

**NEXUS OF LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A
CONTEXTUAL EXEGESIS OF PSALM 72 IN NIGERIA.**

By

ESSANG, EDET OKON (Ph. D Research Student)
Department of Religious and Cultural Studies,
Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus, Nigeria
+2348123622398; ddyessang2014@gmail.com
&

Dr. Stella P. Essien
Department of Religious and Cultural Studies,
Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus, Nigeria
+2348074953812; stellaessien@aksu.edu.ng
&

Dr. Vincent A . Olusakin
Department of Religious and Cultural Studies,
Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus
234807495381; vincentolusakin@aksu.edu.ng
&

Dr. Peter S. Equere
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies,
Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus

Abstract

This article explores the nexus between leadership, social justice, and national development in Nigeria through the interpretive lens of Psalm 72. The Psalm, a biblical text traditionally attributed to King Solomon, portrays an ideal model of leadership grounded in righteousness, justice, and concern for the marginalized. By drawing parallels between the Psalm's vision of just governance and the realities of political leadership in Nigeria, the article highlights the ethical and spiritual dimensions of national development. It argues that the multifaceted and persistent endemic nature of corruption, derelictions of rural development and electoral irregularities amongst others factors that tendered correlated adverse impacts on national development in Nigeria stem largely from a deficit in justice-oriented leadership. The study employs a theological-ethical approach, integrating biblical exegesis with socio-political analysis, to propose that the principles of equity, compassion, and accountability outlined in Psalm 72 offer a transformative framework for governance. The article concludes by recommending a reorientation of leadership culture in Nigeria that prioritizes the needs of marginalized communities and ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities; demonstrates integrity, accountability, and transparency in governance, promoting a culture of

ethics and fairness, as well as addressing disparities and promoting inclusivity, amongst others as a pathway to sustainable national development.

Keywords: Leadership, social justice, national development, Psalm, Nigeria

Introduction

Though Psalms, undeniably, are typically and commonly designated as “the hymnbook of the temple” (Mowinckel 1962:32), or the prayer book of Israel in their cultic services of their monotheistic religion as well as in Christianity, the corpus also appears as a relevant compendium of wisdom for leadership, leadership ethics and etiquettes, moral values and ethics for Christian living, as well as worship and services to God and humanity (Coulter 2011:12). They also major thematically on the ethical responsibility of Israel as God’s people and the “moral and ethical transformation of persons and society” (Saliers, 1979:183). Specifically, wisdom and didactic, royal and messianic psalms can advocate illuminating theological viewpoints on leadership principles and qualities. For instance, Resane (2014:1) employs the shepherd metaphor in Psalm 23 to excerpt the shepherd model of leadership. Adamo (2018:1) interpreted Psalm 23 “africentrically” to explore the protective, provision, healing, caring, courage, and guidance roles of leaders in the ecclesiastical community and to call them to pursue the shepherd-leader model for the advancement and the effectiveness of the *mission Dei* in the world. Psalm 72 is also a typical example of the Psalms in this category.

Many scholars have derived varied rich leadership principles from Psalm 72 and adopted them to explore the necessity of moral values in leadership. For instance, Human (2002:674) employs its values to argue for establishing justice and peace in the societies by leaders in modern Africa. According to Obiorah (2013:198), the petitioner in Psalm 72 delineated “features of good governance expected of every leader” and in Anambra State. Further, Friedman & Friedman

(2009:45) adopts its inferences to cry against greed and leadership crisis in the United States and the world. Uzorma Dike studies justice and righteousness in the Psalm to correlate the virtue of integrity and national stability in Nigeria (2021:22). In the same vein, Essang, Essien, Olusakin and Equere (2024:85) explore the concept of justice in the psalm to propose for just leadership in Nigeria.

Nigeria, despite her rich resource endowment, has grappled with numerous socio-economic and political challenges since her independence. The multifaceted and persistent endemic nature of corruption, lack of transparency and the rule of law, insecurity, derelictions of rural development and electoral irregularities amongst other factors have correlated impacts on her low national development. The root cause of these low economic and development indices, injustices, inequality, and underdevelopment in Nigeria has been attributed by many scholars, to bad leadership and paucity of good governance in the country (Oko, 2023:57; Olusakin & Sibani, 2023:60; Essien, 2023:5, and Eyoh 2015:46). By adopting a simplified literary approach in biblical exegetical method, this study attempts to elucidate the nexus between good leadership and social justice in fostering national development in Nigeria in the light of leadership paradigms enshrined in Psalm 72.

Conceptual Clarification

Leadership

The term leadership receives diverse nuances of meaning due to its multidimensional nature. However, Barna (2003:23) defines it as the process of “mobilizing others toward a goal shared by the leader and followers.” Politically, leadership refers to the ruling political class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a nation as a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the nation such as Nigeria through different decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the nation (Nwambuko,

2021:442). This paper, therefore, delineates leadership as the ability to inspire, guide, motivate, and influence a group of people towards the accomplishment of common goals, through managerial skills as well as integrating the demands of the institution and the needs of individual members in a productive and individually fulfilling manners.

Social Justice

In our society, justice remains the most complex and contentious moral, social, political, and ethical issue due to its multidimensional nature. However, justice literally connotes fairness, uprightness, impartiality, equity, objectivity, righteousness, honesty, neutrality, and disinterestedness (Motloba, Makwakwa, & Machete, 2019:150). Drew (2023:21) avers that justice involves the just distribution of resources; fairness to human rights and equality of distribution of opportunities as well as seeking to uphold these principles of equality, fairness and righteousness in conflict resolution, right protection and promotion of peace and harmony within a community or society. In line with this, social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal political, economic, and social rights and opportunities in a given society. It connotes fairness and equality in distribution of resources, power, and obligations in the society to all people irrespective of ethnicity, race, age, gender, status, ability, sexual orientation and religious or spiritual affiliation (Ugbudu, 2020:70). This implies that in a social justice system, the government in power should be poised to eliminating barriers arising from race, sex, class, colour, creed, ethnicity, religion or nationality as well as generating an environment where every individual receives unreserved and unconstrained opportunity in a positive way with a view to developing individual physical and intellectual faculties.

National Development

Development, simply and generally denotes progress, dynamic, growth or advancement. According to Zakaria and Adedayo (2020:265), development connotes the process, or result of developing or state of gradual growth or advancement via a progressive change in social, economic, technological, scientific, political, and religious conditions resulting to an enhancement in the well beings of the citizens. In Nigeria context as a nation, we can speak of national development. National development is all encompassing process of improving the economic, social, political, and cultural well-being of a nation and its citizens (Adeolu, 2016:11). This infers that, development of any nation encapsulates such parameters as planned national economy; increase in agricultural production; harnessing industrial production; development of human resources; application of science and technology in production sector; provision of mass education; and the provisions of various facilities to meet the need and aspiration of disadvantaged, deprived and poorest of the poor segment of the population (Bayambang, 2023 n.p). It is considered as sustainable when “it is likely to achieve lasting satisfaction of human needs” with “improvement of the quality of life which includes good health, appropriate technologies, food, employment, self-reliance, clean water, shelter and electricity for all” (Oko and Koko 2024:106).

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Biblical Justice Theory and Ethical Leadership Theory. Christopher J.H. Wright's Biblical Justice Theory argues that biblical justice is “the dynamic relationship between God, humanity, and the created order, reflecting God's character and purposes.” It emphasizes God's justice as foundationally rooted in God's creation and covenantal relationships with humanity, highlighting His concern for the vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed; thus, prioritizing restoration, reconciliation, and healing over punitive measures. Thus, this theory

stresses the significance of social justice, advocating for economic, social, and political equity (Wright, 2018:23). Nationally, Wright's theory highlights the need for restoration and reconciliation in Nigerian society; social justice as it resonates with Nigeria's struggle for equitable distribution of resources and opportunities; and importance of visionary leadership and good governance in Nigeria. Its focus on creation and covenant highlights the interconnectedness of human relationships and the environment. By applying Wright's Biblical Justice Theory, Nigeria can move towards a more just and equitable society, where governance and development prioritize the well-being of all citizens (Wright, 2004:120).

Ethical Leadership Theory was coined by Robert Brown, Linda Treviño and David Harrison. It is defined as leadership that is guided by respect for ethical beliefs and values and the dignity and rights of others. Ethical leadership involves leaders making decisions based on the right thing to do for the common good, not just based on what is best for themselves or for the bottom line. (Brown, Treviño & Harrison: 2005:134). The key ideologies of ethical leadership, according to Brown et al (2005:135), include respect (valuing others' skills and contributions), justice (ensuring fairness and equality in all situations), accountability (holding oneself accountable for actions and decisions), service (making decisions based on the greater good) honesty (transparent and truthful communication), and community (considering the needs of all stakeholders). In a nutshell, when leaders are ethically abiding, good governance will ensue; while in the nonexistence of ethical leadership, bad governance can flourish. These theories align with the principles in Psalm 72 that offers a framework for leaders to promote national development in Nigeria by prioritizing justice, integrity, inclusivity and sustainability.

Nexus Between Leadership, Social Justice, and Development

The nexus between leadership, justice, and development emphasizes that just and equitable leadership is crucial for effective and sustainable development, as it fosters trust, inclusivity, and empowers individuals to participate in shaping a better future. Sustainable development requires strong leadership to mobilize resources, address challenges, and create positive change. This includes setting visions, inspiring action, and creating an environment conducive to progress. Justice, encompassing fairness, equity, and the protection of human rights, is a critical foundation for sustainable development. Just leadership ensures that the benefits of development are shared equitably and that marginalized groups are not left behind (Gabriel, 2014:135)

Different leadership styles, displayed by a just leader have different impacts on justice and development. A transformational leadership may be more inclined to prioritize social justice, actively seeking to address inequalities and protect the welfare of individuals, while servant leadership focuses on fairness and justice to promote a supportive environment and reduce perceptions of political behaviors (Achor, 2022:12).

When leadership is rooted in justice, it can lead to stronger social cohesion and trust; a culture of fairness and respect that reduces conflict and builds a foundation for collaboration. Such leadership encourages empowered participation as well as more equitable outcomes. When individuals feel their voices are heard and their needs are addressed, they are more likely to participate in development efforts. Just leadership ensures that development efforts benefit all members of society, not just a select few. These in turn address injustices and promote equity which can lead to more sustainable and inclusive development (Udofia, 2020:154). In conclusion, the nexus between leadership, justice, and development highlights that just and equitable leadership is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

Overview of Nigerian Leadership Challenges Towards Development

Nigeria faces multifaceted development challenges posed by her leaders, in spite of series of development strategies put in place by successive governments all in attempts to generate national development. With the widespread corruption and mismanagement of resources, the country's development has been stalled significantly in all facets, good governance impaired, and the future of the country destroyed. Corruption and development are antithetical to each other; the two cannot cohabit. Nigerian is managed by corrupt leaders who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation; public funds earmarked for social services like healthcare and education are diverted, resulting in inadequate infrastructure, limited access to basic amenities, and a low quality of life for many Nigerians (Oko, 2023:57; Eyoh, 2015:46)

Also, social injustice has become a major barricade to Nigeria development. In a social justice system, as explained by Peschke (1999), people are not “discriminated against, nor their welfare and well-being constrained or prejudiced on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations, age, race, belief, disability, location, social class, socioeconomic circumstances, or other characteristic of background or group membership”. However, Nigeria is heavily infested with injustice, exploitation, oppression, and subjugation of one people by others, and inequalities (Oko, 2023:51; Essien, 2023:10).

The leadership structure in Nigeria is also porous due to lack of accountability and transparency in the managements of public affairs in the nation. Favour, (2024:16) argues that there is a conspicuous lack of accountability and transparency in governance across national, state, and local levels. Proper procedures are frequently sidestepped, resulting in financial misappropriation across various public sectors despite substantial budget allocations. The absence of openness and accountability fosters corruption while posing a significant obstacle to national development. In

the view of Dike (2010:50), poor governance has resulted in consistent dereliction of rural areas in terms of development and access to basic services, poverty, contributing to rural-urban disparities and migration, and limited opportunities for rural dwellers. Electoral irregularities have become a pervasive issue in Nigerian politics, eroding ethical politics, and public trust and faith in the democratic process. Nigerian leaders have subverted popular will of the masses, destabilized citizens opinion and rights, disrupted legislative and executive processes of democratic ideals, eroded the legitimacy of the democratic political system, installed the culture of violence, and disrupted community bonds (Ekanem, Essien & Okon, 2022:1). Insecurity and violence in Nigeria, as another outcome of bad leadership, have worn new dresses ranging from insurgency, terrorism, communal conflicts, religious violence and extremist attacks. Its concomitant effects ranges from loss of lives and properties to hampering of development (Olusakin and Sibani, 2023:54).

Nigeria is also characterized with a significant portion of the its population living in multidimensional poverty. Olusakin and Essang (2024:276) submit that the extreme poverty in Nigeria has resulted in a lawless contemporary society, analogous to prophet Hosea's days, where truth, mercy, and knowledge of God were grossly lacking in the land (Hosea 4:1-2; KJV). According to them, such a perverted society is characterized by juvenile delinquencies, political upheavals, economic hardship, all forms of sexual perversion, ethnic conflict, violence, and abuse of religions. This is accompanied with all forms of immorality among Nigerian leaders. A moral person, according to Nana and Udom (2024:153), is altruistic in nature; a service-oriented person; not self-centered, but compassionate, benevolent, considerate, and kind-heart to everyone that come his or her way. It is a commitment to the service for the sake of others. All these virtues epitomize good leadership and foster national development but they are grossly absent in

Nigeria. In addition, inadequate economic policies, marked by overreliance on oil revenues and a lack of economic diversification, leave Nigeria susceptible to external shocks and economic instability (Udom, Olusakin & Essien, 2025:140).

Reading Psalms 72 for Leadership, Social Justice, and Development in Nigeria

Psalm 72, as accepted by many scholars, was written by King David for edification during the coronation of his successor, Solomon his son (Paul, 1972:351; Obiorah 2013:194; Human 2002:668). As an intercessory prayer, it emphasizes the supplication of the supplicant praying for justice and righteousness from God, so that the Israelite king may display these God-given virtues in ruling Israel. As opined by Ross (2013:532), Psalm 72 as a royal psalm, formed part of the royal liturgy either during the enthronement of the king, or at covenant renewal celebrations. As a royal psalm, it revolves around the king as its dominant figure; reflecting on both the responsibilities of the Israelite king as well as the significance emanating from his office. Its central theme, entreaty for the king as seen in every part of its stichs, strophes, and stanzas, is righteousness and justice in leadership for the peace and prosperity of the land. In addition, David prayed in Psalm 72 requesting God to bring about His rule on earth through the reign of the just and righteous king so that the entire nation would be blessed (Gaebelein 1992:347).

Contextually, Psalm 72 presents a compelling paradigm for social justice, good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. In vs 1 of Psalm 72, justice and righteousness as the two divinely sourced and interrelated virtues are highlighted. “Your justice” (Hb, *mishpat*) refers to the various aspects of justice or different manifestation of nuances of justice (Obiorah, 2013:195) or “God’s gift to the king in making decisions along with the second virtue righteousness (Kaiser, 2009: 264). Righteousness (*tsedaqah*) refers to the state of being conformable to God’s law and with all that is good, excellent and maintenance of all that is in

consonant with the word and will of Yahweh. It is also used for justice, right, uprightness, and equity (USB 2004). Fasuba (2020:151) posits that it implies taking a stand and doing the right thing or acting within the moral and ethical demands of the society such as assisting the poor, the oppressed, and telling the truth to vindicate the innocent and upholding the cause of justice. According to Robert D. Culver, (*TWOT*, 2:948–49), justice definitely involved the interplay between governing, rights, and judging, especially the “poor,” “afflicted,” “oppressed,” and the “needy,” who normally do not receive justice from the courts, but are to be treated equitably under this request to the divine throne. Thus, the supplicant inspiringly adds, “*May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice (vs 2)*. The ‘poor’ (אֲנִי, אֲנִי) as well as the ‘weak’ (עֲבֹיָן, אֲנִי) are regarded as people who are ‘bowed down, and oppressed’ (Martin-Achard, 1997:931). The king, as God’s representative, is vested with the responsibility to administer God’s care for the poor, the weak, and the marginalised. Thus, the privilege of leadership includes the weighty responsibility to care for those who are the weakest in society (Essang et al, 2024:85).

This prayer item emphasizes justice-oriented and righteous leadership. These virtues emphasize leaders who demonstrate integrity, strengthen institutions, and promote transparency in governance and a culture of ethics and fairness; leaders who are accountable to the people. This forms the portrait of an accountable governance. Just leadership and good governance are *sine qua non* for addressing corruption and promoting transparency in Nigeria. Corruption is a key encumbrance to political stability and successful socio-economic development, as it breeds inequality and injustice, discourages foreign investment and aid (Ugbudu, 2020:69). Transparent governance structures, accountable and righteous leadership are significant anti-corruption measures for fostering development in Nigeria (Olusakin, 2024:189)

Vss. 3 of the text, “*May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness*,” implies the nexus between justice and righteousness and development. Prosperity (Hebrew, *shalom*) in verse 3a, usually equate peace and all-round well-being of the people. Thus, mountains figuratively, the land yields prosperity, material resources for the people, general sensation of security and adequate well-being of the citizen and foreigners when the governance is “in righteousness”- conformity to the laws of God. The supplication item in vs 4 of the text, signifies one of the denominators of social justice- justice for the poor and vulnerable. This royal role towards the poor is further reiterated in vss 12-14. These verses explicitly highlight the triple functions of a just king to include, defending the cause of the poor; giving deliverance to the needy and crushing their oppressors. The Hebrew word for the weak means the poor, the oppressed, the helpless, as opposed to “the strong” (May, 1994). Opposed to the poor is the oppressor (Hebrew, *’ashaq*) sometimes rendered “those who hold other people down” or “those who take away other people's rights,” or “a person who derides others” or “one who eats on the backs of others,” signifying those who exploit others for their own advantage (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1977). This is typical of Nigerian leaders, who take advantage of their positions of power to enrich themselves and their cronies at the expense of the masses. “To give deliverance (Hebrew, *yasha’*) to the needy” means to snatch away them from the oppressor (UBS 2004).

The action of a good leader is expressed as “deliver” (Hb *natsal*), meaning “rescue”, the needy, (*’ebyôn*), the one “who has no helper,” the poor (*’ānî*)- a person overwhelmed by want or poverty and the third group, *’ēn ’ozēn lô*, “one without helper.” The role of the king is to extricate them from their deplorable situation. (Obiorah 2013:195). These are accompanied in v. 13, by other actions of a good king- *chuwc*, meaning “to look compassionately at,” “to spare and

regard.” Compassionate feeling should be concluded in palpable action; hence the supplicant adds another action expected of a just leader, “deliverance, (yš”) meaning ‘to save’ or ‘rescue’ to the *nepēš* (here in plural *napšôt*) of the *’ebyônîm*.” The *napšôt* designates the life and soul with all the connotations of this term, of the person involved. The care of the weak and needy by the king is based on genuine compassion (Ross, 2013:538). In fact, in verse 14 we are told he redeems them from oppression (Hb, *tok* meaning “to tread under foot”) and violence (Hb, *ḥāmās*). The usage of this verb “redeem” includes the ideas of rescuing a relative from oppression, paying off his debts, avenging those who harm him, and ensuring that his lands and name are preserved; thus, it suggests that the king acts as a kinsman-redeemer for the needy. In fact, in verse 14 we are told he redeems them from oppression (Hb, *tok* meaning “to tread under foot”) and violence (Hb, *ḥāmās*). The usage of this verb “redeem” includes the ideas of rescuing a relative from oppression, paying off his debts, avenging those who harm him, and ensuring that his lands and name are preserved; thus, it suggests that the king acts as a kinsman-redeemer for the needy (Ross 2013:538).

Thus, the king is to protect the weak when the strong abuse them or prevent the strong from harming the weak (Kaiser, 2009: 264). The entreaty here stresses the leadership role of preventing the powerful people from exploiting the poor people or protecting the poor when the rich treat them badly. This denotes prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities and ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities. In terms of development and access to basic services, rural areas in Nigeria are facing consistent negligence resulting in rural-urban migration and disparities, poverty, and limited opportunities for rural dwellers. However, embracing diverse perspectives and involving marginalized and rural communities in decision-making, promoting integrity and transparency, and strengthening institutions are expected to be

vital aspects of Nigeria's governance and leadership evolution for national development (Ogbu, 2019:90).

These verses confirm the view of Essang et al, (2024:86) that an outstanding mark of a good leader is to save and preserve life, especially the life of persons with the social status of inability to help or defend themselves. Thus, the king in the text is unique among kings; he is moved with compassion for people in need and his compassion moves him to save the lives of the people in need; paying so much attention to those with the greatest needs. Here, the psalmist, according to Obiorah (2013:197), enunciates that good leadership, makes the defense of the less privileged of the society a top priority. He redeems their life because their blood is precious in his sight. In other words, preservation of human life takes precedence over any other royal act.

In the context of Nigeria development, these principles accentuate equity and inclusiveness. According to Ekundayo, (2017:156-157), this principle, is a significant principle of good governance theory, as it specifies the feeling of belongingness and ensuring of the protection of various groups especially the most susceptible to attack, the enrichment of their well-being and guarantee dignity of the human person, equal rights and freedom from any discrimination. To ensure development in Nigeria, this principle should be exhibited by addressing disparities and fostering inclusive participation, prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities by ensuring equal opportunities and access to education, healthcare, and social services, promoting democratic values, protecting human rights, ensuring free and fair elections (Nnablife, 2010:23)

Deductively, sustainable economic growth and human capital development is highlighted in the 6th verse of the text, ***“May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.”*** The two similes here highlight features of good governance. Obiorah (2013:196) posits that good governance is likened to the rain that falls on the mown field, and showers that

water the earth. According to Dike (2021:24), “Godly leaders are like the refreshing rain that makes the land fruitful and beautiful so that even the newly mown fields will produce a second crop.” They are likened to the lamps that light the way (2 Sam. 21:17), the shield that protect (Psa.84:9; 89:16), and the very breath of life that sustain the people (Lam. 4:20). When the king provides the environment for the benchmarks of God’s kingdom to grow, the king’s good reign can be likened to the life-giving showers that provide sustainable economic growth and human capital development (DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson & Tanner, 2014: 578).

Vs. 7 of the text, “*In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more,*” accentuates another vital leadership paradigms for fostering national development-lasting peace and security. This denotes that when a leader rules in righteousness and justice, peace and stability will surely ensue. Peace and security, collectively denotes a condition where individuals, regions, nations, organisations, institutions, and the world progress without any threat or insecurity. It is generally characterised by a domestically generally more stable, safe and secure environment, democratically governed society with respectful to human rights and dignity., Conflict of any form, obviously, not only creates threat and fear, but also hampers socio-economic, and political development. Kanu (2023:10) opines that whereas weak governance and unjust leadership results in instability, inter-ethnic conflicts, and insurgency, as manifested by several rivals’ groups in Nigeria, conversely only effective governance and just leadership can foster peace, law, and order, socio-political stability and security. According to (Dike 2021:26), the effect of justice and righteousness which were the vital elements of ancient Israel’s leadership resulted in stability and security in the land. This infers that ensuring a secure and safe environment, promoting peaceful coexistence by addressing conflict are major determinants for national development in Nigeria. The verb “flourish” (*parach*) probably implies that the

abundance of peace which will flourish “till the moon be no more,” a poetical synonym to “forever.” (UBS 2004). Lasting dominion and abundance give description to the consequential peace and prosperity that could be experienced. In the days of such king, the righteous always flourishes and abundance of peace is always enduring. This confirms the scripture, that “when the righteous is on the throne, the people rejoice.”(Proverbs 29:2); and that “righteousness exalts a nation” (Psalm 34:15)

The tenor of encouraging investments in human capital, infrastructure, and sustainable industries, ensuring long-term economic prosperity via just leadership and good governance is emphasized here. Just leadership, good and effective governance are vital devices for national economic development in Nigeria. Sound policies, transparent institutions, and competent leadership which are characteristics features of righteous social justice rule that attract investments, stimulate economic growth, and reduces poverty (Ekundayo, 2017:157).

Seybold (1990: 181) posits that vs 8, “*May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth,*” describes the range of the kingdom of this blessed and righteous king. The petitions in this section focus more on the extent of his kingdom as an expectation of the suppliant and the outcome of his just rule. In Nigerian context, building sustainable infrastructures from one region to the other enhances connectivity, and facilitates economic growth. According to World Bank (2020), infrastructural development encompasses the construction and maintenance of physical structures such as roads, bridges, airports, seaports, energy systems, and telecommunications across the nation. This aspect of development has the potential to attract foreign investment, boosts trade, and increases economic productivity; generate jobs and stimulate economic activity. Access to basic infrastructure services like water, sanitation, and electricity enhances living standards, while developed infrastructure facilitates

movement of goods, services, and people, integrating markets and communities. This model will result in the leader having *“dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”*

Verses 10-11, *“May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts. May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service,”* accentuate partnerships and collaboration. They signify fostering local and international partnerships, leveraging resources and expertise to drive development. Partnership and collaboration for fostering national development in Nigeria can be in form of collaborations between government and private sector, inter-Governmental partnerships, Partnerships with non-profit organizations such as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), or international partnerships i.e. collaborations with foreign governments, organizations, and donors (United Nations, 2020). They are essential aid in pooling resources, expertise, and knowledge, streamlined decision-making and implementation, stimulating investment, trade, and innovation (World Bank, 2020), promoting unity, trust, and cooperation among stakeholders and improving governance.

The final verses 15&16 presents prosperity as the consequence of righteous rule, not its motivation. The prosperity vocabulary-“abundance of grain” (פִּסַּת־בָּר, *pissat-bar*) and “fruit” (פְּרִי, *pěri*), are classic covenant-blessing imagery (cf. Deuteronomy 28). The prayer formula “may prayer be made” (וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל, *wěyitpallēl*) signifies enduring reliance on God, that negate royal dictatorship. The flourishing of the city (עֵיר, *‘ir*), “like grass of the earth” connotes total societal development. Biblically, prosperity divorced from righteousness leads to judgment (Amos 5), but here abundance testifies to God’s approval of just leadership. Thus, in biblical theology, such prosperity authenticates just leadership under divine favor, contrasting sharply with wealth gained through oppression (Brueggemann, 2002:1235).

These imply that political legitimacy in contemporary Nigeria erodes when leaders perpetuate injustice, leading to distrust, social instability, and underdevelopment. Conversely, just leadership as confirmed by Ugbedu (2020:80), promotes political stability, citizen loyalty, and collective participation in governance which are indispensable components for sustainable development. Also, leaders who genuinely promote justice become a legacy in public memory. Sustainable development requires such long-term moral capital, because trust inspires civic participation, tax compliance, and peaceful cooperation. Thus, Psalm 72:15 suggests that Nigerian leaders should exemplify integrity, transparency, and people-centered policies; these virtues will naturally summon communal goodwill, cooperation, and social cohesion that drive long-term development. When leadership is just, cities flourish and rural communities thrive; fulfilling the psalm's vision of shared abundance. Psalm 72:16 therefore provides a theological critique of resource mismanagement, agricultural neglect, and policies that fail to ensure widespread ecological and economic flourishing in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Psalm 72 is historic as David intercedes for Solomon; it is prophetic with reference to another king (Christ,) and it also holds significance for leadership today. It teaches the portrait of just leadership. A leadership where God's kingdom and ways of justice and righteousness are to be the norms, prioritizing the defence and protection of the needy and the marginalized. This is the standard of God's leadership pattern; it worked in Abraham's time, in the time of the ancient kings of Israel, and it's relevant in the world today. The lessons in this pericope are just as relevant today as they present numerous models for national development. These models include just and righteous leadership; justice for the poor and vulnerable; social justice and equality; peace and security; human capital and infrastructure development,

sustainable economic growth as well as good governance and accountability. By evading the snares and lust for power, wealth and position that entrapped leaders in Nigeria, ruling with righteousness becomes the motivation, urging those in power to remain in the will of God, which, as history and the text demonstrate, provides abundant blessings and justice for God's people. Thus, the selected text presents compelling paradigms for just leadership that ensure sustainable development in any society. By embracing these principles, Nigerians can build a just and sustainable society, ensuring the well-being of all citizens and promoting a prosperous future.

Recommendation

1. Nigerian leadership structures should deliberately institutionalise justice, equity, and fairness in public policy formulation and implementation. Leadership recruitment, performance evaluation, and accountability mechanisms must prioritise justice as a measurable criterion rather than a moral abstraction.
2. Government budgets, social protection schemes, and development plans must prioritise poverty reduction, social inclusion, and protection of marginalised communities rather than elite accumulation.
3. Continuous ethical training, grounded in biblical ethics and social justice principles, for public office holders should be integrated into governance frameworks to counter corruption, patronage politics, and abuse of power.
4. Nigeria must strengthen institutions of accountability, including the judiciary, anti-corruption agencies, and legislative oversight bodies, ensuring that leaders are subject to the rule of law and transparent governance practices.

5. Faith-based institutions, especially churches, should reclaim their prophetic role as advocates of social justice rather than align with political patronage systems. They should engage in constructive civic advocacy, public enlightenment, and moral critique of unjust leadership practices.

6. Academic institutions, seminaries, and policy think tanks should foster interdisciplinary dialogue between theology, political science, and development studies to produce contextually relevant leadership models for Nigeria.

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