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SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The role of research in the development of any nation cannot be over-emphasised. In addition to providing data for measuring specific indices of development, a body of research is expected to end up with some far-reaching recommendations that can trigger policy formulation towards making life comfortable for the citizens. Research in the sociological parlance unveils through detailed methodology discover salient social facts, sui-generis to provide baseline data in the social, economic and political spheres. This study examined the nexus between sociological research and national development with reference to Nigeria. It relied majorly on available secondary data from literatures on the subject matter. Findings show that in every human society, like Nigeria, sociological research provide baseline data on the social indicators that are germane in measuring development in addition to making far-reaching recommendations that can stimulate nation's goal and development. It is recommended that Nigeria government should pay special attention and interest in not only funding sociological research but in implementing recommendations of same.

Keywords: Sociology, Data, Development, Indicators, Research

INTRODUCTION

evelopment in human society, at the micro and macro level, is traceable to the advancement in the socio-scientific understandings of the variables enabling production and reproduction of the social and/or material realities. One area that has been implicated in the course of the advancement of society is research. Broadly speaking, Odia & Omofonmwan, (2013); Oyesola (2010) and OEDC (2002), argued that it helps for a more advanced environment. This is achievable through innovative findings and the utilization of scientific knowledge in addressing social problems to improve various social outcomes and human productivity. The above justifies the nexus between socio-scientific findings and various levels of development in the society. Consequently, the place of research in rolling the balls of national development at the public and private levels justifies in the reason why it has a place in the organization of human society. Thus, Odia & Omofonmwan, (2013) noted that:

Advancement in research gave rise to the growth in science and technology which in

turn lead to industrialization, – creation of job opportunities, increase income, increased production of goods and services, creation of wealth, improved quality of life, improved transportation/communication system, networking regions of the world, clustering of people and integrating nations socially, economically and politically.

The utilization of research output as data for development varies between the developed and developing countries. In Nigeria, there exist a wide lacuna in the quantum and advancement of research output and its effects on the transformation of the socio-political and economic realities in the country. This may be one of the reasons why the gap between the developed and the developing countries continue to widen uncontrollably. However, prevailing social problems in Nigeria offers a wide opportunity for research. The outcomes of which are presumed towards addressing the developmental issues that have limited the evolvement of the nation. Accounting for the economic woes is partly the inability of the Nigerian state to invest hugely in research. The lack of interest or focus in research in addressing and tackling the myriads of problems faced by the country. This

has not only added to the crisis of development, it has made it look insurmountable for successive governments. The progress made in most of the industrialised societies. This can be attributed to the investment and priority that they place on advancing research and the utilisation of its outcome.

The hope of accelerated development may be difficult to realize outside of the purview of a very thorough implementation of social research. Understanding the nature of this gloomy situation through sociological research will offer the country the first step towards resolving and managing any ugly situation. Therefore, for a country to engender meaningful development with her huge resources' endowment, a focus needs to be placed on proper research to identify areas of national and collective strength.

Several debates and studies on the connection between research and development to the advancement of plethora of societal issues have affirmed the roles and contributions of research to development. In the 21st century, the focus on national development has come to take over the conversations that individuals, policy makers and government engage in. Nigeria as a nation has given the issue a place in the national discourse. The conviction on how outcomes are utilized remains a major challenge for the nation in her bid towards development, leaving the subject a re-occurring topic of discussion in several public fora.

Several factors have been found as the roots of underdevelopment in the country. These include such as bad governance, poor economic policy of government, religious intolerance, declining quality of education, political instability and insecurity among others. Some salient issues seeking for attention are the solidness of the relationship between sociological research and the utilization of its outcomes in national development in Nigeria. Equally forming part of the focus are the factors constituting impediments to the advancements of sociological research for national development. This paper while attempting to address the above concerns, is also discussing possible ways towards achieving an improvement in use of sociological research outcomes in national development. For better reading, this paper discusses the subject under the following sub-headings: (a) Sociological Research, (b) National Development, (c) The nexus of Sociological Research and National Development, (d) The relevance of Sociological Research to National Development, (e) Conclusion.

Sociological Research

The concept of research has been viewed differently by several scholars using various professional binoculars to present various view of the concept, but pointing to same direction. According to Oyesola (2010), research involves the process of searching, discovering, inventing and application of new knowledge, theories and principles targeted at solving problems in human society. Specifically, he is of the opinion that research entails:

the application of the scientific method to attain or prove new and exciting theories. It is search, invention, discovery and establishment of new knowledge, facts, principles, theories and methods. It is also acknowledged as a systematic and objective search for knowledge, to establish theories and prove the truth of ideas, hypotheses and assumptions. It is a search which requires care and diligence for new facts. It is experimentation to find knowledge, to take existing knowledge and explore ways of applying it to the many problems of life (Oyesola, 2010).

Corroborating the above, Aborisade (1997) described "research as a systematic thinking strategy which involves a planned and formalised collection, analysis and interpretation of data for problem solving". Research is, thus, an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge making for its advancement. It is the pursuit of truth with the help of study, observation, comparison and experiment. In short, the search for knowledge through objective and systematic method of finding solution to a problem is research. The systematic approach concerning generalization and the formulation of a theory is also research. As such the term 'research' refers to the systematic method consisting of enunciating the problem, formulating a hypothesis, collecting the facts or data, analyzing the facts and reaching certain conclusions either in the form of solutions(s) towards the concerned problem.

Deducting from the views of the scholars above, research is a deliberate and systematic activity targeted at providing practicable solutions to some identifiable problems in the society. In social sciences, research encompasses all scientific investigation into the social, political, cultural and economic institutions towards enhancing the continuing existence of the society.

Sociological research focuses majorly on human nature and social environment which are so complex and more difficult to comprehend for predicting human behavior than object of study in the physical sciences. Sociological research is a systematic method of exploring, analyzing and conceptualizing human life in order to extend, correct or verify knowledge of human behavior and social life. It seeks to find explanations to a phenomenon, to clarify relative skepticism and correct the misconceived facts of social life.

It involves the application of scientific method for understanding and analyzing social life in order to correct and verify the existing knowledge as a system. The main idea behind sociological research is to discover new inter relations, new knowledge, new facts and also to verify and further validate old ones. Sociological research thus has as its main focus, the discovery of those laws which can serve as guidelines for studying human contact and behavior. Sternheimer (2019) perceived sociological research as the systematic study of people, institutions, or social phenomena. According to him measurement techniques such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, ethnography, or comprehensive analysis of texts are usually employed in the process. Sociological research may also include the analysis of data collected by government agencies or other sources

Sociological researchers engage in a systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may result into the development of series of

generalizations. Principles or theories resulting in prediction and possibly ultimate control of events in society are other derivable outcomes in the process. Sociological research is geared towards analyzing and addressing social problems through far-reaching recommendations in the formulation of relevant policies.

Adducing from the foregoing, sociological research is a process of enquiry into social issues and social problems in the society. Through sociological research, new knowledge is being derived and new information is obtained through a systematic and scientific procedure. Sociological research gives insight into social occurrence(s) that make researchers understand why, when, where, what and how social life is being constructed and reconstructed daily. Through sociological research, the complex nature of society is being understood because sociological research provides insight for the sustenance or displacement of preconceived realities. It is a strategic process employed to challenge existing knowledge, based on new findings that supersede prior knowledge on social reality. It uncovers both the latent and manifest aspects of social reality through a systematic process of social enquiry.

Sociological research centers around groups. Some other aspects of sociological research might detail the experiences of specific families or those of individuals. Sociologists question and analyze why things happen, always considering larger social, political, and economic forces.

In Nigeria, sociological research outcomes are expected to have tremendous impact on social life and public policy in order to provide answers to social situations and occurrences within the country.

National Development

National Development, which can be seen to include every aspect of life of all individuals. This includes full-growth and expansion of industries, agriculture, social, religious and cultural institutions in a nation. The United Nations defined national development as growth plus changes in social, cultural, economic and political life of a nation.

Development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. It is expected to enhance fair distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy and socio-economic progress which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society (Mundi, 2008). However, certain distinctions exist between development and other related concepts such as change and growth.

Several indices exist for measuring development; this depends on the lense with which the concept is being viewed. In spite of the magnitude of this concept, Umuru (2002) indicated that development is associated with modernization, material advancement, industrialization scientific and technological progress, and new knowledge about man and the universe. It can be interpreted to mean urbanization, socio-cultural transformation, mass literacy, employment opportunities and the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles.

According to Ohagwu (2010), development is not the same thing as change, growth or modernization. It has to do with the nature, content and course of a society and the choice about goals for achieving the realization of human potential. Similarly, Gboyega (2003) described development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. Developmental goals are tantamount to improvement in material well-being of the citizenry, in a sustainable way such that the present consumption does not endanger the future. It demands through a sustainable approach, that poverty and inequality of access to the basic necessities of life are drastically reduced. This is in addition to improving personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Furthermore, development involves not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life.

National development brings about sustained improvement in the wellbeing of the individuals and bestows benefits to all for self-reliance and mobilization of domestic resources. This equally involves the transformation of the structure of rural production, the development of small-scale industries and the acquisition of technological and scientific skills. A well-conceived planning, policies and programmes are required for the realization of development (Umaru, 1988). This means that development is about self-reliance in every aspect of national life.

As soon as the individuals are made to acquire specialized skills that will enable them to contribute to the development of the society, the society improves when such skills are utilized. The differences in the nature of skills acquired and its application account for the variation in development indicators in both developed underdeveloped nations. According to Alabi (1988) the major factor responsible for the wide gap in the level of development in developed and developing nations is the level of acquisition of pure and applied science.

By inference, national development therefore can be described as the overall development or a collective social, economic, political, technological as well as scientific advancement of a country. This is best achieved through development planning vis-à-vis the application of results from sociological research that captures burning issues in human society. This process can equally be used as the country's collection of strategies by the government.

The national pathways of a nation's human resources acting on its natural resources to produce goods (tangible and intangible) in order to improve the welfare and social well-being of citizens of the entire nation is an important issue in national development, (Chumbow 1990). In terms of indicators of development predicated on minimum standards of living which include (among others) a reasonable standard of good health and housing facilities, food security, life expectancy (reduction of infant mortality and improvement of maternal and reproductive health), education and literacy, and employment, (Chumbow, 1990).

Chukumerije (2008) submitted that national development is a composite term that encompasses many variables. The variables include advancement in educational level, socioeconomic status, media exposure, agricultural innovations, and acquisition of technical knowledge, mass production and culture awareness. It also encompasses the building of reputable national image and the presentation of such image to the world. To the Sociologists and Social Anthropologists, national development can be seen primarily in terms of the process of differentiation that characterizes modern societies. The Political scientist focuses attention on the problem of nation development as modernization occurs (Adams, 2000).

The Nexus of Sociological Research and National Development

The core thrust of any sociological research is its focus on identifying and proffering solutions to social problems. Ideally, the first step to national development in Nigeria is in identifying issues that impedes the development of the country. Sociological research has always been a key part in highlighting challenges faced by developing and developed countries of the world. Hence, the core impediments to national development in any nation begin with the inadequacy, non-recognition of available research outcomes and the non-use of research data for national development. This thus underscores the relevance of research in national development. Sociological research facilitates the exploration of new knowledge frontiers and how these knowledge aids the advancement of the infrastructural and material realities of the society. Technological, medical, educational and political progressions of society are dependent on the dynamic role and outcomes of research in promoting socio-economic and political life.

In relations to national development, sociological research highlights issues such as education, economic development, agriculture, production among other areas. Sociological research exposes such important areas as it aids the building of society. Consequently, it can be argued that research whether basic, applied and sociological is relevant in advancing the development trajectory of the Nigerian nation. The issue of national development in Nigeria has evidently generated high volume of literature. Mabogunje (1968) and Idowu (2013) are notable scholars who have contributed in these regards. A synthesis of their studies provides evidence of negative linkages between uncontrolled urbanization and national development. Besides the issue of urbanization and national development disarticulations, there is also the question of national security and national development. Scholars (Adebakin & Raimi, 2012, Otto & Ukpere, 2012, Ewetan & Urhie, 2014, Adamu & Rasheed, 2016, Nkwatoh & Nathaniel, 2018, Nwapi, 2018) have continue to link the recurring spate of insecurity in Nigeria to this.. They s are all in agreement that insecurity is impacting national development in the Nigerian nation negatively.

Scholars also have researched the linkages (or lack of linkages) between education, one of the primary focus of sociological research and national development in Nigeria. Specifically, on the ethnicization of university education and national development in the country, Duruji, et al (2014) would argue that at the base of national development is an

advancement in education; specifically, university education but the Nigerian case reveals that the system of education is at the mercy of the state's internal intricacies.

The destructive effects of ethnicity in the country have trickled down to education while national development remains at the receiving end. Duruji et al, (2014) argued that this reflects in the county's public university admission processes, appointment of university dons, and even in the location of university facilities. It furthermore, culminates in the denial of university education to qualified applicants, breeding of frustrated students and migration of brilliant academics abroad, and the eventual loss of those educators that could assist in national development to more inclusive societies of the world. Other studies that have critiqued tertiary education in Nigeria and its incapacities to boost national development include Omopupa & Abdulraheem (2016), Ogungbenle & Edogiawerie (2016), Igbineweka & Enowoghomwenma (2017), and Uche & Owotutu (2020). Findings of these studies all indicate immense disarticulations between tertiary education in Nigeria and desired national development.

Sociological research impacts on gender mainstreaming in national development in Nigeria. From the perspectives of gender and agriculture in national development in the country, Ogunlela & Mukhtar (2009) highlight that most farmers in Nigeria operate at the subsistence, smallholder level in an extensive agricultural system; hence in their hands lay the country's food security and agricultural development. These authors then continued:

Particularly striking, however, is the fact that rural women, more than their male counterparts, take the lead in agricultural activities, making up to 60-80 percent of labour force. It is ironical that their contributions to agriculture and rural development are seldom noticed. Furthermore, they have either no or minimal part in the decision-making process regarding agricultural development. Gender inequality is therefore dominant in the sector and this constitutes a bottleneck to development, calling for a review of government policies on agriculture to all the elements that place rural women farmers at a disadvantage (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009).

It does not appear as if such lopsided gender issues in development as it pertains to the agricultural sector are being adequately addressed in the country. Asaju and Adagba (2013) have thus suggested that education is imperative in ensuring that women participation is adequately factored into all the national developmental templates in the country. Boyi (2014) and Akinbi and Akinbi (2015) have also made contributions to the discourses on gender, education and national development in Nigeria. According to Boyi (2014, p. 68) gender disparity is a well-known feature of Nigerian educational landscape, as the educational policies and practices in Nigeria are to say the least gender insensitive and not fashioned to achieve gender balance in schools. Such gender insensitivities as demonstrated by Boyi cannot of course be recommended for national developmental strides. Akinbi and Akinbi (2015) underline that research have pointed to inequality in access to formal education in Nigeria in favour of the male. This is in spite of the nation's commitment to equality of all, irrespective of race, sex or

gender as buttressed by section 18, of the 1999 Nigerian constitution. This situation according to Akinbi and Akinbi (2015) has grave implications for national development in Nigeria.

In the words of Mimiko (1998), the impediments to national development manifest in the failure of government to rely on social data in formulation and designing development plans, strategies and planning process. He noted that in spite of series of development strategies, put in place by successive governments, and sometimes with good intentions, all attempts to generate meaningful development proved futile. Political Sociologists have researched in political governance and leadership as the necessary ingredients to national development. Societies lacking basic elements of good governance may be devoid of basic indices of development and socio-economic transformation leading to development becomes a mirage. In bad leadership, it was noted that leaders lack sense of commitment to development. Sociological research outcomes on corruption, economic discipline, prudency in managing the available national resource provide the basic variable in measuring national development. Nations managed by corrupt leaders, who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation, rather than using it to project the interest of the citizenry may not meet the aspirations and yearnings of the citizenry. As good as any national development plan may be, as long as it superintendent on by leaders who are corrupt, may not meet its goals (Mimiko, 1998). Sociologists of economic life often assert that corruption and development are antithetical to each other, cannot cohabit, and so one suffers at the expense of the other.

Another important factor is the mono-economic base of the country. The country largely depends on crude oil for her survival to the detriment of other resources. All other sectors of the economy are neglected. For instance, agriculture, which constitutes the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in the 1950s and 1960s, has been thrown into limbo over the years. How would government encourage export promotion when there is virtually nothing to export? The economy is not diversified and this is not suitable for a sustainable development (Mimiko, 1998).

Research in the national planning process is a necessity as variously noted by scholars. However, government in most of the developing countries view research as mere academic exercise that has no place in the policy making process. This constitutes a great impediment to the achievement of national development in countries like Nigeria and has resulted in the quagmire of poor development trajectory.

Relevance of Sociological Research to National Development

Data from sociological research, without any gainsaying, are instrumental in addressing a lot of development deficits in the country. Research as a systematic search for knowledge is an important machinery when applied, for the development of new and improved product and services, technological advancement and industrial growth of any nation. Research has become one of the most enduring and effective means of boosting sustainable economic development and reinforcing competitiveness in the face of rapid growth and development

taking place between industries, countries and people of the world

Since sociological research revolves around issues relating to man and his environment. It is an important tool for uncovering the various socio-cultural issues that in recent years have become an instrument for disrupting the socioeconomic wellbeing and the economy of the country. For example, conflicts, one of the subjects of sociological research, viewed by Ayoob (1991), as such vulnerabilities that threaten, or have the potential, to bring down significantly weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, as well as the regimes that preside over these structures and profess to represent them internationally. Conflict and its outcomes tend to affect the entire structure of a nation which in turn impedes National development, especially in Nigeria. Findings on conflict resolution strategies by sociological researchers (Osabiya, 2015; Adedeji Ademola, 2021 among others)may offer some farreaching solutions to some of problems of herdsmen/conflicts, armed banditry, insurgency and other criminalities in Nigeria. For instance, the Niger Delta region has witnessed violence and conflicts between host communities and foreign oil companies arising from environmental pollution and degradation. Not limited to this, the conflicts involved the indigenes of host communities and federal government due to resource control. Sociological research reveals the reasons for the manifestation of this conflict and how they can be abated and managed in order to facilitate the development of the region.

Moving further, sociological research can be seen as an indispensable tool for national development because it exposes both national and international values that broaden knowledge, experience, social interaction, skills and output. Such values range from social integration, national unity, religious tolerance to the ideas of nationalism, unity and interdependence among the citizenry. Sociological research helps to expand knowledge on these values as well as suggesting means through which these ideas can be inculcated in the society to bring about qualitative positive contribution to national development. These values are what will allow leaders and prospective leaders to possess the spirit of patriotism and make policies that will project national development instead of the current trend of corruption, sectional development, nepotism, intimidation and marginalization, mismanagement of public finance among others.

Additionally, the expediency of social research to National Development can also manifested in its relevance in exposing the various socio-cultural factors influencing social relationship between oil companies and host communities natural and mineral resources in various parts of the country. This is best appreciated in the findings of Ogbemi, Ogbiten Brickins (2020) on 'attitude of host communities towards deploying corporate social responsibility to manage conflicts in the Niger Delta Nigeria. The scholars among others recommended some important strategies for ensuring enduring peaceful relationships between oil companies and the host communities in Niger Delta. Sociologists of environment's research focuses on man and his environmental components as means to uncover relevant aspects of the sociology of natural and mineral resources that

are deposited in different sections of the country for allencompassing development.

Also, in the recent time, the issue of good governance and leadership has become very critical in view of the fact that these are part of the factors affecting organisational performance and productivity. A Study on leadership, politics and good governance for national development by Sandra (2017) concluded that the power of incumbency and immunity enjoyed by leaders encourage the perpetration of misnomer situations.

More often than not, embezzlement, fraud and other forms of corrupt practices in both private sector organizations, ineptitude and gross leadership incompetence in the public sector organizations often results in the failure of institutions and organizations. According to Akande, (2013), good governance and transformational leadership have eluded most work organisations in Nigeria thus leading to poor performance of institutions or organisations.

Good governance and leadership fall within the purview of sociological research. Hence the knowledge derived through sociological research assist managers of corporate organisations in the private sector and the bureaucrats in the public sector to enrich their understanding of the need to adopt international best practices in managing the affairs of institutions and organisations and make them more efficient and effective in service delivery. It is therefore obvious that various sectors of Nigerian economy need transformational leaders who understand the dynamics of organisations and workplace. Not only this, such leaders should be able to apply these in the management of men and materials in order to produce visible results that will propel national development. Pertinent in this situation are the Nigerian public workers who have been negatively described by various scholars. In the words of Okoh (1998), Nigerian public workers are lazy, unproductive, inefficient, ineffectiveness and manifesting various forms of deviant work behaviour in the workplace such as truancy, absenteeism, low performance and so on. The knowledge of transformational leadership provided through sociological research can be used to reposition various organisations in the public and private sector for national development.

Furthermore, sociological research enables the researcher to provide answers which can lead to the development of social programmes and public policies for improved welfare, political participation, uphold human rights, reduce inequality, and ensure social justice. Sociological research outcomes in society thus contribute to the sustainability of society, hence its centrality in improvement required by man in his social environment. Sociological research has many uses across the wide array of sub-disciplines in Sociology, the wider social sciences and beyond because it offers different types of knowledge to people. This therefore highlights a need for continue development, practice and promotion of sociological research in Nigeria. More so, gaining access to the body of knowledge on sociological research methods will allow researchers to acquire significant skills to facilitate national development.

Conclusion

From all indications, most Nigeria and its' government are yet to appreciate the role of sociological research as a viable aspect of sociology for national development. This is because sociological research plays a vital role in national development in Nigeria (Okafor, 2014). Therefore, it is important for the various institutions in Nigeria offering sociology as discipline to ensure that their students are well equipped and well-grounded intellectually in various components of sociological research. Ensuring this will positively contribute to national development. Sociologists also need to continue to create public awareness on the relevance of this aspect of the discipline to national development.

The Nigerian social scientists should be in the fore front of producing scholarly works that will re-define national discourse and shape the way things are viewed and perceived in socio-cultural and economic spheres as well as to challenge the politicians to be transparent in their action and dealings and be accountable to the people who elected them. Generally, the knowledge derived from sociological research will enable the policy makers to be in advantageous position of formulating policies and programmes. The knowledge will as well put in place adequate regulatory framework that will diversify the Nigerian economy and building strong human capital for overall national development. It is recommended that Nigeria government should pay special attention and interest in not only funding sociological research but in implementing recommendations of same.

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