrative (Ayeni, 2024). Without free expression and a free media, violations of human rights may remain hidden, leading to impunity and continuous violations. Similarly, the National Human Rights Commission reveals that a total of 19,470 complaints of rights abuse were reported in April 2024, with most of the reports filed against state actor's/government agents, including the police, the military and other security agencies (Chiedozie, 2024). These violations not only undermine the rule of law but also erode public trust in law enforcement agencies, and poses danger to Nigeria's nascent democracy.

Interference with Judicial Process

A strong pillar for the prevalence of rule of law is the independence of the judiciary, ensuring that the courts acts impartially and free from external influence. This principle is supported by the theory of separation of powers, which emphasizes the need for distinct and independent branches of government. It therefore encompasses the independence of the judicial arm of government in various aspects, including appointment, finance, security of tenure, and administrative and decision making matters (United Nations, 2003). The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) enshrines the principles of judicial independence. By Section 6, judicial powers are vested in the courts. The Constitution in Section 153(1)(i) also established the National Judicial Council (NJC). The powers of the NJC as contained in the Part 1 to the Third Schedule to the Constitution include, overseeing appointments, judiciary funds, and exercising disciplinary control over judges and staff. However, in practice, the judiciary in Nigeria encounters challenges to its independence.

Political interference in the judicial appointments is a major issue, with politicians influencing the process to appoint loyal supporters rather than the most qualified candidates. This politicization compromises impartiality, as these judges recommended by the politicians often feel compelled to rule in favour of the government, as a way of repaying the favour of appointment (Banire, 2021). This statement is reinforced by Odinkalu quoted in Olasupo (2024) who posits that judicial appointments in Nigeria have become a racket in self-dealing entirety unrelated to any rational criterion for being a judge. Another challenge to the

independence of the judiciary is the security of tenure of judicial officers. The security of tenure of office is guaranteed under Section 292 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which provides that judicial officers cannot be removed by the President or Governor except by acting on an address supported by two-thirds majority of the National Assembly or the House of Assembly of a state as the case may be, or as recommended by the National Judicial Council. However, despite the above constitutional provision, a former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Walter Onnoghen was removed from office by the executive in a manner that is not in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. This violated the security of tenure of judicial officers.

Financial dependence on the executive also undermines judicial independence. Despite Constitution provisions in Sections 80(1), 81(3) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), and judicial pronouncements affirming financial autonomy, the judiciary still lack control over its budget, especially at the state level. This financial reliance may pressure judges to avoid ruling against the government or powerful interests. Without independence, the judiciary cannot function effectively. The above view is reinforced and consistent with the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2024) report which states judicial independence is weakened by the terms of appointment and dismissal, poor compensation and unmanageable workloads.

Disregard for Court Orders

The practice of the rule of law in Nigeria is at a record low and has not been remarkable and impressive, particularly in the aspect of obedience to court orders. The frequent disregard for court orders by the President, Governors, and other members of the executive branch is alarming. High-profile cases like those Sheikh Ibraheem El-Zakzaky, Colonel Sambo Dasuki, Omoyele Sowore, and Nnamdi Kanu exemplifies this issue. These individuals were detained despite several court orders ordering their release (Punch, 2023). The judiciary faces challenges in enforcing its judgement, mainly when the government or powerful individual are involved because of lack of effective enforcement mechanisms (Soyele, 2024). When court orders are ignored, it discourages Nigerians from seeking redress through the justice system, and creates an environment where individuals take laws into their own hands.

Delayed Justice System

One major challenge to the rule of law in Nigeria is the delay in resolving cases. Banire (2021) attributes these delays in the judicial process to the attitude of judges, and lawyers, noting that some judges do not keep proper schedules, and have a tendency to postpone cases for trivial reasons, showing a lack of readiness to work. Lawyers also contribute to the delays in the system by filing unnecessary applications and requesting adjournments to frustrate the case. Furthermore, inadequate judicial personnel, inadequate funding and infrastructure, along with limited use of technology also add to the problem, resulting in huge court dockets. Chukwuma and Ebai (2013) notes that the formal legal systems do not provide the expected outcomes in terms of justice delivery, due to lack of capacity and logistics to perform their duties. These result to backlog of cases that impedes the effective enforcement of laws and the delivery of justice. The delays in the judicial system contribute to prison congestion, with large number of inmates awaiting trial. This situation is consistent with the United States Department of State (2023, p.10) report on human rights, which highlights lengthy pre-trial detention as a serious problem in Nigeria. Detainees often wait for years to gain access to a court, and in many cases, multiple adjournments resulted in years long delays. The shortage of trial judges, trial backlogs, endemic corruption, bureaucratic inertia, and undue political influence further hamper the judicial system.

Weak Institutions

Strong, effective and accountable public institutions that respects the rule of law is crucial for good governance and socio-economic and political stability. A solid and legitimate rule of law system protects the human rights of people, holds power accountable, prevents violent crime and provides fair and legitimate avenues to resolve conflicts in societies (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d). However, there have been instances where powerful individuals have been able to undermine the rule of law. Such individuals easily manipulate and abuse weak institutions to their own advantage, leading to corruption, injustice and instability. For example, corrupt politicians have been able to use their power to influence the judiciary and the police. Similarly, trust in public institutions has also been, and partly remain on the decline. This view is consistent and reinforced by the United Nations (2007), which states that government institutions meant to facilitate the rule of law have been plagued by corruption and lack of independence from politicians, thus failing to prevent the arbitrary exercise of power.

Lack of Access to Justice

Access to justice refers to the ability of people to seek and obtain remedies through informal or formal institutions of justice. It is a state of law that represents the promotion and protection of human rights, providing a very effective means of conflict prevention. As a mutually reinforcing component of rule of law, access to justice is key to ensuring peaceful, equitable, and inclusive development. However, access to justice remains a significant issue in Nigeria, particularly for those who are illiterate and lack awareness of their rights. Ignorance and illiteracy exacerbates the difficulties faced by individuals seeking legal redress. Many Nigerians do not know their rights and live in ignorance of their constitutional protections, which makes it easy for others to violate those rights. This lack of awareness leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. Even when citizens are aware of their rights, the challenges posed by poverty hinders their ability to seek legal redress.

Poverty and deprivations also constitutes substantial obstacles to social justice, progress, and development. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2022), 63% of persons living within Nigeria, approximately 133 million people live in multi-dimensional poverty. The majority of the poor 86 million people (65%) live in the North, while 45 million (35%) live in the South. Indigent people are less able to access formal legal institutions for dispute resolution. This statement aligns with the perspective of Okogbule (2005) who notes that people living in poverty are most likely to have their human rights violated, and are least likely to enforce their rights. This is due to the high cost of litigation in Nigeria which is particularly burdensome for the majority struggling to secure their livelihoods. The United Nations (2007) posits that for the rule of law to further sustainable development outcomes, it must ensure protection of all human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development.

Corruption

One of the primary responsibilities of the government is to enforce the rule of law. However, pervasive corruption at every level of governance in Nigeria has hindered this obligation. Numerous cases of high-level corruption have been reported, with individuals who are responsible for enforcing the rule of law undermining it through their actions. The rule of law demands accountability from both individuals and the state as a whole. Some law enforcement officers are also involved in corruption, which poses a huge challenge to rule of law and formal justice systems. Alleged reported cases of judicial corruption, involving both judges and members of the Bar have led to questionable practices of winning cases. The United States Department of State (2023, p.24) country report points out that massive and

widespread corruption remains endemic, and has affected all sectors of government in Nigeria, including the judiciary and security services. Nigeria ranked 145th out of 180 countries and scored 25 out of 100 points on the 2023 Corruption Perception Index published by Transparency International (2024). Thus, resources which could have been channelled into meeting citizen's basic needs in human security are diverted, thereby undermining good governance.

Conclusion

This paper contends that there is a direct correlation between the adherence to rule of law, good governance and socio-economic and political stability in a country. The rule of law is designed to protect citizens' right to freedom and an equal chance for a good life. It ensures equality before the law, mitigates arbitrary exercise of power, curbs corruption, and protects citizen's rights. The rule of law engenders socio-economic and political stability by strengthening the voices of individuals and communities, providing access to justice, ensuring due process and establishing remedies for the violation of rights. The stability of society fundamentally depends on the adherence to the principle of rule of law. The paper harps on the need for strong government institutions, accountable governance, good leadership, inclusivity and respect for the rule of law to maintain this stability.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered to enhance the rule of law, drive good governance, and ensure socio-economic and political stability in Nigeria:

1. There is need for increased commitment to constitutionalism and ensure that democratic principles are upheld at all times.
2. Strengthening of government institutions is crucial to enhance the practice of rule of law. This include an independent judiciary, free and independent press, a strong civil society, and a professional and accountable police force.
3. The justice system should be improved upon by providing adequate funding for the training of judicial personnel and ensuring strong partnerships with law enforcement agencies.
4. There is need to ensure protection of human rights, access to justice, and the promotion of diversity and inclusion. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate citizens about their rights and redress mechanisms available to them.
5. There is need to ensure transparency and accountability to fight against corruption and encourage public participation in governance.

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