



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE APPERCEPTION OF ETHICAL VALUES OF THE NATIONAL PLEDGE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The National Pledge is an oath of allegiance and one of the important national identities in Nigeria. It comprised of six basic lines of solemn promise of service and patriotism by Nigerians to contributing their quota in terms of sustainable national unity and development to Nigeria. The ethical virtues embedded in the Nigerian National Pledge are so important and promising to the extent that if, properly adhere to, can go a long way to stimulating and making Nigeria a great nation. It has however been observed that most Nigerians apperceived the National Pledge as a vow or promise that has no much value since majority of the citizens in Nigeria usually see the National Pledge as a normal routine that has to be recited without taking cognizance of its wordings for proper and adequate manifestations for national cohesion and development. It is evident that most Nigerians usually recite the National pledge always but the reverse is the case when it comes to taking the wordings therein into actions and manifestations. Nigerians are therefore advised to always adhere strictly to the dictates of the wordings of the National Pledge and be dedicated to its cause accordingly. It is also suggested that, if Nigeria is truly going to be great, it is expected of her citizens to create and sustain the integrity of the nation by maintaining their individual integrity and they also should embrace unity, progress, peace, equity, transparency, accountability, dignity of labour, tolerance (religious and ethnic) and faith in Almighty God.

Keywords: Apperception, ethical values, national pledge, national development, Nigeria

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian National Pledge is an important national identity in Nigeria. It is an oath of allegiance and a solemn promise being perpetually recited by Nigerians at every point in time. The National Pledge is also regarded as a statement and a promise of patriotism and nationalistic declaration to upholding national unity and cohesion in all ramifications of human endeavour, contributing ones quota towards national development, peaceful and meaningful co-existence among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria.

According to the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024) the Nigerian National Pledge as written in 1976 by Professor Felicia Adebola Adedoyin is a formal promise to be faithful, loyal and honest, emphasizing the quest to serve Nigeria in unity, honour and glory. It was designed to instill in every citizen the importance of honouring and serving Nigeria by exploring the ethical virtues that are necessary to accomplish this great task.

Ethical virtues are qualities of characters that are considered morally good and help make ethical decisions. Examples of ethical virtues include: tolerance, justice, equity, loyalty, faithfulness, honesty and dignity. The ethical virtues embedded in the Nigerian National Pledge are so important and promising to the extent that if, properly adhere to, can go a long way to stimulating and making Nigeria experience tangible national development and greater exploits in the achievement of the long standing goals of the founding fathers. The ethical virtues in the Nigerian National Pledge are the apperception of the right attitude to the exploitation and manifestation of its wordings.

Apperception is the act of comprehending a new idea by assimilation with the sum of one's previous knowledge and experience. It is a process of understanding something perceived in terms of past experience. This is in fact an act of perceiving new experience in relation to past experience (Berk, 2013). Perception in its real sense is a simple impression that has not yet reached consciousness and manifestation, which an external phenomenon produces on the senses (Berk, 2013). Apperception on the other hand is a perceived sensation already perceived by consciousness. It is the process by which new experience is assimilated to and transformed by the residuum of past experience of an individual to form a new whole (Tsvetkov, Rogov, Kozlov, & Titov, 2020).



A good example of apperception is a situation when a boy from a rich family and a boy from a poor family while strolling together in a street and they come across a sum of ten thousand Naira on the sidewalk. The rich boy says it is not a lot of money and the poor boy says that it is a lot of money. The difference in their perception however lies in the way they apperceive the same event with the lens of past experience through which they perceive and value or devalue the money.

It has been observed in Nigeria that most citizens apperceived the National Pledge as a vow or promise that has no much value. Most Nigerians usually see the National Pledge as a normal routine that has to be recited without taking cognizance of its wordings for proper and adequate manifestations for greater exploitation of the goodies of national development. This development shows that the National Pledge is been comprehended and upheld by most Nigerians with levity hands even in deeds and purposes. Nigeria as a developing country is facing a lot of limitations to sustainable national development hence the National Pledge is expected to be a boost and encouragement to attain a pride of honour in her efforts to accomplish effective national unity, cohesion and development.

The disconnections among these lofty promises of purpose, negative actions cum attitude among many Nigerians raises pressing questions about the sincerity and impact of these lofty declarations. Can a nation thrive on pledges and declarations unfulfilled? Can a nation experience effective and sustainable national development where corruption, unfaithfulness, ethnicity, nepotism and intolerances of all kinds thrive?

2.0. The Nigerian National Pledge and Its Ethical Virtues: Implications for Nigerians

The Nigerian National Pledge contains six (6) basic lines. Nigeria gained her independence from the British colonial rule on October 1st, 1960 (Olayiwola & Dahunsi, 2023) As part of her efforts toward nation building, the national pledge was officially introduced in 1976 purposely to make Nigerians commit themselves to proper manifestation of the indices of unity in diversity and national development (Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). Its emergence is to arouse the consciousness and commitments of the citizens to effective and efficient nation building.



It is disheartened however to note that most Nigerian citizens do not take the national pledge very serious. It is also evident that most Nigerians usually recite the National pledge always but the reverse is the case when it comes to taking its wordings been recited into actions and manifestations. Had it been that Nigerians attitudes and behaviours aligned with the wordings of the National Pledge through proper and prompt adherence to the wordings of the lyrics of the national pledge, Nigeria would have attained the greater heights of development and she must have started enjoying the dividends of unity in diversity reaching the level of one of the most enviable nations of the world.

Obiagu (2024) posited that a rethinking of incorporating Civic Education where national symbols and other important nation building concepts would be taught that would manifest civic practices and thus challenging asymmetric structures and attitudes to better position thus a manifestation of justice-oriented citizenship and national development of note. Going with this development, it is important and necessary at this juncture to take a cursory look and analysis of the Nigerian National Pledge in order to consider how beautiful, purposeful and germane the wordings of the National Pledge and its ethical virtues are to the manifestation of national unity and development in Nigeria and to highlight its implications for Nigerians.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. It employed discourse analysis in the clarifications of the apperception of ethical values of the national pledge for National Pledge to development in Nigeria. The perspectives are drawn line-by-line from Nigerian National Pledge and presented elaborate discussions in context of national development.

4.0. DISCOURSES IN CONTEXT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The six (6) basic lines of the Nigerian National Pledge according to the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024) include:

- Line 1: *I pledge to Nigeria my country*
- Line 2: *To be faithful, loyal and honest*
- Line 3: *To serve Nigeria with all my strength*
- Line 4: *To defend her unity*
- Line 5: *And uphold her honour and glory*
- Line 6: *So help me God.*



Line 1: I pledge to Nigeria my country

A critical analysis of the Nigerian National Pledge from Line 1: I pledge to Nigeria my country shows that the wordings here are possessive by using the phrase “I pledge”. A pledge is a covenant which supposed to be obeyed when it is somehow convenient or otherwise. This very statement speaks volumes. With a pledge to Nigeria, my country, each and every Nigerians reciting this pledge should accept here that Nigeria is my/our country despite the acknowledgement of differences in tribe and tongue.

Most Nigerians still pledge and expressly confess that Nigeria is our country but in the real sense of it indiscipline, favouritism, ethnicity, nepotism, religious intolerance and others in like manners have spread their tentacles because of the ways in which the citizens apperceived the National Pledge and its ethical virtues to be nothing but mere promise with no commitment.

This act is because in real sense of it, most Nigerians do not see themselves as citizens of the same dear country- In Nigeria religious bigotry, ethnicity, corruption, nepotism and so on and so forth have been the order of the day. For instance, appointment into public and private offices, employment opportunities, and admission into higher institutions of learning and unity schools, distribution of national wealth and others in this category are characterized by man-know-man, ethnicity and nepotism despite the emergence of National Character Commission.

Line 2: To be faithful, loyal and honest

Faithfulness, Loyalty and Honesty are very good examples of ethical virtues. It is therefore considered as the moral responsibility of all Nigerian citizens to be faithful, loyal and honest. This; to some extents demand high value responsibility and obedience from all Nigerians.

The phrase; “To be faithful, loyal and honest centers on “Righteousness”

The Biblical injunction as found in The Book of Proverb, Chapter 14 verse 34 that: Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people (Biblehub, 2024). This injunction suggests that a nation’s moral character and adherence to justice and truth lead to its prosperity and greatness while sin and injustice bring shame, decline and failure (Okunoye, 2012). The core message of this Biblical injunction is that a nation’s prosperity is



directly related to her ethical and moral conducts. This implies that a nation built on principles of justice, fairness and integrity will thrive and be respected, standing the test of time, while a nation that disregards these principles will face the consequences thereon. Historically also, nations that have upheld the principles of justice and human rights have often enjoyed greater stability, growth, development and prosperity while those that embraced oppression, indiscipline and injustice have faced internal strife, external challenges, failures and backwardness.

The phrase to be faithful, loyal and honest in line 2 of the Nigerian National Pledge also requests all Nigerians to be righteous in all their endeavours, honest to themselves and the nation-Nigeria. Loyalty as an important ethical virtue should always be embraced by all the citizens of Nigeria. Public office holders in Nigeria need to be faithful, loyal and honest to Nigeria as they are supposed to be strictly adhering to the oath of office taken when they become public officers.

Other Nigerians who are non-public office holders also need to be faithful, loyal and honest in all ramifications of human endeavour to the country-Nigeria and other constituted authorities. The apperception of the ethical virtues of faithfulness, loyalty and honesty should be given a right priority in Nigeria's space of time. A situation where social justice, equity, fair play are nowhere to be found despite the apperception of these great ethical virtues would be somehow difficult for an effective nation building to manifest. A nation where injustices, disloyalty, unfaithfulness, indiscipline and dishonesty prevail, such a nation would never experience the green light of being great talk less of achieving the dividends of national unity, cohesion and development.

The lesson here for Nigerians (both the government and the governed) is that the virtue of faithfulness, loyalty and honesty should be given a greater priority as the moral calls of Nigerians should be greatly improved. There should be reduction if not total deduction of social vices like electoral malpractices, examination malpractices, corruption, delayed justices, disloyalty to Nigeria and constituted authorities, frauds, and fraudulent activities, insincerity and dishonesty of all kinds.

**Line 3: To serve Nigeria with all my strength**

It is a continuation from line 2, a continuation of promise or allegiance to Nigeria. This is a virtue of dignity of labour. A dignified service to Nigeria is a service to humanity. The Biblical meaning of service in the Book of Luke Chapter 22 verse 27, Jesus said “*But I am among you as one who serves*” (Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011). Service here is helping others who need assistance. Service is the work done or help provided especially for the people or for a person, an organization or a nation/country (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). The primary aim of service is to create value for this by taking actions/ steps to address their needs and problems. The ultimate goal of service is to improve the well-being of individuals or nations through the dedications and positive attitudes to work by the citizens.

The phrase “To serve Nigeria with all my strength” is being abused today because most Nigerians are not well committed and dedicated to their callings and service. This further shows that dedication and dignity of labour which supposed to be the hallmark of service has been jettisoned and replaced with laziness, corruption, greed, covetousness and so on and so forth. The situation has been so bad to the extent that some of those who find themselves in public positions usually think of enriching themselves through corruption and fraudulent practices. Majority of those in government circles in Nigeria are serving purposely to enrich themselves at the detriment of real service to develop Nigeria and make her experience development (Omoregbe, 2004).

To this end, what this aspect of the Nigerian National Pledge is saying is that all Nigerians should pledge their devotion to Nigeria and serve with dignity and dedication to make her a great nation again. This should be taken as a serious task of contributing one’s quota towards her recovery and development at all levels of human endeavour. Thus, a clarion calls to selfless service and not a service for self. In an effort to build Nigeria and achieve the dreams of the founding fathers, the mind sets of Nigerians should be that wherever we find ourselves, we can still join forces together to build a united and great Nigeria by getting rid of the culture of indiscipline and lawlessness.

**Line 4: To defend her unity**

One of the synonyms of defence is protection. The Nigerian National Pledge took cognizance of the fact that unity already exists in Nigeria. This is a promise, vowing and even offering to defend Nigeria's unity "*though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand*" (Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). The unity of any nation is paramount and must be protected at any point in time. In the recent past and up till this present time, the unity of Nigeria as a formidable nation is being threatened with ethnicity, nepotism, internal rivalry, religious and ethnic intolerance, banditry, Boko Haram insurgences and so on. Many lives and properties were destroyed. Nigeria is still at crossroad battling with all these shortcomings that showcasing as landmark limitations to a united Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to note that, the only way to actualize a united and better Nigeria is by sustaining and protecting the unity of Nigeria that has already been established by the founding fathers.

Line 5: And uphold her honour and glory

The honour and glory of contemporary Nigeria is begging for attention and recognition as a united, peaceful, formidable, God fearing and an indivisible political entity. The Nigeria's honour and glory should be upheld by all Nigerians and that they should also make efforts in all ramifications to retain Nigeria as an honourable and glorified nation. If Nigeria therefore is truly going to be great, Nigerians are expected to re-create and maintain the integrity of the nation by maintaining their individual integrity and they should also be ready to change their negative attitudes and the best way to do this is to stop acting indifferent or contrary to the National Pledge. The lip service of most Nigerians to the National Pledge should be jettisoned and embrace the right attitude that are embedded therein.

Line 6: So help me God

The phrase "*So help me God*" is an act of submission to a superior being (God). God is highly referenced in the affairs of the nation, Nigeria. God has a tune of finality in the affairs of men. A prayer to God to help Nigerians to fulfil the vows in the National Pledge and as they have committed themselves in lines 1, 2, 3 and 4. This development is important therefore because referencing, acknowledging and praying to God are germane if an individual or a nation wants to be successful. It is therefore expedient for all Nigerians to always remember and fear God in fairness to the wordings of National Pledge. Nigerian leaders and citizens



alike should always reference, acknowledge, praise and pray to God in all our undertakings because God is a Supreme Being who has the divine power and might to change bad situations and experiences to the better and the very best ones. Nigerians should also embrace unity, progress, peace, equity, improved quality of life, transparency, accountability, tolerance (religious and ethnic) and faith in Almighty God.

5.0. CONCLUSION

The Nigerian National Pledge is an oath of allegiance. It is a promise of faithfulness, loyalty and dedication to the growth and development of Nigeria as dreamt by her founding fathers. The Nigerian National Pledge was well written and the wordings are purposeful because it is fashioned towards the actualization of unity and progress in Nigeria. Nigerians are therefore advised to always adhere strictly to the dictates of the wordings of the National Pledge and be dedicated thereof, in order to experience meaningful nation building and national development.

Competing Interest

The author declares that no conflicting interest exist in this manuscript

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