

LIJOMASS

**LAPAI INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT
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ISSN: 2006-6473

**A Publication of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai**

**Volume 9, Number 1
April 2018**



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PAGINATION FEE: N20,000

ACCOUNT NAME: IBBU FACULTY OF MGT. & SOCIAL SCIENCES

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INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF ASA RURAL AREAS OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Institutional structures all over the world play crucial role in the development of the society especially rural areas. This is because no individual or society can develop without those structures. This study examines the developmental impacts of institutional structures on rural area in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. As such, survey design was adopted. The data were collected through questionnaires administered to one hundred and twenty (120) households in Asa. Data collected were analysed through descriptive statistics; Chi-square was employed to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between institutional structures and sustainable rural development. Also, it was discovered that a close supervision of the institutional structures will enhance the level of development in the rural areas. Based on the above, it was recommended that there is need for the three-tier governments to intensify efforts in establishing more institutional structures in the rural areas. Furthermore, government and the communities should ensure that the institutional structures are well monitored coordinated and supervised. Lastly, corporate organisations, non-governmental organisations and individuals should be sensitised on the need to establish institutional structures for the rural dwellers.

Key Words: *Development, Infrastructure, Institution, Rural Area, Structure.*

1. Introduction

Institutional structures all over the world play crucial roles in the development of the society be it rural or urban areas. This is because no individual or society can develop meaningfully without those structures. Many structures serve the rural areas and directly contribute to rural development. For instance, rural financial institutions, agricultural research institutions and rural community development agencies are among the most important institutional infrastructures in Nigeria. These institutional infrastructures are essential in the mobilization of the rural people, pooling of their resources and also spreading economic risks, training of personnel and development of leaders and integrating the rural population as a whole into the mainstream of national development (Ekong, 2010).

Rural areas in Nigeria depend heavily on agriculture which relies on local investments. The implication is that the rural areas devolve majorly on agricultural sector for income, employments and other livelihoods exigencies. The majority of Nigerians live in rural areas, with an average settlement having 5,000 or less inhabitants (IFAD, 2001). In fact, rural areas are the bedrocks of national population and serve the urban areas with both natural and human resources in terms of industrial needs. However, the rural dwellers are voiceless, characterized by underdevelopment, as most of them hardly live above subsistence level. Laah, Abba, Ishaya and Gana (2013) observed that rural areas in Nigeria are indeed denied the basic necessities of life such as balance diet,



clothing, housing, health facilities, sound education, transport facilities, recreation as well as credit facilities among others.

Rural development should aim at organizing and developing available resources of land, man power and water in such a way that majority of the rural dwellers would be able to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, reasonable facilities for education, interaction and health (Seniyi, 2002). The various policies of the Nigerian government on rural development are to improve the living condition in the rural areas with a view to curbing the streaming rural-urban migration. These policies show the zeal of different governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which has led to the proliferation of developmental agencies. Despite the countless numbers of rural development policies introduced at different times by successive governments coupled with the huge financial and material resources employed, little or nothing is felt at the rural level as each policy has often died with the government that initiated it before it starts to yield dividends for the rural dwellers. Chukwuemeka (2013) support this claim when he states that not minding the lofty objectives (policies and government initiatives) such efforts ever endured beyond the government that initiated the schemes. Consequently, past governments have put in efforts to develop the rural areas. Despite these efforts, the condition of the rural people is still below the acceptable level. Despite the realization of the above facts and the huge resources committed to rural development in Nigeria, rural development still remains unattainable. It is within this framework that this study sets out to examine the developmental impacts of institutional structures on rural area in Asa local government area of Kwara State. The following hypotheses are developed for testing.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between institutional structures and rural development.

Ho₂: There no relationship between supervision of institutional structures and rural development.

This study will be beneficial to government, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Community Development Associations (CDA), policy makers and individuals interested in rural development. Specifically, the study will assist them in coming up with a framework for sustainable rural development which in turn will ameliorate the plights of the rural dwellers.

2.1 Literature Review

Institutional Structures: According to North (1990), institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. It is well established that institutions generate subsequent incentives for various choices. As North (1990) firmly states, institution structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic. In other words, institutions define and limit the set of choices of individuals. It follows from the above that if the institutional infrastructures of a given social order changes or evolves, the inhabitants face a different institutional-benefit/cost structure, resulting in a new incentive environment.

Rural Development: Rural development can be defined as the outcome of a series of quantitative and qualitative changes occurring among a given rural population and whose converging effects indicate, in time, a rise in the standard of living and favourable changes in the way of life of the people concerned. Rural development would therefore be conceived as a process of not only increasing the level of per capital income in the rural sector but also of the standard of living of the rural population. The goal of rural development should be the enrichment of the quality of a



rural population. This goal implies the development of adequate socio-culture facilities in the rural areas where the majority of the people reside particularly in the third world countries.

According to Seniyi (2002), the concept of rural development has three main components, which include:

- a. The economic component, this emanates from the fact that the needs of the people cannot be met without a sustained increase in agricultural production which requires investment input and trained manpower.
- b. The social component which is the requirement that the people should have the opportunity to meet their basic social needs and that the distribution of income and assets should be equitable.
- c. The political component which involves an improvement in the socio- economic relationship to create a healthy society and characterised by mass participation at the local level.

According to Gana (1990), rural development has been described to be the total transformation of rural components of a nation's mode of production. He argued further that, this entails a functional transformation not only of production technology, but also the social organization of productive forces. In another dimension, Ogwumike (1995) defines rural development as socio-economic aspect of changes, which deals specifically with rural sector of the economy.

Ikotun (2006) describes rural development as conscious efforts by the government and community directed at enhancing general welfare of the people and immediate environment of the rural sector. Meanwhile, improving general welfare of a rural sector can be explained in terms of provision of fundamental needs such as housing, food and social amenities-like portable or pipe borne water, electricity, transportation and good road network as well as other institutional facilities. By this implication, rural development is urbanization processes, due to the fact that it has great changes in the pattern and organization of the settlement in the rural sector (Ikotun, 2006).

2.1 Developmental Impacts of Institutional Structures on Rural Areas in Nigeria

Sustainable rural development is about reacting to the needs of the rural dwellers in a manner that they will be self-sufficient as well as participate and contribute to the social, economic and political development of their communities (Asaju, 2017). Rural areas in the developing world are the economic spine; they contribute to the overall economic growth by supplying raw materials, food and labour to other sectors of the economy. In fact, rural areas especially in third world countries can be said to have contributed to the development of the third world countries. Despite these significant contributions, rural areas are the most neglected. Poverty represents a salient problem in virtually all rural areas (Jalic, 2017). They are characterized by food insecurity, income inequality, poverty and lack of infrastructural facilities (Israr, Yaseen & Ahmad, 2017).

One obvious characteristic of the rural areas of Nigeria is that, they have not witnessed any significant level of development in the past five decades. This is evidenced by the apparent lack of basic infrastructural facilities and the abysmal poor quality of life among the rural dwellers (Chukwuemeka, 2013).



The prevailing condition of any sector of society may be adequately determined at any point in time through combination of methods. These methods according to Ekong (2010) include a survey of available social, physical and institutional infrastructures, and people's level of living including their levels of perceived deprivation and satisfaction with the current level of their lives.

Most of the public schools in Nigerian cities are not in good order; let alone those in rural Nigeria in which there is little or no supervision. Most primary schools in some farm settlements are either collapsing classrooms, palm front cover or student sitting down under the tree while there is little or no provision for health centres, even the available ones are without necessary personnel and medical facilities (Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2005).

Regarding portable water, the use of pipe borne water is fast going into extinction in virtually all rural areas in Nigeria. According to Ekong (2010), most rural dwellers in Nigeria obtain water from streams, wells, rivers, shallow ponds or rain. Ameachi (2005) argued that the rural infrastructures should have positive impact on the socio-economic lives of rural dwellers. Rural farmers need motorable roads for efficient transportation of their inputs to the farm as well as the transference of their farm products out of the farm. According to Ifabiyi (2010), the average time spent in fetching water is particularly an important indicator of the level of efficiency of rural water supply within the rural communities. According to him, most rural dwellers in Nigeria obviously rely on unconventional means of getting water such as shallow ponds, rivers or rain.

It is assumed that improvement in health could lead to improvement in life expectancy which is a robust indicator of human development. A simple channel through which health affects human development is by improving living conditions. As living conditions improve human longevity is expected to improve and vice-versa (Awoyemi 2011). Ajala, Sanni and Adeyinka (2005) revealed that the available medical services are absolutely insufficient. Thus, he suggested that there is an urgent need for governments at all levels to provide health facilities towards enhancing sustainable rural development.

Furthermore, communication facilities are indeed not sufficient in a typical rural Nigeria. Rural people still depend largely on the face to face communication studies in their educational system which obviously revealed a low level of infrastructural development in the area of communication. On this ground, Lustig and Stern (2000) noted that Information Communication Technologies (ICT) such as mobile phones could have an impact on rural livelihoods and reduction of poverty in rural communities of Nigeria.

The impact of various institutions on sustainable rural development cannot be over emphasized. Jalic (2017) in his investigation of the influence of rural development support on poverty and livelihoods of rural dwellers in Serbia discovered that microfinance bank plays a fundamental role in alleviating the sufferings of the rural dwellers. Living standard of the rural poor will be uplifted when they receive loan from microfinance banks for the farm activities. In the work of Asaju (2017), he opines that where these institutional structures are properly implemented and well monitored, sustainable rural development would be order of the day.

In line with the above, there have been several institutional structures established by various governments in order to enhance rural dwellers' production, distribution and consumption



activities and ultimately the quality of their lives. These include Agricultural Development Project (ADP), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA), Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Accelerated Food Production Programme, Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI), Better Life for Rural Dwellers (BETTER LIFE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Rural Roads Development Fund (NRRDF), Rural Banking Scheme (RBS) as well as Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) among others. All these institutional structures have their main objectives as to better the lives of rural dwellers, stimulate and enhance economic growth, as well as get the rural sector to contribute meaningfully to the national economic and social development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Structural functionalism was used to explain the link between institutional structures and sustainable rural development. The theory assumes that the society is made up of parts and these parts contribute positively or functionally to the operation and functioning of the system as a whole. Structural functionalism holds that each part of the society is necessary for the functioning and survival of the social organism that is the society. The theory sees the human society as an entity in which all the components work together cooperatively and cohesively for the betterment of the overall society (Ogunbameru, 2013).

The theory depicts the nexus between institutional structures and rural development as institutional structure is one of the key components in human society. An effective and well established institutional structure in rural area is necessary for the functioning and survival of the rural area. Institutional structure is also functional and will bring sustainable development to the rural dwellers.

3. Methodology

The design of this study is descriptive survey method, which is characterized by a systematic attempt to describe the research setting or area of interest (Osuala, 2006). The quota sampling technique was used in selecting one hundred and twenty (120) households from the local government area. Questionnaire was used as the basic instrument for data collection. In analyzing the data collected from the field, the inferential statistics in form of chi-square statistical method was employed to test the hypotheses.

The study was conducted in rural Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. Asa has area land size of 106,455 square kilometers with a total population of 385,221 (National Population Census, 2006). Rural Asa is inhabited by different peoples who speak Yoruba and Fulani languages while Islam, Christianity and traditional religion are being practiced by the people. The major economic activities of the Asa rural people are crop farming, fishing, animal husbandry and hunting.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 depicts the prevalence and benefits of institutional structures to the rural dwellers. The table shows that 57% of the respondents revealed that they had institutional structures aside from structures such as NAPEP, ADB, river basin, rural electrification etc. 17% of the respondents revealed the presence of rural electrification project; 11% of the respondents unveiled that they



had NAPEP; 10% had ADB, while 5% had river basin. As for whether there were any institutional structures established by private individuals, 94% of the respondents revealed that no institutional structure was established by private individuals, while 6% revealed that they had institutional structures established by private individuals. It is important to note that majority of the institutional structures were established 6-10 years; 28% revealed that the institutional structures were established 11-15 years ago; 13% said they were established 16-20 years ago; 8% said they were established 1-5 years ago, while 3% said they were established 21 years above.

Question on whether the institutional structures were supervised effectively shows that 62% of the respondents unveiled that the institutional structures were well supervised; 23% were of the opinion that the structures were moderately supervised, while 15% did not know the level of supervision and maintenance given to these structures. Majority of the respondents 53% utilised the institutional structures very often; 40% used it often, while 7% rarely used the institutional structures.

Data on the effectiveness of these institutional structures show that 44% unveiled that these institutional structures were effective; 37% unveiled that these institutional structures were very effective, while 19% were of the opinion that these structures were not effective. On whether these structures were beneficial to the people, 81% revealed that these structures were beneficial to the people, while 19% debunk these institutional structures were beneficial to the people. This information suggests that the extant institutional structures were effective and functional to the people.

Furthermore, data on the level of development in the area shows that majority of the respondents 85% specifically rated the level of development in the area as very high, while 15% of the respondents rated the level of development in the area as low. Lastly, on whether these institutional structures have potential for rural development shows 69% disagreed that these institutional structures had potential for rural development, while 31% agreed that these institutional structures had the potential for rural development. Therefore, high level of development in the area could be as a result of combination of different factors and not necessary the institutional infrastructures alone.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' by the Benefits of the Institutional Structures

Institutional Structures	Frequency	Percentage
Preference of boys over girls		
ADB	12	10
River basin	6	5
Rural Electrification	21	17
NAPEP	13	11
Others	68	57
Total	120	100



Years of establishment		
1-5	9	8
6-10	58	48
11-15	34	28
16-20	16	13
Above 21	3	3
Total	120	100
Supervision		
Well supervised	74	62
Moderately supervised	28	23
Don't Know	18	15
Total	120	100
Utilisation		
Very often	64	53
Often	48	40
Not quite often	8	7
Total	120	100
Effectiveness		
Very effective	44	37
Effective	53	44
Not effective	23	19
Total	120	100
Beneficial to people		
Yes	97	81
No	23	19
Total	120	100
Level of rural development		
High	102	85
Low	18	15
Total	120	100
Potential for rural development		
Yes	37	31
No	83	69
Total	120	100

Source: Fieldwork (2017)



Testing of Hypothesis One

Table 2: Cross Tabulation of Institutional Structures and Rural Development

Institutional Structures	Level of Rural Development		
	High	Low	Total
ADP	4	8	12
River Basin	6	0	6
Rural Electrification	19	2	21
NAPEP	8	5	13
Others	65	3	68
Total	102	18	120

$$X^2_c = 21.34 > X^2 (0.05) = 9.49, df = 4, n = 120$$

Decision Rule

Setting the level of significance at 0.05 with the degree of freedom (5-1) (2-1) = 4, the critical (table) value 9.49 was found to be lesser than the calculated (observed) value of chi-square=21.34. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a relationship between institutional structures and the level of social services development in the study area.

Testing of Hypothesis Two

Table 3: Cross Tabulation of Supervision of Institutional Structures and Rural Development

Supervision of Institutional Structures	Potential for Rural Development		
	Yes	No	Total
Well supervised	17	57	74
Supervised	18	10	28
Don't know	2	16	18
Total	37	83	120

$$X^2_c = 6.29 > X^2 (0.05) = 5.99, df = 2, n = 120$$

Decision Rule

Setting the level of significance at 0.05 with the degree of freedom (3-1) (2-1) = 2, the critical (table) value ($X^2 0.05$) = 5.99 was found lesser than the calculated (observed) value of chi-square (X^2_c) = 6.29. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is relationship between the level of supervision of the extant institutional structures and rural development

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The study sought to establish whether the existence of institutional structures in the rural areas has any linkage with rural development. The first hypothesis on the relationship between institutional structures and rural development was accepted. Hence, institutional structures promote sustainable rural development. The more the institutional structures are established in the rural areas, the more the level of development. This finding is in line with the finding of Nalere, Yago and Oriel (2015) on the impact of rural institutions on rural development. They discovered a significance relationship between rural institutional structures and rural development.



The second hypothesis on supervision of the institutional structures and rural development was accepted. A close supervision of the institutional structures will make the structures more functional which in turn elevate the living conditions of the rural dwellers. This finding is consistent with Nalere, Yago and Oriel (2015) who found that a good coordination and supervision of the institutional structures lead to rural development. Similarly, the finding is also consistent with Okidi and Mugambe (2002) who opined that before that there can be sustainable development in rural areas, the existing institutional structures must be well coordinated and monitored.

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following observation and conclusion are drawn. It was found that the existence of institutional structures in the rural areas help a lot in ensuring sustainable development in the rural areas. Beyond establishing the institutional structures in rural areas, the close monitoring or supervision of these establishments is salient to sustainable rural development.

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby proffered.

- i. There is need for the three-tier of governments and non-governmental organisations to intensify efforts in establishing more institutional structures in the rural areas.
- ii. Corporate organisations and individuals should be sensitised on the need to establish institutional structures for the rural dwellers.
- iii. Government agencies should strengthen and monitor institutional structures in the rural area towards improving social services, infrastructural development and economic development.
- iv. Government agencies should increase community involvement in the monitoring of institutional structures towards ensuring efficiency and effectiveness.

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