Original Research Article

Assessment of Stakeholders' Perception of Government Approach towards Civic Engagement and Community Integration in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined stakeholders' perception of government roles in civic engagement and community integration. It also examined stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration and determined the influence of variables such as gender and level of education on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised stakeholders such as Academics, Community Leaders and Local Government Officials in Osun State. A sample size of 260 personnel comprising of 100 academics, 100 community leaders and 60 local government officials were purposively selected based on nearness using convenience sampling technique. An instrument was developed and validated before use. Two research questions were raised and answered, also two hypotheses were tested and verified. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentages, mean, Independent t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The results among others showed that there was a significant influence of level of education on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration (F= 1.690, p<0.05). The study concluded that level of education had significant impact on stakeholder perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Perception, Government Approach, Civic Engagement, Community Integration.

INTRODUCTION

The role government of various nations of the world plays in ensuring civic engagement and community integration is considered germane. This is because government stands at the central point to ensure that stakeholders have enabling environment for community development. For instance, South African local government provides a mechanism that promotes three fundamental values namely; liberty, participation and efficiency [1]. The liberty that stakeholders will have could stir up participation in efficient community development. According to Omumbo [2], the role of local government is to solidify a collective vision and to assemble and enable a network of public sector and civil society stakeholders to lead culturally appropriate intervention services. In Nigeria, local authorities are expected to provide the opportunity for locals to participate in local decisions and local schemes within the general national policies and to act above all, as local centers of initiatives and activity conducive to development communities [22]. This role is somewhat related to that which the Federal government of Nigeria is to play [3] in ensuring civic engagement and community integration.

The concept of civic engagement has been defined differently by various authors based on their views. For examples, Adler and Goggin [4] defined civic engagement as "the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (p. 236). Likewise, in a study by Cho [5], civic engagement is defined by UNICEF as "individual or collective actions in which people participate to improve the well-being of communities or society in general". Saputra, Muchtarom, and Triyanto [6] refer to civic engagement as "the active participation of citizens individually or collectively in community life based on skills,

expertise, knowledge, which combines with values, motivation and commitment to make changes in order to improve the quality of people's lives for the better" (p. 820).

Critical civic engagement involves acknowledging multiple, potentially contradictory, beliefs. For example, the knowledge that systemic social inequalities are maintained through focused effort of certain parties can coexist with a young person's unwavering belief that they can be an effective change agent [7]. In view of the aforementioned definitions, it is therefore apparent that there is no universal definition of civic engagement [4]. However, this paper refers the subject to mean the voluntary involvements of individual(s) in activities (like: voting, association) that lead to improvement of community wellbeing.

Community integration on the other hand is perceived as the involvement of individuals in family and community life, fulfilling given roles and responsibilities [8], as well as participation in social groups and communities [9]. Similarly, Raitakari, Haahtela, and Juhila [10] defined community integration as a certain way of behaving with neighbours and as a suitable way of being in contact with them (p. 13). In a study by Blanchard [11] community integration is defined as "members' feelings of membership, identity, belongingness, and attachment to a group that interacts primarily through electronic communication". These definitions have emphasized stakeholder views as a common denominator.

Thus, community excellence is dependent upon academic excellence. Civic engagement is a powerful fulcrum for leveraging multiple degrees of achievement across spectra of people and places [12]. Students who participate in civic engagement learn more academic content [13]. Through academic praxis (application of theoretical concepts to action), students shift from being knowledge receivers to idea creators. Abstract concepts come into relief against the background of situation and context as students consider, apply, test, assess, and reevaluate multiple disciplinary approaches to solving an array of human, mechanical, and environmental challenges.

To this end, civically engaged individuals learn higher-order skills including critical thinking, writing, communication, mathematics, and technology at more advanced levels of aptitude [14]. In their efforts to create socially equitable communities, they encounter opportunities to hone innovative approaches that such engagement work requires. By conjoining the academic knowledge and skills necessary to address community needs, students deepen and extend their learning. Through civic engagement, knowledge and insight no longer exist in the life of the mind; they become coalesced in mindful and caring community involvement.

In literature, stakeholder perception is defined as opinions or views of people towards something [15]. Similarly, Lindell and Perry [16] define stakeholder perception as an individual's evaluation of the professionalism, trust, and responsibility to protect the source of the risk information. In this paper, view of stakeholders like academics, community leaders and local government officials in Osun State regarding government approach toward civic engagement and community integration is considered.

The study therefore investigated the extent to which government approach towards civic engagement and community integration were perceived in Osun State, Nigeria with the aim of assessing stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study set out to:
1. Examine stakeholders' perception of government roles in civic engagement and community integration
2. Examine stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration, and
3. Determine the influence of gender on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration
4. Determine the influence of level of education on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
From the objectives of the study, the following research questions were raised.
1. What are the stakeholders' perception of government roles in civic engagement and community integration?
2. What is the stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration?

HYPOTHESES
From the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were tested.
1. There is no significant influence of gender on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration

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2.   There is no significant influence of level of education on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design was appropriate for this study since it was a fact finding study investigating the extent of stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration in Osun State, Nigeria. The population for the study comprised stakeholders such as Academics, community leaders and Local government officials in Osun State. A sample size of 260 personnel comprising of 100 academics, 100 community leaders and 60 local government officials were purposively selected from Osun East senatorial district in Osun State, Nigeria. One hundred lecturers were selected from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Osun State College of Education, Ilesha using convenience sampling technique. From the 10 local governments that constituted the senatorial zone, 10 community leaders and six local government officials were selected from each of the local governments using convenience sampling technique.

An instrument titled: Stakeholders Perception of Government Roles and Approach Questionnaire (SPGRAQ) was developed and validated before use. It has three sections, Section A was on demographic variables of respondents which include sex, occupation, local government, and so on of the respondents. Section B had 12 items on government roles while Section C had 9 items on government approaches. For both section B and section C, the respondents are expected to express their opinions based on four options from Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). For section B, the highest point is 48 while the lowest point is 12. For section C, the highest point is 36 while the lowest is 9. Validity of the instrument was established through face, content and constructs validity procedures. The face validity was ascertained by specialist in Tests and Measurements and Social Studies. Test-re-test method of testing reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Two research questions were raised and answered; also two hypotheses were tested and verified. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentages, mean, Independent t-test, and one-way ANOVA.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the stakeholders' perception of government roles in civic engagement and community integration?

Table-1: Descriptive Statistics of stakeholders' perspective of government roles in civic engagement and community integration

S/N	Roles	SD		D		A		SA		Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Creating an umbrella for participatory democracy	40	15.4	75	28.8	100	38.5	45	17.3	2.58
2	Providing an avenue for altering public policy	14	5.4	79	30.4	109	41.9	58	22.3	2.81
3	Recognizing the value and human dignity of each person in the society	17	6.5	58	22.3	98	37.7	87	33.5	2.98
4	Creating varying degrees for political awareness and advocacy	31	11.9	56	21.5	130	50.0	43	16.5	2.71
5	Showing respect and dissent for laws	26	10.0	54	20.8	89	34.2	91	35.0	2.94
6	Ensuring a balance between rights and responsibilities	29	11.2	46	17.7	111	42.7	74	28.5	2.88
7	Solving society's problems in an informed manner	12	4.6	66	25.4	81	31.2	101	38.1	3.04
8	Engaging in an active process that goes beyond passive citizenship	7	2.7	87	33.5	103	39.6	63	24.2	2.85
9	Involving the community in decision making processes	12	4.6	9	3.5	104	40.0	135	51.9	3.39
10	Providing opportunities for altering government policies and practices	13	5.0	75	28.8	107	41.2	65	25.0	2.86
11	Providing avenues to negotiate differences	11	4.2	60	23.1	88	33.8	101	38.8	3.07
12	Providing a balance between legally defined and culturally defined citizenship	14	5.4	69	26.5	92	35.4	85	32.7	2.95

Source: Field Work, 2020
Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows the stakeholders' perspective of government roles in civic engagement and community integration. From the above table, we can deduce that the top five stakeholders' perspective of government roles in civic engagement and community integration includes: involving the community in decision making processes (M = 3.39), providing avenues to negotiate differences (M = 3.07), solving society's problems in an informed manner (M=3.04), providing a balance between legally defined and culturally defined citizenship (M=2.95) and showing respect and dissent for laws (M= 2.94).

Research Question 2: What is the stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration?

To answer this question, stakeholders' responses were scored based on the items in the questionnaire as rated by the investigators. The individual respective scores were summed up to build their level of perception. The mean and standard score of the group score were 22.95 and 8.44 respectively. Scores below the group mean score were considered as having negative perception while those with scores above the group mean score were considered as having positive perception. The result is presented in table 2 below.

Table-2: Descriptive Statistics of stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration

Perception	Frequency	Percent
Negative	92	35.4
Positive	168	64.6
Total	260	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2020

Table 2 shows that 35.4% of the stakeholders had negative perception and 64.6% of the stakeholders were found to have positive perception. There is an indication from this result that more than 50% of the stakeholders that participated in the study demonstrated positive perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of gender on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration.

Table-3: T-test analysis comparing male and female stakeholder's perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t	P
Male	158	23.71	8.296	.630	258	-1.81	.071
Female	102	21.77	8.578	.755			

Source: Field Work, 2020

Table 3 shows the significant influence of gender on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration. It can be observed from the table that there was no significant influence on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration for male (M= 23.71, SD= 8.296) and female (M= 21.77, SD=8.578); t (258) = -1.811, p>.05 stakeholders.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of level of education on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration.

Table-4: ANOVA on level of education on stakeholder's perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	58.489	25	2.340	1.690	.025
Within Groups	323.896	234	1.384		
Total	382.385	259			

Source: Field Work, 2020

Results in Table 4 reveal that the df (25, 259) and F-value yielded 1.690 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected since the P value 0.025 is less than 0.05. This means that there is a significant influence of level of education on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration.

DISCUSSION

Searching through existing literature, this paper revealed that the perspective of stakeholders on government roles in civic engagement and community integration are relatively new. As such, the findings of this study revealed five top stakeholders' perspective of government roles in civic engagement and community integration. These include: (1) involving the community in decision making processes (M = 3.39); (2) providing avenues to negotiate differences (M = 3.07); (3) solving society's problems in an informed manner (M=3.04); (4) providing a balance between legally defined and culturally defined citizenship (M=2.95) and (5) showing respect and dissent for laws (M= 2.94). The results differed from previous study by Salem [17] who found the perceived roles of Dubai government in supporting private sectors for sustainability as the following indices were observed: awareness role, regulatory role, legislative role, and endorsing role. A number of other scholars have discussed perceived roles of government in terms of mitigating and responding to impact of climate change [18], as well as control of pest [19].

This study further showed that few stakeholders (35.4%) had negative perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration. While majority (64.6%) of the stakeholders demonstrated positive perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration, the result is in line with findings in Ibrahim, Mustapha, Nie, Mokhtar Froz & Shah [20] who found that stakeholders had positive perception toward Malesia government and also accepted the efforts being made by the government in enhancing the wellbeing of the community. Similar study by Mustapha and Ibrahim [21] revealed that stakeholders had positive perception toward government programmes.

The findings of this study revealed that there was no significant influence on stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration for male (M= 23.71, SD= 8.296) and female (M= 21.77, SD=8.578); t (258) = -1.811, p>.05 stakeholders. The findings also showed that the level of education significantly influence stakeholders' perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration. This is in line with the submission that critical civic engagement involves acknowledging multiple, potentially contradictory beliefs. For example, the knowledge that systemic social inequalities are maintained through focused effort of certain parties can coexist with a young person's unwavering belief that they can be an effective change agent. In a similar way, Surak and Pope [7] revealed in their study that participating faculties were able to describe the value that civic engagement experiences would bring to their coursework, their concerns for students' success, and their beliefs that the work could become feasible.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the level of education had significant impact on stakeholder perception of government approach towards civic engagement and community integration. This might be so because civically engaged individuals learn higher-order skills including communication, mathematics and technology in line with the global development at more advanced levels of aptitude. In efforts to create socially equitable communities, they encounter opportunities to hone innovative approaches that such engagement work requires.

Government should therefore intensify policies that would enhance active engagement of citizens and make implementation of such policies as well as those already on ground a reality so as to promote community integration.

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