

The Roles of Community Based Organizations in Rural Development Activities in Osun State, Nigeria

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Despite the several roles of Community-based Organisations (CBOs) in complementing the government rural developmental efforts, the conditions of the rural dwellers have not improved significantly as expected. The study examines the perceived and performed roles of CBOs in the rural development of Osun State. Data for the study was collected from a sample of all registered CBOs in all the rural areas of Osun State. Using multistage sampling method, a total of 56 CBOs were randomly selected across the six administrative zones in the State. Structured interview schedule was used to elicit information on the characteristics of the selected organizations, their perceived and performed roles as well as the challenges facing the organizations in carrying out their activities. The results show that the role performance of slightly more than 80 percent of the organizations could be classified as low or medium. Specifically, role performance was classified as low as indicated by 21.4 percent, medium by 60.7 percent of the organization and as high as 17.9 percent of the organizations. Further analysis using independent t-test shows the mean role performance (6.9) was significantly lower than the mean role perception(10.8), $t=6.30$, $p<0.01$ We therefore conclude that CBOs in Osun State were not meeting their roles as perceived by them and as expected. This could be attributed to certain challenges and constraints in accessing fund, poverty level of the people in the community and lack of government supports.

Key Words: Nigeria, community based organizations, rural development

Introduction


There is a wide gap in the development levels of both the urban and rural areas in many sub-concentrated in the urban centers while the rural areas are largely neglected. Most rural areas in Nigeria lack basic amenities like pipe-borne water, good road networks, schools, health facilities, markets to mention a few making rural areas to be grossly underdeveloped (Ekong, 2010). In general terms, the rural areas engage in primary activities (such as farming) that form the foundation for any economic development. Despite this importance, there is inadequate infrastructure, which improves the quality of life, absence of potable water, electricity and good feeder roads. The rural people have low purchasing power and standard of living. The value for rural population in Nigeria was 79,528,440 as of 2010 representing 50.2 percent of the nation's population (World Bank, 2010).

The decay and worsening rural conditions and the attendant increase in rural-urban migration are evident in the long years of neglect of the rural areas (Adebisi, 2009). The introduction of Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment programme

(NDE), Better Life for Rural Women etc made little or no significant improvement on the development of rural communities and the conditions of the rural dwellers. Some problems associated with failure of some of the government's effort include lack of consistency between project formulation and execution; lack of continuity; and poor coordination (Afolayan, 1995; Deji, 2002).

Roles consist of a set of rules or norms that function as plans or blueprints to guide behavior. Roles specify what goals should be pursued, what tasks must be accomplished, and what performances are required in a given scenario or situation. Role perception has been conceptualized in different ways. For example Akinbode (1970) viewed role perception as

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the manner in which a role occupant view his roles and what he feels the people with whom he interacts expect him to do. This therefore determines the extent to which such a role occupant would fulfil his role. However, Lloyd (1967) in his own opinion viewed perception as the freedom of an individual role occupant to manoeuvre in his attempt to achieve his own goal. Hence, people have different perception of a particular duty or role based on individual experiences in life and societal expectation. Roles have also been seen as responsibilities, obligations, or behavior expectations of occupants of various positions in a social system (Opabunmi, 2005).

The CBOs are known to have the ability to influence ideas and actions of others and as a result of this they are regarded as effective change agents (Adisa, 2001). The failure of governments' top-down approach and lack of involvement of the people at the grass-roots in the bottom-up strategy have reduced the confidence of the public in central authorities. Therefore, communities seek solace in indigenous institutions such as CBOs which undertake development programmes and projects that they observe as immediate needs in their communities (Adisa, 2013). Studies have shown that the activities of CBOs in rural project development have been seen as an important element and a sure way to the speedy development of the rural areas in Nigeria (Abegunde, 2008). The impact of CBOs have been felt in the areas of social and economic development, policy matters, health, infrastructure, environmental and physical development among others (Adeokun, Adisa and Oladoja, 2006).

Despite these accomplishments, many rural areas in Osun State still lack basic amenities like pipe-borne water, good road networks, schools, health facilities, markets to mention a few making those areas to be grossly underdeveloped. Where government is properly playing its expected role, activities of community based organizations should complement rural development, not replacing it. It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to provide answer to the following research question.

Research Question

Are CBOs able to perform all their perceived roles in the development of their rural community?

Methodology

The study population comprises all registered Community Based Organizations in all the rural areas of Osun State. The list of the organizations was obtained from the headquarters of respective Local Govern-

ment Areas. Primary data was obtained using structured interview schedule administered on members of the selected Community Based Organizations (executives and ordinary members). The interview schedule elicited information on organizational characteristics; role performance of CBOs and challenges facing the organizations in carrying out their activities.

Multistage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the samples for the study. At the first stage, one Local Government Area (LGA) was purposively selected based on the number of registered CBOs in each of the six administrative units, making a total of six (6) LGAs. In order to identify the Community Based Organizations in the target community, the list of all the registered CBOs was obtained from their respective local government headquarters and those involved in rural community development activities (either completed or on-going) were selected. The CBOs were selected in proportion to the number in each community. Seven percent of the organizations involved in self-help projects from the six administrative zones were randomly selected, making a total of 56 CBOs.

Measurement of perceived and performed roles

The following fourteen expected roles of CBOs were listed: Training, Financing Project, Liaison with government to bring about initiation of new project, promoting mutual understanding, raising fund for project execution, planning of programmes, socialization, and economic empowerment. Others were cooperation with other organizations, provision of infrastructure, mobilization of members, partnering with other organizations, protecting the image of the community and providing security for community or government projects. We asked each organization which of the expected roles she perceived as her role and whether they perform such roles or not. Each role checked was scored (1) while the unchecked was scored (0). The maximum obtainable score was 14 for those that performed all the roles while the minimum was zero (0) for those that did not perform any of the role. Mean plus standard deviation was used to rate role performance as low, moderate and high. Role performance was classified as low when the role performance score fell below the difference between the mean score and one unit of standard deviation. Role performance was at the high level when role performance score was above the sum of the mean score and one unit of standard deviation while at the medium level, role performance score fell in between the two extremes (Plus or minus one unit of standard deviation).

Organizations were also were further asked to rate the extent to which they performed each role

mentioned on a 4-point Likert scale - very regularly (4), regularly (3), occasionally (2), and rarely (1). The frequency distribution of the extent to which each role was performed was also obtained.

Background Characteristics

The background variables in the study include: organizational characteristics such as year of establishment, membership strength, and leadership emergence, sources of revenue, decision making, leadership qualities and frequency of meetings.

Data analysis

At the first level of analysis, we present the percentage distribution of organizational characteristics and other relevant variables. We obtain the mean and the standard deviations of perceived and performed roles and then used independent t-test to compare the mean performed roles and the mean perceived roles. This is to show whether the mean perceived role differ significantly from the mean of role perception.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of organizations by their selected characteristics

Year of existence

Results in Table 1 show that more than half of the CBOs were established less than 20 years ago. Specifically, 32.1 percent of the CBOs came into existence less than 10 years ago and 23.1 percent had existed within 10 years to 19 years. About 28.6 percent of CBOs existed for 30 years or more. The findings imply that most of the CBOs in the study area came into existence more than a decade ago as the mean years of existence was 18.3. The findings validate Abegunde (2009) assertion that 81.4 percent of the CBOs in Osogbo Local Government Area (LGA) were established more than a decade preceding the survey. In a similar study, Adisa (2001) also found that 10.7 percent of the CBOs came into existence less than ten years preceding the survey indicating that roughly ninety percent (89.3%) had been in existence more than ten years before the survey. The implication of this is that the CBOs are likely to be more matured and purposeful and as such are expected to have internal harmony that would have made them to overcome possible developmental challenges such as leadership issues.

Membership criteria

As regards organization membership criteria, nearly half of the organizations (48.2%) did not place any restriction on membership. However, 25.0 percent each placed priority on indigenous status and moral uprightiness as conditions for joining their organizations. Less than ten percent (8.9%) of the organizations, respectively placed emphasis on form of religious affiliation and occupation, 7.1 per cent each emphasised income and age. Similarly, 10.7 per cent emphasized educational qualification as a criteria for membership while 17.9 percent of the organizations placed emphasis on sex of the members as a condition for membership. Also, 14.3 per cent considered marital status as a condition for membership. Thus, the findings revealed that indigenous status and moral uprightiness were the most important criteria for membership admittance. However, higher proportions (48.2%) did not place any restriction for membership admittance. The implication of this is that the people will be more committed to the development of their community. However, the higher proportions (48.2%) with no conditions for the entry of members could face challenges of disunity and other vices that may not promote the interest of the group in community development activities.

Membership size

On the membership strength about 39.3 percent started with less than 20 members, 44.6 percent started with number ranging from 20 to 40 while only 16.1 percent had more than 40 members at inception of the organization. Distribution of community based organizations by current membership strength shows that more than one quarter (26.8%) had less than 40 members as at the time of the survey, 32.1 percent reportedly had between 40-60 members while 41.1 percent had 60 members and above with a mean current membership strength of 89.5 people as against 23.3 people when they first started. This implies that the size of the organizations is not stagnant but grows over time. This is because high proportions (39.3%) of the organizations started as a small group of less than 20 but later grew to membership strength of over 60. This could be as a result of people realizing the need to come together as a group to meet their community needs because of the neglect of the community by government and or development agencies. The implication is that as the members increase, CBOs are more likely to have large capital base through contributions of members and this can enhance better performance.

Table 1: Distribution of organizations by year of establishment, membership criteria and organizational size

Organisation characteristics		Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Years of existence	<10 years	18	32.1	
	10-19	13	23.1	
	20-29	9	16.1	
	30+	16	28.6	18.3
Criteria for membership*	Age	4	7.1	
	Sex	10	17.9	
	Education	6	10.7	
	A Economic status	4	7.1	
	Religion	5	8.9	
	Indigenous status	14	25.0	
	Marital status	8	14.3	
	Moral uprightness	14	25.0	
	Occupation	5	8.9	
	No restriction	27	48.2	
Organizationn size at inception	Less than 20	22	39.3	
	20-40	25	44.6	
	41+	9	16.1	23.3
Current membership size	Less than 40	5	26.8	
	40-60	18	32.1	
	61+	23	41.1	85.9

*Multiple responses.

Distribution of organization by perceived and performed roles

Fourteen roles expected of CBOs were listed in Table 2 and organizations were asked about their perception of such roles and whether they actually perform each of the roles.

The five most common perceived roles identified were economic empowerment (75.0%), mobilization of members for rural development activities (60.7%), protecting the image of the community (58.9%), raising fund to execute projects (58.9%) and financing projects (57.1%). With regards to role performance, providing security for the community and government projects (62.5%) tops the list of role performance by the CBOs, others were provision of infrastructure (55.4%), liaison with government for support (57.4%), planning of programmes to be executed (50.0%) and sponsoring members for training and capacity development (50.0%). The findings reveal variations in virtually all the perceived and performed roles of CBOs except in sponsorship of training where both were identified equally.

While 75 per cent of the organizations perceived economic empowerment as their role, only 25 per cent of the organizations however reported they were performing the roles. This wide gap could be as a result of the widespread economic meltdown in the country and little or no access to fund. Organizations sometimes rely on the government or private organizations for financial support and empowerment to be able to achieve their intended roles. Such funds are not always available and when available may take a

long period of time to access contrary to the claim of Anyanwu (1992) that government at state and local level provide financial support and technical assistance for CBOs to enable them to achieve their goals. In nine out of the fourteen expected roles of the organizations, the proportion of the organization that performed such roles were less than the proportion who perceived that their organizations should be playing such roles. This finding suggests that organizations often don't get the necessary support they needed to be able to achieve their expected roles. The finding agrees with those found out in previous literature on the activities of community based organizations in Nigeria, for example, Idode (1989); Deji (2002), and Mathews-Njoku (2009). A higher proportion of the organization reportedly performed the role of securing their environment and of government properties than they perceived it as their expected roles (37.5% vs 62.5%). This is because there is an increasing awareness that the issue of security is everybody's business and should not be left only for the government and this is one reason that communities often organize their own vigilante group. They probably have come to terms with the fact that the communities will suffer for it if those facilities are not well protected and become spoilt or vandalized. Similarly, the proportion of organizations involved in the provision of infrastructure was higher than those who perceived such as their roles. This is one of the major reasons why many CBO's engage in self help projects because of the failure of the government to provide basic infrastructure such as electricity, pipe borne water, good roads for local communities.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to perceived and performed roles of community based organizations

Roles	Perceived Roles*	Performed Roles*
	Percent	Percent
Sponsor Training	50.0	50.0
Financing Project	57.01	43.9
Liaison with Government	42.09	57.1
Promoting mutual understanding	41.1	37.4
Raising fund for project execution	58.9	41.1
Planning of programmes	50.0	50.0
Socialization	55.4	45.0
Economic empowerment	75.0	25.0
Cooperation with other organizations	53.6	46.4
Provision of infrastructure	44.6	55.4
Mobilization of members	60.7	39.3
Partnering with other organizations	58.9	41.1
Protecting the image of the community	48.2	48.2
Security for Comm. & government projects	62.5	62.5

*percentages

Distribution of organizations by level of role performance

Level of role performance for the CBOs in the study area was rated into low, moderate and high using mean \pm standard deviation (Figure 1). Role performance is high when the role performance score is greater than the sum of the mean score and one standard deviation. Role performance is at the medium level when role performance score is in between plus or minus one standard deviation away from the mean score. Results in Figure 1 show that 21.4 per cent of the organisations were rated low in their level of role performance, 60.7 per cent were rated moderate while only 17.9 per cent rated high in their

level of role they performed. The findings reveal that majority (60.7%) of the organisations were rated moderate in their level of roles they perform. This result shows that the role performance of slightly more than 80 percent of the organizations could be classified as low or medium. Specifically, role performance was classified as low as indicated by 21.4 percent, medium by 60.7 percent of the organization and as high as 17.9 percent of the organizations. This is an indication that CBOs in Osun State were not meeting their roles as perceived by them and as expected. This could be attributed to certain challenges and constraints in accessing fund, poverty level of the people in the community and lack of government supports.

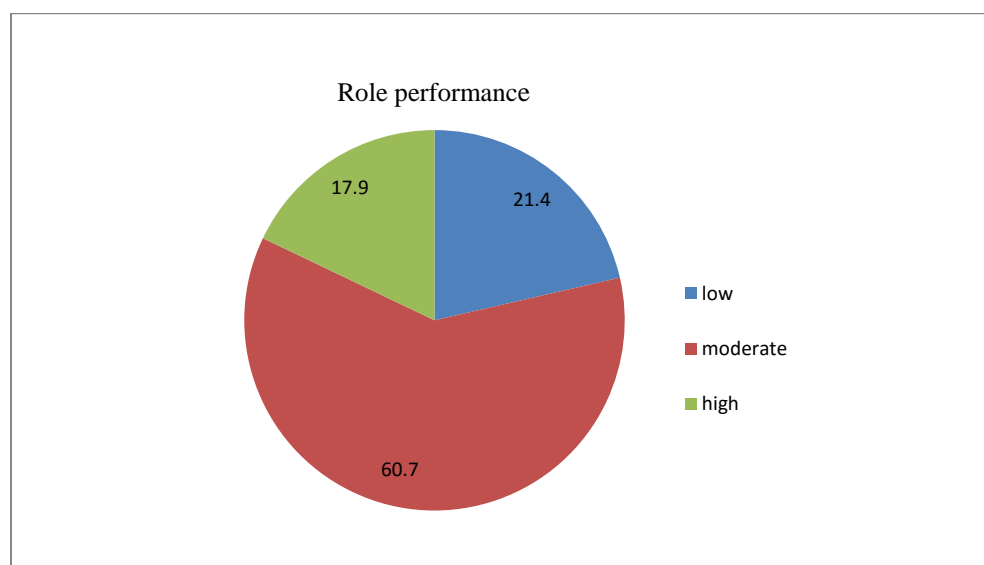


Figure 1: Distribution of organization by levels of role performance.

Distribution of respondents by their assessment of roles performed by community based organizations

Results in Table 3 show the extent to which CBOs have been performing their roles as claimed by the respondents. For instance, majority (96.0%) of the respondents claimed that the organization have been performing socialization role like supporting their members during ceremonies in terms of finance and physical commitment. Also 95.8 percent claimed that their organizations finance projects, while 92.0 percent indicated that their organizations liaise with the government for the development of their community. Protecting the image of the community is an im-

portant issue among the organisations and was accounted for by 92.6 percent of the respondents. Furthermore, 90.9 percent indicated that their organisations do mobilize their members which could have accounted for the increase in membership strength. While 90.3 percent claimed that they provide infrastructural facilities for their communities. Other roles performed to a greater extent by these organizations include promoting mutual understanding (81.3%), providing security for community and government projects (80.0%), cooperation with other organizations (76.9%). It could be deduced from the above findings that majority of the CBOs in the study area were performing their roles to a moderate extent.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of respondents by their assessment of roles performed by community based organizations

Performed roles*	Very regularly A	Regularly B	Occasionally C	Rarely D
Sponsor Training	10.7	35.7	28.6	25.0
Financing project	66.7	29.2	4.2	0.0
Liaison with Government	60.7	32.0	8.0	0.0
Promoting mutual understanding	37.5	43.8	12.5	6.3
Raising fund for project execution	30.4	26.1	43.5	0.0
Planning of programmes	35.7	39.3	25.0	0.0
Socialization	72.0	24.0	4.0	0.0
Economic empowerment	35.7	28.6	21.4	14.3
Cooperation with other organizations	23.1	53.9	15.4	7.7
Provision of infrastructure	64.5	25.8	9.7	0.0
Mobilization of members	68.2	22.7	9.1	0.0
Partnering with other organizations	13.0	17.4	56.5	13.0
Protecting the image of the community	63.0	29.6	7.4	0.0
Security for Comm. & government projects	51.4	28.6	17.1	2.9

*Multiple responses.

Differences in perceived and performed roles of community based organizations

Our research question in this study is whether the perceived roles of the CBOs differ from their performed roles. Thus we compare the mean role performance with mean role perception using t-test to see whether the observed difference was statistically significant. Table 5 shows that mean role performance was 6.95 compared with 10.77 for role perception.

This indicates that the mean role perception was higher than the mean role performance. This difference was statistically significant because the observed probability (p-value) associated with t-statistic of 6.30 and the mean difference of 3.82 was (P<0.01). Thus, the hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in role performance and role perception would be rejected. This implies that CBOs may not be able to perform all their perceived roles due to one constraint or the other.

Table 4: Comparison of perceived and performed roles of community based organizations

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	95% Confidence Interval
Performed Roles	6.95	3.85	5.92 - 7.97
Perceived Roles	10.77	2.51	10.09 - 11.44

Mean(diff) = mean(role performance – role perception) = 3.82
 t = -6.3028 Ho: mean(diff) = 0 p-value<0.01

Conclusion

The findings in this study show that despite the roles of CBOs in complementing the government rural developmental efforts, the conditions of the rural dwellers have not improved significantly as expected. This is because many CBOs could not fulfil their perceived roles as expected because of certain constraints. As effective change agents, if CBOs are empowered, they will be able to overcome several constraints militating against their fulfilling their perceived roles in the development of their rural communities. Previous studies have shown that many CBOs lack government support and are poorly funded. We therefore recommend that government should accord CBOs the needed recognition as partners in progress in the development of rural communities. Non-governmental organizations should also show interest in the activities of CBOs and provide the needed encouragement for them to be able to fulfil their perceived roles.

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