

Democratic Government and Rural Development in Taraba State North-East Nigeria: A Pilot Study Report

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Abstract

This paper examined democratic government and rural development in Taraba State Nigeria using small sample of 36 respondents to report the pilot study results. The methodology adopted was survey research design; in which questionnaire were administered randomly on students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria-Nigeria. The reliability of the instruments were analyzed using SPSS V20. The results confirmed the reliability of all the instruments adopted for the study. It concludes that, the benchmark of 0.60 adopted from literatures confirmed the reliability of all the items of the constructs and therefore be maintained for the main study.

Keywords: Democratic government, rural development, Taraba State-Nigeria, Pilot study report

1. Introduction

Democracy, is an important system that is being practiced by many nations. Nigeria is one of those countries that practices democratic system, and this was successfully enthroned in 1999. The successful transition to civilian government in 1999 after many years of military rule to an elected leaders has placed democracy on the challenging agenda; agreed by all. This was accompanied by high expectations from the general public, because, over times the Nigerias' development remains inadequate; especially at rural level, which is regarded as the most deprived and undeveloped. According to the World Bank (2013) 53% of Nigerians live in the rural areas. From these, therefore, suffice it to say that rural people constitute the majority of the Nigeria's dwelling unit. It is therefore imperative for the government to pay considerable attention for the welfare of its citizens and particularly the development of rural sub-sector.

Section 2c (1 and 2) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for Nigerian democratic state which is Federal and structured into 36 states, with a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and 774 Local Government Areas. Section 14 (1) also, stipulates "the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice". It further states in sub-section 2 (a, b, and c) that "sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom through this constitution derives all its power and authority"; the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government and the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provision of the constitution". This shows the recognition of the people in a Nigerian democratic arrangement, due to the fact that, their welfare and general development is not only paramount but a constitutional requirement of which democratic government must address.

Furthermore, section 16 (2a) of the constitution provides "the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development. The same constitution in Section 2 (b) provides "the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good". Unfortunately, in Nigeria and Taraba State in particular, there are lop-sidedness and imbalance in the economic development and distribution of resources, not only among the three tiers of government, and geopolitical zones, but also, among and in-between the urban and rural centers.

This paper is basically set out to report the pilot study results on democratic government and rural development in Taraba State-Nigeria by using four key variables of perception and attitudes towards democracy, democratic government effective implementation of rural development programmes, democratic government performance to achieving rural development and the Nigerian political arrangement and rural development. Based on the Cronbach Alfa results, it argues that, the variables are fit for measures and reliable for the main study.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Issues

2.1 Democracy in Nigeria

Various views are expressed by scholars as regards democracy. Atelhe (2014) maintained that, "democracy presupposes political system in which the people rule through any form of government they choose to establish and the supreme authority is exercised by the representatives elected by popular suffrage". In Nigeria, just like many democracies; the representatives of the people both at the executive and the legislative arms are elected. However, whether those elected representatives actually represents the interest of the masses and have

concerns on their welfare remains the issue of concern. According to Ojajorotu and Allen (2009) “democracy in Nigeria is far away from people’s welfare; as citizens were neglected from its benefits. This shows the high level of irresponsibility of any government; to talk of the democratic system of government”. Okeke (2014) described the Nigerian system of democracy as “ceremonial democracy...” This seems to be so as leaders are only elected to fill the public offices without comparable performance in meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the people.

In the light of the above, Otive (2011) maintained that “Democracy in Nigeria can only be meaningful if it delivers on bringing socioeconomic development of the nation. He further argued that the political freedom which forms the basis of democracy remained insignificant without the commensurate socioeconomic development that will uplift people from hunger, deprivations and degradations”. Hence, the need for people to elect leaders that will respond to their myriads of problems bedeviling them.

2.2 Rural Development

Discussions on the concepts of rural development remains contestable among scholars. It is in this light that Van der Ploeg et al (2000) asserts that “there is no any comprehensive and generally accepted definitions of rural development; as the notion of rural development emerges through socio-economic struggles and debate”. Viewed differently however, Emeh et al (2012) affirm that, the concept should rather be called and referred to as ‘rural-community development’ instead of ‘rural development’. This is according to them to capture the real meaning of the entire concept. That, most if not all the definitions and talks on rural or community development is actually referring to ‘rural-community development’. This is premised on the assumption that development does not occur in a vacuum but rather in a place (community) which is Noun, that, the adjective (rural) seeks to describe and the verb (development) gives information about”.

Generally, however, rural development is concerned with the economic, social and general improvements in the living conditions of rural people through provision of adequate and quality social services for betterment of their communities.

2.3 Democracy and Rural Development in Nigeria

Generally, literatures on democracy and development seems to have find it difficult to establishing the link and correlations between democracy and development, as it remains debatable and normally ends with incomplete empirical evidence. This was rightly observed by Przeworski and Limongi (1993) when they said “The problem with an empirical analysis of establishing relationship between democracy and development is that they do not conclusively prove or otherwise, a causal process. What the empirical studies have best been able to produce are “educated guesses”.

Victor and Fidelis (2009) argued that “some scholars have attempted to demonstrate that such relationship does exist. In the sense that political democracy facilitates economic development that in turn impact welfare of citizens positively”. However, the history of Nigerian democracy, particularly since its return in 1999 portrays a negative correlation between democracy and development. For example, Ake (1996) maintained that, “In Nigeria, history of democracy, economic development and welfare of the people has been that of disappointment”. This is evident in the sense that, the returns to democracy in 1999 has placed the country on an agenda with high expectations on economic sustainability and development. Yet the democratic performance remains insignificant. Buttressing this further, Victor and Fidelis (2009) asserts that, “in Nigeria democratic institutions emerged in 1999 to date, yet remained ineffective, in response to the economic, social and political needs of people”.

Nigeria experienced unprecedented economic growth and huge revenue generations accrued from excess crude oil since its return to democracy, yet that has not been translated in the meaningful development of the nation, this is worst when it comes to rural areas. “In an effort for example, in rural development since the return of Nigeria’s democratic dispensation from 1999 to date; a four year development plan was initially articulated from 1999-2003 with the objective of pursuing a strong, virile and broad-based economy that is highly competitive, responsive to private sector-led, diversified, market oriented and open, but based on the momentum of its growth” (Akpan, 2012). This does not affect rural development. Between 2003-2007 a very comprehensive and all-encompassing policy document was formulated. “The National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (NEEDS); with broad national implementation strategy across all levels of government. At the state level, there is (SEEDS) State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy; while at the Local Government (LEEDS) Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy” (Omotola, 2007, and Okeje, 2009). It has a general framework for poverty reduction, employment generation and the provision of social safety nets for most afflicted groups and empowerment of rural populace amongst others. Furthermore, 7 Points agenda of President Yar’adua was initiated in 2007 and subsequently, the Transformation agenda of President Goodluck. All these, were mere political programs that end unexecuted. Akpan (2012) captures this scenario rightly by saying that “Nigerian development practice towards rural areas has over the

years been shaped by the political and economic circumstances prevailing at a particular period of its development”.

Suffice it to say that, the democratic practice in Nigeria is fundamentally put to questions of how responsible is it? Is it neglectful of rural areas? And of what impact and value is it to the welfare, survival and socioeconomic well-being of the rural people? These and many more questions remain and continue to serve as the dilemma of democratic practice in Nigeria and rural development that masses had to continue asking and bear.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The survey instruments used for the data collected for this study were validated by conducting a pilot study before finally going to the field. The suggestions obtained from this pilot study will therefore be incorporated and the items revised where necessary in the main study.

According to Fink (2003) Pilot study test samples are commonly small. This survey therefore, was conducted through self-administered questionnaires with 36 respondents in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria-Nigeria, which was administered randomly. The 36 respondents that were used represents 10% of the 360 total samples size selected for the survey of main study.

The questionnaire instruments used for this study consist of two parts. The part A of the questionnaire has to do with the demographic characteristics of respondents. Under this part, respondents were asked to state their characteristics using property of nominal scale of each statement to measure two dimensions of gender (male and female); four dimensions of age (15-30, 31-45, 46-60 and 61 and above); three dimensions of marital status (married, single and others); five dimensions of educational qualification (First School Leaving Cert, School Cert/Higher Sch. Cert, Diploma/Cert. in Education, BSc/HND and Postgraduate) and also, five dimensions of occupation (farmer, public servants, private business, community leader and others) respectively.

The part B of the questionnaire is structured to explore democratic government and rural development in Nigeria using a five-point Likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, Neutral, agree and strongly agree, based on the following respondents views: perception and attitudes of people towards democracy; with ten items. Democratic government and effective implementation of rural development programmes; with eight items. Democratic government performance to achieving rural development; with seven items. Lastly, Nigerian political arrangements and rural development, with six items.

4. Reliability and Validity of Survey Instrument

Data reliability is very important in measuring constructs in research. Reliability is the degree to which measures are free from errors and can be capable of producing consistent results. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) maintained that, the reliability of measures is an indication of stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concepts and ascertain its goodness of measures”.

The reliability were subjected to using Cronbach and Alfa based on the identified benchmark in the literature between 0.5 to 0.9 (Sekaran, 2003, Hulland, 1999 and Nunally, 1979). We subjected our Cronbach and Alfa to 0.60.

The SPSS version 20 was used to test the reliability of the instrument, using thirty one (31) items under four (4) variables. This are presented as follows:

4.1 Perception and Attitudes towards Democracy and Rural Development

Table 4.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.830	10

Table 4.1 above shows the reliability of measures for perception and attitudes towards democracy. It shows that the ten items coded as PATD 1- PATD 10 were measured and all the items were found fit and reliable for measures at Cronbach Alpha .830. This is above the recommended benchmark of 0.60 we have selected for this study.

4.2 Democratic Government Performance on Rural Development

Table 4.2: Reliability Statistics of Democratic Government Performance on Rural Development

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.897	7

Table 4.2 above shows the reliability statistics of democratic government performance on rural development. The seven items coded as DPRD 1- DPRD 7 were measured and all the items were found fit and reliable for measures at Cronbach Alpha .897. This result is above the recommended benchmark of 0.60 we have selected for this study.

4.3 Democratic Government and Effective Implementation of Rural Development

Table 4.3: Reliability Statistics of Democratic Government and Effective Implementation of Rural Development

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.825	8

Table 4.3 shows the reliability statistics of democratic government and effective implementation of Rural Development. The eight items coded as DIRD 1- DIRD 8 were measured and all the items were found fit and reliable for measures at Cronbach Alpha .825. This is equally, above the recommended benchmark of 0.60 we have selected for this study.

4.4 Nigerian Political Arrangement and Rural Development

Table 4.4: Reliability Statistics of Nigerian Political Arrangement and Rural Development

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.639	6

The above table it shows that reliability statistics of Nigerian Political arrangement and rural development. The six items coded as NPRD 1- NPRD 6 were measured and all the items were found fit and reliable for measures at Cronbach Alpha .639. This is also, above the recommended benchmark of 0.60 we have selected for this study.

5. Conclusion

Thus far, the paper examined democratic government and rural development in Nigeria using pilot study results obtained from questionnaire survey. It was established that, the constructs can measure the variables of perception and attitudes towards democracy, democratic government and effective implementation of rural development, democratic government performance on rural development and the Nigerian political arrangements on rural development. It is concluded that, the 0.60 benchmark adopted from the literatures confirmed the reliability of all the items of the constructs and therefore can be maintained for the main study.

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