



DRIVERS OF SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NSUKKA LGA, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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(Received 21 April 2022, Revision Accepted 27 July 2022)

ABSTRACT

Over the years, Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu state, Nigeria has been experiencing a slow rate of development. Based on this therefore, this work was designed to investigate the drivers of socio-economic and cultural factors militating against rural development in Nsukka Local Government Area. A purposeful sampling was used to select one hundred (100) respondents in each of the five rural Villages, making it a total of 500 respondents. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data was represented using simple percentages, charts, and Chi-square. of the 500 questionnaires shared, 483 were correctly and completely filled and analyzed using SPSS. The findings revealed that traditional belief system, gender segregation, land use system, mismanagement of project funds, poor execution of projects and non-involvement of community members in planning and execution of rural development projects constitute some of the drivers of socio-economic and cultural factors militating against rural development in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu state, Nigeria. The result also showed that there was a statistically significant relationship ($P < .033$) between respondents' level of education and participation in rural development. Finally it was recommended that rural people should learn to welcome and harness development despite their cultural belief system and there should be a collaborative effort of the government and the people, more especially the youths in planning and implementation of rural development projects.

KEYWORDS: Socioeconomic factors, cultural factors, rural development, community participation and Social workers

INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a topic that is frequently discussed, but there is no consensus on how to measure it. Various criteria exist such as economic, social, cultural or environmental, which can be used to assess rural development (Straka J, Tuzova. M, 2016).

There are number of economic, social, cultural or environmental factors and indicators that can be used to assess rural development. These factors can be often found in those many definitions of rural development. For example, Chambers (2013: 147) defines the rural development at a general level based on the definition of the World

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Bank: "Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need".

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2006: 1) defines rural development as an "improvement in the overall rural community conditions, including economic and other quality of life considerations such as environment, health, infrastructure and housing". This view is shared also by Madu (2007) who considers rural development as a process, which should improve all aspects of human life Process in a coherent system, in which one factor affects the other. Also the tradition of local community, quality of regional milieu and adaptability of key rural actors (e.g. government representatives or interest groups) are regarded as important. Hlavsa (2010) mentions demographic factors (e.g. social, infrastructural and economic-production) to be relevant. Indicators mentioned by Kovárník (2010) in his research include the GDP, unemployment or expenses and employees. Bernard (2012) states that hard indicators such as availability of jobs or population growth and age structure, and soft indicators such as the quality of the environment, human capital or participation of citizens are very crucial to the development of rural community. In addition to the above, socio-cultural practices can also be an impediment to attaining rural development in Nigeria.

Culturally, belief system of the rural people bridge development, for example, they find it difficult to release a particular land for development due to the belief that it is on that land sacrifices are being made for the gods of their land, secondly they find it difficult to release a particular land for development to avoid the destruction of their aesthetic values like trees and other things that bring about the beauty of their area (Ogbunga, 2013). Akuoku (2008) defines socio-cultural practices as the distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. Individuals generally hold onto these at all times irrespective of the environment they find themselves.

Since independence, successive Nigeria governments have never been short of rural developmental programmes and reforms aimed at alleviating the failing rural economy, livelihood, insecurity and other specific policies associated with poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development (Paul, Agba & Chukwurah, 2014). Rural development which aims at eradicating

poverty among rural populace through satisfying the basic needs of the people has faced numerous challenges such as the lack of increased involvement of community members in project execution, mismanagement or embezzlement of funds by the government officials, while education, age and sex are also posing some of the problems associated with rural development.

In Nigeria, the rural areas are not progressing in line with urban areas or metropolitan states in terms of having sustainable development like good roads, electricity, good telecommunication, transportation, good water supply, standard markets and health centres, improved housing as well as improved agricultural and storage facilities that would help in sustaining the rural masses. According to Prelleltensky (2004), rural development problems come as a result of governmental deliberate neglect or inability of the rural community to welcome development due to their cultural belief system etc. According to rural development strategies 2002, through rural development strategies, efforts of the people and that of the government are brought together to improve the economic social and cultural conditions of the rural areas, so as to integrate them into the life of the nation and allow them to enable their people contribute more to national growth.

The role of social workers in facilitating rural development

The social work profession focuses on human wellbeing and quality of life (Okoye, 2013), hence, social workers can play the role of advocacy and mediator, assessment and counseling services, facilitating and broker services, carry out research and educating people on rural development. Social workers play a variety of professional roles in rural development-related cases such as psychosocial interventions including case management, educational groups, support groups, community outreach, and community education, end of life care, tele-counseling, organizing leadership programmes, and, long-term sustainability issues, etc. Social workers empower individuals, relieve suffering, and affect social change. They help meet the basic needs of all people and strengthen those who are vulnerable, oppressed, or living in poverty.

Social workers with the knowledge of both literature and practice can immensely contribute to community development. Therefore, there is a need for well-qualified, practice-oriented, committed social workers to improve community

members' socioeconomic status and quality of life. effort (Dhavaleshwar C. U., 2016). Social services and social workers have an important role in helping people improve their quality of life by creating awareness and sustaining the community by creating employment opportunities on their effort (Dhavaleshwar C. U., 2016). Much of the profession's knowledge base about rural social work practice is formulated from narratives, case studies, and conceptual models of rural people and communities. Therefore, social workers may benefit from extrapolating practice implications from the literature of other rural researchers and professionals, as well as using the social work profession's research narratives, case studies, conceptual models, and emerging research studies. (Joanne, R, 2012).

Communication methods and delivery strategies aimed at encouraging older less-educated people, who have less contact with development strategies, are needed to further increase community education. This way, a good rate of participation can be achieved in rural areas of developing countries through the use of appropriate service delivery mechanisms. The social work service delivery strategy is designed to reduce the main barriers to rural development, and this may include; the poor quality of health resources, economic and social inaccessibility, lack of knowledge on ways of developing rural communities. Therefore, it is the social workers responsibility to take up these challenges from here to reduce the problems associated with the rural development in Nigeria.

Data and Methods

Design, area, and sampling

Research design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design which enabled the researchers to observe and collect information from the cross section of a population or phenomenon on a defined issue (Babbie, 2010). This is a suitable design for the study because it allows one to obtain data within a given period of time from a sample as well as generalization of research results to the entire population of the study. Therefore, the design facilitated the efforts of the researchers to ascertain a proportion of rural dwellers in Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu state, Nigeria.

Area of study

Nsukka LGA area of Enugu State, southeast Nigeria was the area of the study. The Local Government Headquarters is located in the hilly and green sites which Nsukka is known for close to colonial quarters of the pre-Independence years. Nsukka LGA has an area of 1,810 km² and lies within latitudes 6⁰45¹N and 7⁰00¹N of the Equator and longitude 7⁰15¹E and 7⁰30¹E of the Greenwich meridian. Nsukka LGA is on a plateau, with heights which vary between 365 -420 metres above mean sea level with isolated and outstanding peaks reaching over 545 metres. Furthermore, Nsukka is a home to members of the Igbo ethnic group. That is, people of the area are predominately Igbos. The current residents in Nsukka LGA are predominantly Christians while smaller percentage of them belongs to African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Islamic religion. Most of the inhabitants of the area are farmers, traders, civil servants and artisans. Their unique and popular food includes Achicha, Ayaraya, Igbagwu and Okpa (Adeniran, 2014).

Population of the study

Nsukka LGA has a total population of 309,633 persons from the 2006 National Population Census (NPC, Nsukka Geographical Data, 2011). The population comprises of 149,241 males and 160,392 females. The target population of this study was the rural dwellers in Nsukka LGA within the age range of 18 years and above and this age group was considered to respond appropriately to the issues raised in the questionnaire. For the IDIs, twelve (12) informants were used and also six hundred (600) respondents was added to make the total sample size of 612.

Sampling procedure

The study adopted multistage sampling techniques which enabled the researchers to select respondents from communities, streets and households for the study. This is relevant to the study because it captured the key population characteristics in the sample that are proportional to the overall population. First, the rural autonomous communities included in the study were selected using hand drawing methods. The names of the rural autonomous communities were written in pieces of paper, folded and

dropped into a container. Six communities were selected from the container one after another without replacement. This was to give all the participants equal opportunities to be selected for the study. The questionnaire was distributed in the first three communities as selected and the IDI informants were selected from the remaining three communities. This variation was to get diversified information as regards the subject matter. After the selection of the three autonomous communities, two villages were selected from each autonomous community using hand drawing methods without replacement to make it a total of six villages where the respondents were selected. Due to the scattered habitations in the villages, the researchers and their assistants used systematic sampling technique, starting from the first dwelling unit or compound in each village and moved along the paths into every fifth compound until the required number of one hundred respondents was obtained through purposive sampling, thereby making it a total of 600 respondents from the six rural villages.. For the In-depth interview (IDI), 3 Village heads/Onyishis, 3 community Town Union chairmen, 3 community women leaders and 3 youth leaders) from the three rural communities were purposively selected, giving a total of twelve

participants. The informants were members or residents of the selected communities who were capable of giving out reliable information concerning the subject matter of the study..

The Health Research Ethics Committee of the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku Ozalla, approved the study with a clearance certificate bearing the registration number: NHREC/05/01/200B-FWA00002458-1RB00002323E and permissions obtained from all the participants in their different communities. Each of them gave verbal consent before the questionnaire was administered.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The researchers examined the relationship between marital status, occupation and religion of the respondents and their participation in rural development projects in the communities. These socio-demographic factors were considered important because of their influence on the rural development projects. Therefore, the researchers cross tabulated the respondents' marital status, occupation and religion and the responses to participation in rural development projects. The information displayed was used to facilitate better understanding of their participation in rural development projects.

Table 1: Selected socio-demographic characteristics and participation in rural development (N=387)

Socio-demographic characteristics	Participation in rural development		Total	χ ²
	Yes	No		
Marital status				
Single	54 (24.9%)	93 (54.7%)	147 (38.0%)	.000; df=1; p<35.986
Married	163 (75.1%)	77(45.3%)	240 (60.2%)	
Total	217 (100.0%)	170 (100.0%)	387(100.0%)	
Occupation				
Private workers	139 (64.1%)	156 (91.8%)	295 (76.2%)	.000; df=1; p<40.389
Civil/Public workers	78 (35.9%)	14 (8.2%)	92 (23.8%)	
Total	217 (100.0%)	170 (100.0%)	387(100.0%)	
Religious affiliation				
Christianity	176 (81.1%)	72(42.4%)	248 (64.1%)	.000; df=1; p<62.916
Other religion	41 (18.9%	98 (57.6%)	139 (35.9)	
Total	217 (100.0%)	170 (100.0%)	387(100%)	

Source: Field work 2019

The study revealed that 217 respondents had participated in rural development projects while 170 respondents had not participated in rural development projects. The results also showed that the married, civil/public worker, Christian respondents had participated more in rural development projects than those who were single, private workers and non-Christian respondents. Also, the chi-square value ($\chi^2 = p < .000$, $p < .000$ and $p < .000$) revealed that significant relationship exist between marital status, occupation, religious affiliation and participation in rural development projects. Thus one's marital status, occupation and religious affiliation can influence participation in rural development projects.

One of the IDI participants in this study has this to say;

“The rural private work remains the basis upon which social development, education and social security systems in rural areas rely. Nonetheless, this sector has often been neglected by policymakers in Nigeria.. The government should partner the rural private sector to improve infrastructure in rural areas, make technologies available and promote agricultural value chains in the rural areas as done by some emerging nations.”

In support of the above assertion, another participant during IDI session cited an example thus:

“To reduce poverty, there has to be a policy designed to address the needs of residents of rural areas as well as maximize the contributions of the rural private sector to deliver pro-poor growth. Such policies should enhance or create an enabling environment for public-private dialogue”

Factors militating against rural development

This section presents data on the drivers of socioeconomic and cultural factors affecting rural development to find out the possible factors militating against the rural development projects. When the respondents who pointed out that the rural development projects carried out by the government were not useful to their communities, they were asked to indicate the major causes of their failures. The results showed that the major causes of such failures include the following: vandalization (2.3%), abandonment, (6.4%), poor execution of projects (8.7%), mismanagement or embezzlement of funds(19.7%) While other major causes to include corruption and government neglects of the rural areas (3.1%) and 59.8 % did not respond to the question.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents on the major causes of the un-usefulness of the rural development projects to their communities

Causes of the un-usefulness of rural development projects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vandalization	11	2.3
Abandonment	31	6.4
Poor execution of projects	42	8.7
Mismanagement/embezzlement of funds	95	19.7
Others	15	3.1
Not applicable	289	59.8
Total	483	100.0

Source: Field work 2019

The finding revealed that mismanagement or embezzlement of funds for rural development was the major cause of non-usefulness of the projects in these communities. In confirmation to the finding, a respondent during IDI session have this to say;

“Indeed, the usefulness or non-usefulness of any rural development projects depends on several factors. Many of the rural development projects by the government are not useful to us. This is caused by the mismanagement or embezzlement of funds and corruption among the people responsible for the projects. If the funds for the projects are not well channelled towards the execution of the project, its purpose will be defeated and makes it not usable by the members of the community.” (Female, 48 years old, Chairlady)

In support of the above assertion, another respondent during IDI session cited an example thus;

“see our public primary schools today, our children cannot make use of them due to the dilapidated state of the buildings as a result of poor or low standard materials used for constructing them.” (Female, 45 years old, Chairlady)

Another participant had this to add,

“We all know that Unrealistic expectations, lack of resources, unrealistic time frames, poor communication, technological incompetence, a weak business case and inadequate risk management all contribute to the failure of a project in our rural communities”

Table 3: Distribution of the respondent on the cultural factor hindering rural development in their communities

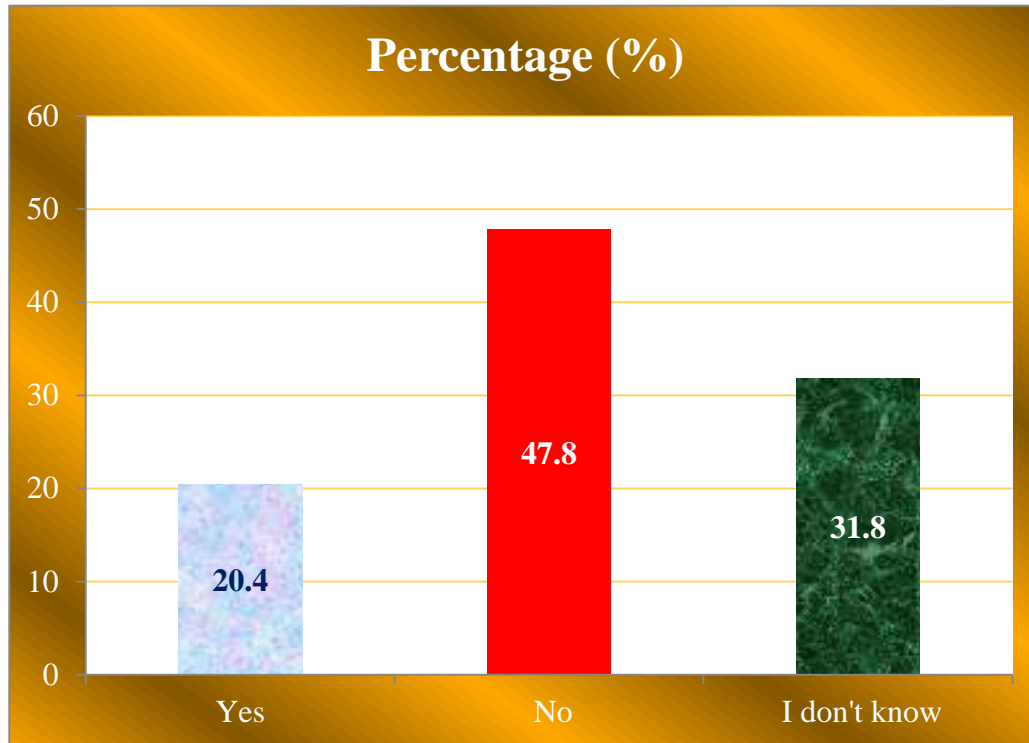
Contributor to rural development projects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Traditional belief system	91	18.8
Gender segregation	87	18.0
Land use system	66	13.7
All of the above	143	29.6
Not applicable	96	19.9
Total	483	100.0

Source: Field work 2019

The information above represents the views of respondents on the cultural factors that hinder rural development in many communities. Among the respondents, about nineteen percent of the them were in agreement that traditional belief system hinder rural development, The result revealed that the majority of the respondents (29.6%) agreed that gender segregation and land

use system are factors that can hinder rural development in their communities. This was in agreement with the views of some participants during IDI sessions conducted in the selected villages. They were of the opinion that cultural practices can hinder rural developments, as what is obtainable in this modern day cannot accommodate aged long practices.

Fig. 1: Percentage distribution of respondents on whether government involves community members in planning and execution of rural development projects



Source: Field work 2019

Fig. 1: Percentage distribution of respondents on government involvement of community members

The Figure 1, showed the responses of the respondents on whether government involves community members in planning and execution of rural development projects. The result in the chart showed that the greater percentage of the rural populace were of the opinion that the government does not involve community members in planning and execution of rural development projects. Community members, community development unions, traditional rulers, age grades and social workers can be involved in planning and execution of rural development projects.

The information from the IDI sessions conducted in the selected communities affirms this finding. One of the participants said

“The problems affecting rural development not taking roots in this our localities are so numerous that only one agency or government cannot handle it successfully. It needs joint efforts by

different people to resolve them as they arise.” (Male, 51 years old, Chairman).

Another participant was of the same view that “rural development projects are not supposed to be handled by only one body or agency, also the same goes with the problems associated with it. Many people must be involved in resolving any issue about rural development. This finding was supported by the information given by an IDI participant who said;

“The planning and execution of rural development mostly within our environment are placed in the hands of top political party leaders who might have assisted them (government authorities) to win their elections. They use such projects to compensate or settle them for their efforts during elections without considering the capacity of such a person to implement such project.” (Male, 25 years old, Youth leader).

Table 4: Educational status and participation in rural development

Educational status of respondents	Participation in rural development		Total
	Yes	No	
Lower level of education	95 (43.8%)	93 (54.7%)	188 (48.6%)
Higher level of education	122 (56.2%)	77(45.3%)	199 (51.4%)
Total	217 (100.0%)	170 (100.0%)	387(100%)

$\chi^2=4.556$; $df=1$, $p<.033$, critical value= 3.841

Source: Field work 2019

The result revealed that out of the respondents who participated in rural development in this study, above fifty percent of them had higher level of education. Chi square test result showed that computed χ^2 is 4.556 while the critical χ^2 value is 3.841 and $df = 1$. The test showed that there was a statistically significant relationship ($P <.033$) between respondents' level of education and participation in rural development. As a result of this, the substantive hypothesis which stated that people with higher level of education are more likely to participate in rural development than those with lower level of education. Hence one's level of education is a factor that can hinder one's participation in rural development.

The comatose state of education in the rural areas compounds the problems of rural development in Nigeria. It was based on this, that one of the participants commented thus;

"The political apathy or un-enlightenment of the rural people is as a result of the political underdevelopment of most rural communities in Nigeria. In a situation where majority of the populace are not educated and where income is low and poverty is high, engaging local political leaders on effective governance is not likely to be the priority of most people once the politician gives them a small amount of money"

A political leader can resort to building a market instead of providing pipe borne water in a community that has no water. In fact, such a community may be drinking water from the

unclean environment or dirty sources, yet the politicians turn their eyes away from the reality of problems on ground. Another example is the vote buying which hinders rural development in Nigeria and it is also a phenomenon subservient. that has plagued elections in this country. This is more prevalent in rural areas where many of them had no education. In this situation, poverty and lack of access to quality education are used as tools by the political elites to keep the people. Education is both the product of society as well as an important tool for bringing about changes in the rural community. In rural communities, quality education combined with effective institutions is the only way to trigger positive change and quality standard of living. (Adeola O, 2019).

Table 5: Regression analysis predicting the influence of some socio-demographic characteristics on people's participation in rural development

Independent variables	B	S.E	Wald	Df	Sig	Exp (B)
Sex	-.305	.197	2.388	1	.122	.737
Age	.052	.125	.176	1	.675	1.054
Marital status	.027	.120	.052	1	.820	1.028
Occupation	-.251	.288	.761	1	.383	.778
Level of education	-.565	.207	7.456	1	.006*	.568
Religion	.233	.213	1.198	1	.274	1.262
Constant	-1.667	.890	3.502	1	.061	.189

Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Note that N=483. Age was re-coded as younger and older respondents, marital status was categorized as single and married, occupation was categorized as private-workers and public-workers, education was categorized as lower level and higher level of education, and religion was categorized as Christianity and other religious practitioners.

The result above showed that logistic regression analysis was conducted using participation in rural development as the dependent variable while sex, age, marital status, occupation, level of education and religion were used as independent variables to determine which of the variables could predict participation in rural development. The result implies that sex, marital status, occupation, and religion were not predictors of participation in rural development. However, level of education was possible predictor of

participation in rural development. This showed that at .006 level of significance there is a statistically significant difference between level of education and respondents' participation in rural development.

The study showed that respondents with higher level of education are 0.568 more likely to participate in rural development as compared with respondents with lower level of education. This implies that a unit change in the level of education of the respondents (from low level of education to high level of education) will result to 0.568 unit change in their participation in rural development. Based on this finding, educational and awareness campaign programmes should be formulated and implemented in Nigeria. This will serve as a measure to increase awareness and encourage people to participate in rural development

Table 6: Distribution of the respondents on the role of professional social workers toward rural development

Professional social workers' roles towards rural development	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Advocacy and mediation	27	5.6
Assessment and counselling services	24	4.9
Facilitating and broker services	22	4.6
Research and educating people	45	9.3
All of the above	101	20.9
Not applicable	264	54.7
Total	483	100.0

Source: Field work 2019

The above table showed the responses of the respondents on what the professional social workers can offer towards rural development. The result indicates that among the respondents who were aware of professional social workers, less than six percent of the respondents believed that social workers can play the role of advocacy and mediator, about five percent of them were of the opinion that social workers can as well assist in assessment and counselling services to bring about growth in rural development, while more than twenty percent were in agreement that social workers can play all the roles. The findings therefore, revealed that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that professional social workers can offer all these services towards rural development.

When some of the participants were asked how relevant is the role of social workers towards the development of rural areas? One of them had this to say;

“In terms of rural development, social workers have enormous roles to play in developing rural communities, for instance, social workers can use the method of social action, where they can mobilize the members of the community to tackle a community problem or to improve their local area. People give their time and other resources for the common good of the people. Social action is about people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities.”

The social workers are involved in the process of making referrals to link a community to needed

resources with the use of advocacy. This requires the knowledge of resources, eligibility requirements and the location of services. In the issues of advocacy, one of the participants described one of the roles of social workers in rural development as follows;

“One of the roles of social workers in rural development includes the advocacy role, where the professional social workers fight for the rights of a giving community by convincing governments or others of the legitimate needs and rights of members of community. Social workers in advocacy role are usually concerned for the members of the community who are vulnerable or unable to speak up for themselves about their community needs. Social workers are the change agents, they are involved in gathering community members together, playing a facilitator’s role in order to bring about rural development”

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to find out the drivers of socioeconomic and cultural factors militating against rural development. The researchers examined the relationship between certain independent variables and the dependent variables. The independent variables include some of the socio-demographic data of respondents which are marital status, occupation, and religion. Chi-square (χ^2) was used to determine whether there is any statistically significant relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The study showed that one’s marital status, occupation and religious affiliation can influence participation in rural development projects. Influence of occupation on rural development can be traced with the adaption of the ancestor’s occupation by present generations and planning to take further with their upcoming generations with the organized environment. Agriculture is chosen as the occupation to understand and analyse the influence of occupation on rural development in selected case areas Occupation always played pivotal role in the existence and evolution of human life, especially in the rural communities (Abhay Malik, et al, 2020)

In this study, the result revealed that the majority of the respondents (29.6%) agreed that traditional belief system, gender segregation and land use system are factors that can hinder rural development in their communities. There are many other drivers of socioeconomic and cultural factors that can hinder rural development. For instance, a study carried out by Ndou, (2012)

revealed that lack of funds, poor project management, poor management of funds, lack of commitment and motivation, low level of education of project members, lack of youth involvement in community-based projects, lack of monitoring and evaluation by government officials and community leaders, lack of training and unavailability of workshops for project members and lack of government involvement in addressing project challenges were identified as the reasons for failure of community-based projects. These challenges or drivers of socioeconomic and cultural factors affecting rural development in Nigeria must be attended to whenever we deem it necessary to establish community-based projects to avoid failure of community projects in future

The result in the chart showed that the greater percentage of the rural populace were of the opinion that the government does not involve community members in planning and execution of rural development projects. This finding corroborates with the study carried out by Ngondo (2014) which states that 50 of the respondents(66.7%) said they were not involved in developing resources list for any Constituency Development Fund (CDF) project around the area whereas 25 of the respondents (33.3%) said they were involved. Project stakeholders can either be internal or external and each type has its own communication requirement. It’s the responsibility of the project manager to ensure the means and frequency of communication in project management with project stakeholders according to their influence and interest in the project. A common practice is to maintain a stakeholder register or a stakeholder map to decide the frequency and means of communication for each stakeholder according to their influence and interest in the project.

Governments in developing countries have now come to the realization that no development will be meaningful except when the rural communities are also carried along. This realization is borne out of the reality that rural dwellers constitute a significant component of their population (Nwankwo and Okeke, 2017).

The study also showed that one’s level of education is a factor that can hinder one’s participation in rural development. The test showed that there was a statistically significant relationship ($P < .033$) between respondents’ level of education and participation in rural development. Education is important for everybody, whether they are learning new facts, skills, or trades (Farheen Sajjad, 2019).

Education has a desirable control over rural individual, family, community, and society development, leading to poverty reduction, income equity, and controlled unemployment. According to Life Learners Academy, (2019), education helps to bring about social change, improves individual social status and living standards, activates participation in rural and cultural development.

In this study, it was revealed that majority of the respondents (20.9%) were of the opinion that professional social workers can play many roles such as advocacy and mediating role, assessment and counselling services, facilitating and broker services, and educating people towards rural development. The experience of practicing social work in rural areas is different from that in urban areas. This has led to the development of a rural specialization in the social work profession (Anjali, 2008). Social work has a distinctive approach of assisting clients to function optimally within their environments (Lawal and Akor, 2020). Social workers in rural areas make use of the generalist approach in professional training rather than specialised approaches. The existence of social work practice and its adaptation to address the plight of those in rural areas has assisted some communities tremendously (Bamford, 2015). In line with this, the end- result of the involvement of social workers in developmental process will adequately be of huge value to individuals, groups, or communities (Lawal and Akor, 2020). From the foregoing, it is apparent that the adoption of social work practice for rural development will make positive impact especially in view of its significance in mitigating social problems.

CONCLUSION

Generally the drivers of socio economic and cultural factors militating against rural development have been attributed to the following reasons; lack of effective participation of the rural dwellers in the planning and execution processes of the rural development; one's marital status, level of education, occupation and religious affiliation can influence participation in rural development projects. The finding revealed that mismanagement or embezzlement of funds for rural development was the major cause of non-usefulness of the projects in these communities. The study also investigated that traditional belief system; gender segregation and land use system were the factors that hinder rural development in many communities. Social

workers as the change agents are involved in gathering community members together, and playing a facilitator's role in order to bring about effective rural development. From the foregoing, it is apparent that the adoption of social work practice for rural development will make positive impact especially in view of its significance in mitigating social problems.

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