



Good Governance, Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Good governance has always been an important issue in global development. Most third world countries especially African countries have been identified by the World Bank as chronically groaning under the spell of under-development which is believed to be rooted in corruption and bad leadership. Many ad-hoc solutions embarked upon by various International Organisations have proved insignificant and insufficient in most African countries. The pseudo-development approaches based on the replication of western mode of development to the developing world have aroused suspicion that the mode of development in the West cannot be used as a basis for engineering growth in other parts of the world especially in Nigeria. Many studies have been conducted in Nigeria to explain how good governance can lead to development and poverty alleviation, yet sufficient breakthrough has not been achieved. Hence, there is need to explore why it is difficult for Nigeria to translate its economic development to enrich its people and how one would explain poverty in the midst of economic prosperity. Based on this, the article wants to examine the loopholes in the development priorities of various governments in Nigeria. The research is timely based on the recent statistics from the IMF that Nigeria is now the largest economy in Africa. This article therefore, examines the impact of development and good governance on poverty alleviation in Nigeria. It seeks to explore the potency and place of good governance in poverty alleviation in the largest country in Africa. To achieve this, relevant literatures will be reviewed to closely examine the gap which will ultimately provide rationale for conducting the research. It is therefore based on the established rapport between good governance, development and poverty that this study examines the relevance to the Nigeria case. This research is therefore premised on the conviction that these three concepts are inevitably intertwined and thus if properly integrated can be employed in studying Nigerian situation and used in the alleviation of poverty.

Keywords: Governance, Poverty, Rural Development, Alleviation, Nigeria, Good Governance

1. Introduction

The trajectory of underdevelopment in the midst of affluence can be described as the most disappointing issue in the contemporary globalised world. The first phase of globalisation, which culminated in eventual colonisation of the entire world by the European powers looked promising with the proliferation of industrial goods that resultantly raised the standard of living in the global South (Oatley, 2008). With the end of Second World War most colonised part of the world started regaining their lost independence signifying with the independence of India in 1947. By 1960s most countries in Africa and Asia regained their independence which led to the new phase of globalisation (Agyeman, 2012). With the number of independent countries in the 1960s, most newly independent countries were convinced that the misery and underdevelopment that had pervaded the socio-political terrain of their countries would be disbanded. This lofty objective was soon realised by some countries. For example,

countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Botswana have completely eradicated absolute poverty and they are on the verge of fully becoming industrialised nations. While it was difficult for others such as Nigeria, Ghana, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Ethiopia etc to extricate themselves from the pangs of poverty and underdevelopment. It was the eventual winning of autonomy, which guaranteed sovereignty that gave the developing countries an assumption of the mantle of leadership of their various states, in order to take their destiny to their own hands (Agbiboa, 2011a)

However, after the independence, most developing countries were full of hope that their independence will bring to them unending prosperity and development, as was obtained in the North. Incidentally, most part of the developing world could not convert their hard-won independence to development and prosperity, as was envisaged (Anyanwu, 2012). As soon as colonialists left the countries of the South in the 1960s, most countries landed in civil wars while some were taken over by military administrations. The culture of good governance signified by the institutionalisation of democracy became a rare commodity; it was very expensive to buy, especially in Africa (Adejumobi, 2006). The proceeds of this action are mal-administration, poverty, and underdevelopment. It will thus be necessary at this point to diagnose how the triumvirate concepts-poverty, rural development and good governance are related, especially in discussing developmental issue in Nigerian case. It is in the tacit exploration of these three conceptual undertones that this research is conducted.

The concept of good governance is a much-touted philosophy upon which most development agencies situate their developmental agenda in Africa; and unfortunately there is a limit to what good governance can attain going by Eurocentric definitions of the concept (Agbiboa, 2011a). Most development priorities have placed too much burden on the good governance i.e the need to alleviate poverty and rural or community development in developing countries (Anyanwu, 2012). It is therefore within the intellectual scope of this research to define approximately what good governance should mean in Africa and how it should be employed to curb the menace of poverty and underdevelopment. As thus, the research is divided into sub-sections, three of which are explicitly devoted to the clarification of the three most important concepts of this research. In this case, relevant literatures are explored to ascertain the efficacy and loopholes inherent in the concepts. Afterwards, Nigerian is presented vis-à-vis the concepts. Consequently, the research is confronted with the need to establish the connection with the three important concepts and check whether the global definitions and practicability can be adapted and adopted in Nigeria.

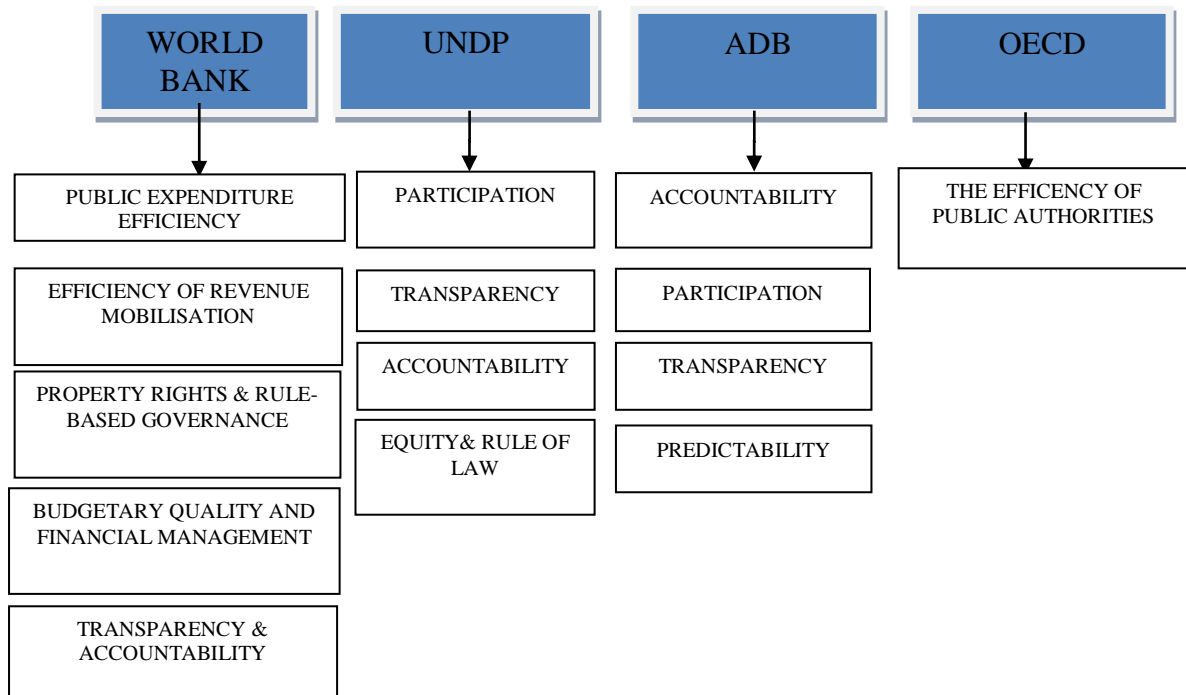
1.1. Conceptual Framework/Clarification

Good governance is a concept over-flooded with various meanings and controversial interpretations (Hulme *et al.*, 2014). What it portends varies across discipline, policy-making rationale, and state in question. Most policy makers and the world development agencies have been particular about the need for good governance in developing countries because of the preconception that the root cause of all developmental deficiencies is mal-administration (Thomas, 2010). According to Gray and Khan (2010), the theory of good governance was first developed in response to the need for providing property right in the early 1970s, which was seen as a way to guarantee stability and effective functioning of market economy.

Good governance is therefore an antidote to solving many problems that bedevil the global socio-political landscape. What the term itself means does not have any universal interpretation but it seems that most scholars and students of politics and economy universally accede to its efficacy in curbing the menace of underdevelopment (Anyang'Nyong'o, 2001; Chabal, 2002). For Chabal (2002) the main rationale behind the concept of good governance is the need to build effective government where they do not exist. This leads to an important question: what are the components of effective government? Effective government according to Grindle (2007) is the one that purposively make poverty an abomination within its geographical entity. Ott (2009) contends that an effective government must ensure that its people live in happiness. He stresses the need on the part of government to ensure that people are provided with all necessities of life in order to make them happy citizens. But this notion of all necessities of life contradicts Anyang'Nyong'o (2001) who defines good governance in terms of basic necessities of life. In his own definition of necessities, he pinpointed that government must ensure that foods, clothing, shelter, education, health and security are guaranteed for its people. The happiness conditionality of good governance as enunciated by Ott may be linked to the one defined by Anyang but what remains doubtful is whether all these ingredients of basic necessities of life lead to happy life.

The seeming contradiction of what good governance entails can be further elaborated by examining the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Asia Development Bank (ADB) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definitions of the concept (fig. 2.1).

Figure-2.1.

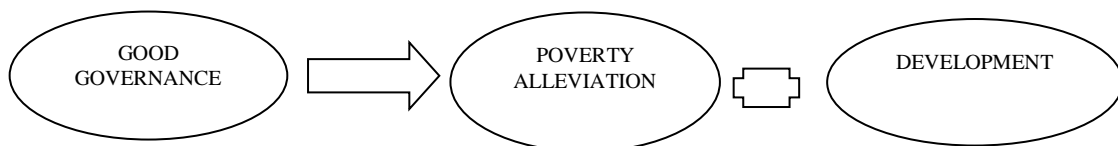


Source: author's inference from Stromseth (2011).

The above diagram points to one thing: that there seems to be divergent views about what constitute the basic elements of good governance. Notwithstanding all the divergent views, there is still point of unanimity among the stake holders and scholars in the field of politics and economy. The point of convergence is that there is the need for a state to embrace accountability, transparency and participation in governance and these three components are constant features in discussing the concept of good governance.

However, the basic rationale behind good governance is to ensure that administrative mechanism put up by government to administer society should be based on the principle of equity and accessibility by the people. Grindle (2007) contends that there is harmonious connection between the concept of good governance and poverty reduction in any country. We can thus infer that good governance, if all necessary components are included as variables, has the capacity to transform a society to the threshold of development, which is a favourable fertile ground for poverty alleviation and reduction, as depicted in the diagram below.

Figure 2.2.



If the above assumption holds, then it therefore becomes pertinent to adopt this in explaining the relationship between the variables to Nigerian context.

2. Good Governance, its Relationship to Development and Poverty

The concept of good governance has become a household name that calls into question the efficacy of governments in serving as lubricant for engine of growth (Benson *et al.*, 2013). It is no doubt an opposite of maladministration. The failure of the market economy signified by capitalist ethos has placed additional responsibility on governments and non-governmental institutions to ensure that the global

social-political problems are arrested (Ravenhill, 2008) The lesson learnt from countries like Sweden, Norway and Demark shows that government of all categories have substantial role to play in making life better for their citizen (Cobbinah *et al.*, 2013). Unfortunately the governance situation in many countries is worrisome and therefore calls for the revalidation of the concept. It is assumed by many policy makers and some human right activists that if governmental structures are not properly furnished to cater for contemporary needs of people it is doubtful if the present global poverty and insecurity will be abated (Bradshaw, 2006)

Thus, the questions to be put forward at this stage are: What exactly is good governance? What are its philosophies and components? Is there any nexus between it, democracy and authoritarianism? Good governance is defined as the institutional arrangement and mechanism that are properly tailored to alleviate the sufferings of the people (Cobbinah *et al.*, 2013b). It is a method by which government is made more responsive to the yearnings and aspiration of its people. Its basic hallmark is the provision of essential and basic capacity building to enable an individual survives in a particular society (Ibid). As such, governments need to ensure that basic infrastructures for healthy and good living are available. How this is achieved remains a doubtful exercise for some policy makers and concerned stakeholders.

The historical antecedent of good governance started after the Second World War when the economic prosperity of a country became only parameter for good governance (Grindle, 2011). The wealth of a nation was the sole indicator for good governance during the period, and it was based on this premise that Marshal Plan was instituted to restore European economy after the Second World War. Thus, the only language of good governance during this period was economic growth, and the situation persisted until 1970s when some Scandinavian countries swiftly embraced the welfare aspect of good governance. It was at that point basic needs, welfare and economic growth, were particularly entrenched in the dictionary of good governance. The 1990s witnessed the need to develop human capacity for sustainability (Cornwall and Brock, 2005), when various governments were motivated to accept that the only sustainable way to good governance is capacity building, which is based on the development of human capacity to function well, as well as contributing to the development of a society (Ibid.) The contemporary global society has witnessed many changes culminating in extending the good governance to establishment of mechanism to ensure environmental sustainability cum human development (Grindle, 2007), the two concepts been well advertised globally in the parlance of good governance.

Good governance, and its components, encompasses various aspect of developing society by the government. It is a concept of putting most responsibility on the governmental structure. The basic assumption of good governance is to make government institutional structure and capacity relevant to the society and based on the equality of all strata of society. Gender and racial equalities, openness, accountability, transparency, democracy, equal representation, education, health, environmental sustainability, employment and justice are all important components of good governance as defined and enunciated by development agencies. According to Grindle (2007), corruption is “*the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development; and issues like accountability and transparency have emerged as potent weapons in the battle against corruption*”. The question here is whether these components can be generalised to all nations. This is because what becomes an issue of good governance in developed countries is different from that of developing countries, most especially the African’s (Anyanwu, 2012). In the developed countries the issue of good governance rests solely on environmental and economic sustainability (Dijkstra, 2013), while in the developing nations there are multitudes of developmental issues that called for governmental attentions, because of the years of negligence and translucent governance.

Furthermore, the definition of developing countries also needs further clarification. If countries like Brazil, Argentina, Malaysia, Singapore, Iran, South Africa and some other countries are still being identified and categorised as developing nations then the issue of good governance also need reassessment. For example, most of the countries mentioned above have conquered absolute poverty; constant electricity supply guaranteed, relative security achieved, peaceful transition of democratic rule, and relative internal political coordination achieved. If all these components form part of good governance it simply suggests that countries like Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, Ghana, Burma, Vietnam and many more still have long way to go in achieving good governance as defined by various developmental agencies (Fritz and Menocal, 2007). It is thus a difficult task to draw a thin line between what becomes an issue of good governance across boundaries. And, if we can successfully define this it implies that good governance will have a different connotation across boundaries and should be treated as such.

The last question is to examine whether there is fruitful connection between good governance, democracy and authoritarianism. The premise behind the linkage between democracy and good governance is that for a government to achieve substantial level of progress the societal mechanism for governance must be transparent enough and accountability sustained. The twin factors of accountability and transparency, which is inherent in democracy, is one of the most important reasons that make democracy a crucial ingredient of good governance. It is assumed that for all components of good governance enumerated above to come to fruition a country must be democratic in nature (Tedheke, 2012). But, it would be unscholarly to insistently assume that for a country to achieve good governance it needs to be democratic; the world has seen the “most notorious democratic” dispensations in Africa and Asia (Norman *et al.*, 2011). Democracies exist in some countries in Africa and Asia as well as in some other part of Latin America but most of these countries still perform below what is expected of good governance. Poorest people in the world desperately inhabit many countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Indonesia, Uganda, Liberia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and many more (Bradshaw, 2006). The question now is, ‘where is good governance by way of democracy?’ The most notable progress recorded in Brazil and South Korea was under President Vargas Getulio and the South Korea’s military regimes respectively. Democracy, therefore, does not preclude good governance in its entirety. There is an exception. What is constant in the dictionary of good governance is development in all aspects of a certain society regardless of location, be it rural or urban. (Cornwall and Brock, 2005)

3. Concept of Ruralism in Development

To begin with, rural development is inseparable from the idea of good governance. Rural community can be conceptualised as a geographical entity where the local allegiance is very strong and small population maintained (Ikeji, 1999). Good governance in its definition encompasses holistic development of a certain society (Ibid.). It assumes that those who live in a small community are not deprived of the essential means of livelihood. The concept of rural development has been an integral part of development institutions’ programmes to ensure that those who live in rural settings are motivated to do so in order to curb rural-urban drift (Oladapo, 2014). The concept of rural community in development agenda of government has evoked the need for conceptual clarification. What defines a rural community in one country varies from one geographical setting to another (Ibid.). The American Bureau of Statistics defines rural community in term of those spatial area whose inhabitants is 2, 500 while in Nigeria it is defined in terms of community in which population of the inhabitants is less than 20,000 (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). In this way, one may encounter a problem of defining what makes a community rural as opposed to urban setting.

But what most scholars and rural sociologists unanimously agreed upon is the economic dimension of the community, level of infrastructural development, population density, remoteness from the city centres, relative isolation, homogeneity, poverty level, and culturally embedded (Küle, 2008; Plein, 2011; Ighodalo *et al.*, 2012; Oladapo, 2014). The definitions given to rural community in certain instances reflect the geographical origin of scholars. For some scholar from African setting, the most important binary definition of rural and urban settings is level of poverty Ighodalo *et al.* (2012). For scholar like Plein (2011) the most important factor is social cohesion and natural setting. It may thus be said that the level of poverty among the rural and urban dwellers in the developed world is not a major factor to determine the rurality of a community (Ibid.). This is because the governance condition of the developed world has taken care of the need to ensure that both rural and urban settings are accorded proper attention in terms of development priority (Grindle, 2007). If this fact holds, then one can safely assert that lack of good governance in some developing countries prompts an attempt to see poverty as a defining characteristic of rural setting. Living in a rural society does not mean one should perpetually live in impoverishment; it is the government policy that dictates otherwise. This submission therefore questions a harmonious conceptual relationship among governance, rural development and poverty, which this paper intends to extend in analysing Nigerian case.

4. Concept of Poverty

Poverty, despite its plethora in socio-economic discussion, is a common term. The concept of poverty, which antedates the biblical era, is a global phenomenon. It is, theologically, both divine and human in nature. It is providential because of the emphasis both monotheistic scriptures; Bible and Quran, lay on it in human society. It is also human because of the mental capacity inherent in human being to change its living conditions for the better or worse. The latter dimension of poverty therefore is the purpose of this article which basically rests on the philosophical dimension of ‘seeing is believing’. Both

dimensions of poverty are stretched to show that the scourge is treated along with the views of previous scholars. The approach is no doubt empiricism; the need to study a phenomenon with scientific investigation and justification leading to practical analysis as opposed to theological cum divine reasoning.

The concept of poverty has received utmost attention of scholars from various fields from the earliest period. Scholars from sciences, engineering, chemistry and physics from the earliest times have always considered the scourge of poverty in their researches (Seton-Watson, 1977). Most of the scientific discoveries made in the Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries were principally to improve the living standard of human race. No discovery has ever been made in isolation of poverty. The renaissance period in Europe arose out of the need to improve the living standards of the Europeans. The Napoleon wars that erupted in the late 18th century Europe had its root in poverty (Ibid.). Thus, poverty has both philosophical and social dimensions. Some philosophers see poverty as moral and humanitarian issues while sociologists consider it a societal malaise (Ott, 2009). The different interpretations given to it therefore reflect various approaches societies and scholars adopt.

Also, the fear of poverty had also occupied the attentions of some political scientists and economists from Britain in the 18th century. For example, the issue of poverty cannot be divorced from the philosophies of economists like Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus. For the latter scholar, it was the issue of poverty in the British society that impelled him to propound the theory of population (Watson, 2003). He claimed that to maintain a balance in any society, there must be a corresponding growth between population and national economic growth. Malthus was of the view that if population grows at geometric progression and economic development at arithmetic progression there may be famine and poverty in the society. This brief illustration suggests that the contemporary developmental issue of poverty has been recurring for centuries. It means that governments of various forms cannot claim to relent on alleviating poverty from the society.

Poverty is no doubt an inflated concept in the political and socio-economic sphere. It is in fact a household name in the contemporary developmental parlance. It is therefore difficult to give to it a precise definition that will be acceptable to other scholars in the field. It is in fact an elusive concept. What constitutes poverty varies from one society to another; from one group to another, from one age to another, and from one family to another. In this way, the definition of poverty may become a personal issue altogether. Notwithstanding the elusiveness and fluidity, the UNDP, World Bank, IMF, regional banks like African Development Bank (ADB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) unanimously define poverty that cut across all cultures. MDG1 is entirely devoted to poverty reduction by 2015, a process that has been regarded as failure in both Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Aderinwale and Sanusi, 2011). In its exclusive form, poverty is a condition of living below the poverty line stipulated by the World Bank. Again, what is it to 'live below poverty line'? In Africa, for example, clothing, shelter, food, and security are given prominence in defining poverty whereas in Western Europe poverty is defined as somebody that lives below \$5 per day. In Asia, especially in Malaysia, where absolute poverty has been eradicated, living below \$3 per day has been recognised as poverty level (Ravenhill, 2008).

However, the purchasing power parity has been used to arrive at objective analysis of incidence of poverty in the globe because of inadequacy of Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita income in some developing countries. It should be emphasised that the highly developed countries like Japan, the US and the UK primarily set poverty line at \$14 to \$26.19 per day (Nyasulu, 2010). This thus subjects poverty definition to ambiguity which resulted in adopting different approaches to combating poverty from different developmental agencies. From what appears to be unanimous among scholars, poverty is defined in terms of inability to meet up with one's needs and wants (Ejolu, 2008). This perceived broad definition of poverty indicates that nobody is immune from poverty, as his/her needs and wants are not met in a particular period in time. This argument can also be sustained by popular economic theory that human wants are unlimited but the resources to satisfy them are limited in supply. Therefore, the definition of poverty, if seen from above perspectives, put human race at 'risk of being perpetually poor'. To avoid this pitfall one will be forced to agree with the international development agencies' definitions of poverty which is defined in terms of food, clothing, shelter, unemployment, health challenges and education (Cobbinah *et al.*, 2013). Agreeing with this definition provides intellectual consolation and satisfaction, which stipulates that someone who can have access to all the above facilities can be terminally assumed to be exempted from the scourge of poverty. Nyasulu (2010) thus provides a related argument that before all these facilities can be guaranteed appropriate mechanism is needed. What this means is that favourable policy euphemistic of good governance must be available before such facilities can be

provided. In this way, eradication or alleviation of poverty is inextricably intertwined with good governance.

5. Nigeria, Good Governance, Rural Development and Poverty

Discussing the three concepts in relation to Nigerian case is a matter of expediency mainly because of their potency to serve as antidote to the contemporary problems in the society. The scourge of bad governance, poverty and rural underdevelopment is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It is a worldwide developmental debacle (Agbiboa, 2011b). Writers, scholars, civil societies and policy makers have overflooded the intellectual discourse with writings and discussions on these issues. Thus, in order to do justice to all these concepts in relation to Nigeria I choose to discuss each separately and the point of convergence.

5.1. Nigeria and Good Governance

Good governance seems to be a scarce product in the developing world. It is an antidote to underdevelopment and poverty in most developing nations. That of Africa is the most alarming (Anyanwu, 2012). Of all African countries, Nigeria is the best endowed with all necessary ingredients of development. Skilled labour, natural resources, abundant financial resources, vast agricultural landmass, and favourable geographical and weather conditions are all scarce resources that are abundantly available in Nigeria (Leone, 2010). Whereas in other parts of Africa, these resources are scanty except in the cases of Kenya and South Africa. Nigeria is thus a paradox of underdevelopment. When Nigeria got her independence in 1960, most nationalist seems to be optimistic about the potential of the country. It became a thing of joy in most African countries to see Nigeria as the epitome of hope for black race (Toyin and Matthew, 2008). The prophesy and clairvoyance seemed to be true when Nigeria first election was held to pave way for democratic governance in 1960. Nigeria, given its ethnic diversity and spatial land mass, was compelled to divide the country into three geo-political zones for governance and administrative expediency, whereby each region remitted certain amount of its financial resources to the federal government in Lagos, the best governance system Nigeria had ever operated. Each region was developing at its own pace until the military administration under Aguiyi Ironsi hijacked power in 1966. The coup resulted in mutual suspicion from principal ethnic groups-Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba (Nyewusira *et al.*, 2008).

Another coup was staged the same year by a northerner, Major-General Yakubu Gowon. He abolished regional system and this resulted in the creating of another states under Nigerian federal system. This was the last straw that broke the process of good governance in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2010). Although it will be unfair to wholly attribute mal-administration to military government in Nigeria, most especially since military personnel are not well trained in the art of governance, it is naturally bound to rule by force and not by reason. The basic elements of democracy that makes society more governable are non-existent in the military regimes. From the point when the civilian administration was disrupted with its attendant disturbance in the political structure of administration, Nigeria has since then been battling with the issue of governance (Ojo, 2010). The structure, defined in terms of justice, equality, ethnic diversity, accessibility, minority right, freedom, and representation, was collapsed completely. Even when civilian administration regained power in 1979, the decade of bastardisation of the system by military administration could not be restored. The administration structure upon which the pillar of good governance rests became a scarce commodity in Nigeria. Successive Nigerian governments have been intransigent to the yearning of the people and the system could not guarantee any essential means of livelihood (Aboluwodi, 2012). Once the governmental structure had been disturbed since 1966, it is very difficult for any Nigerian government, civilian and military alike, to institute any policy that will benefit the entire citizen. The economy edifice of the country solely relies on oil which is dictated by the forces of global demand and supply. The collapses of the governmental structure which can cater for all sections of the society worsen the case; and poverty and underdevelopment are the by-products of such ineptitude in governance (Agbiboa, 2011b).

Furthermore, in Nigerian case, there is no difference between military and civilian administration in term of governance issue. What makes bad governance a recurrent feature in Nigerian socio-political landscape is the way in which the mechanism for governance is arranged. The contemporary problems of internal insecurity and political turmoil are the result of decades of structural injustice in Nigeria (Anyanwu, 2012). The structural malfunctioning therefore resulted in growing poverty and underdevelopment in the country since independence. If this submission is right, then one is safe to assert

that bad governance breeds poverty and underdevelopment. In this case, rural underdevelopment is not immune from the pang of bad governance in Nigeria.

5.2. Nigeria, Poverty and Rural Underdevelopment

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria is unique in the sense that government seems to be apathetic to the issue for decades (Toyin and Matthew, 2008). In the dictum of Nigerian society, poverty is defined in terms of absence of necessities of life; shelter, food and clothing (Idzenga, n.d). If one extends the definition to include education and health, it suggests that Nigeria's problem is more complicated if the basic things that guarantees the continual existence is almost not available. The complete failure of the systemic structure has made the prevention and eradication of absolute poverty impossible. Inasmuch as this exists, the underdevelopment will continue to be a colossal task to solve. Of all the sections of Nigeria society, the most affected area is rural community (Ikeji, 1999).

The decades of complete neglect of rural dwellers and its non-existent in the developmental philosophy of Nigerian government has compounded the rural underdevelopment and poverty (Ibid.). In Nigerian context, the concept of rural is associated with the worst things of life. Those who live in such setting are the most underprivileged not only in Nigeria but also in the world (Kūle, 2008). Those who are closely familiar with rural settings in Nigeria know the rural community as sociologically imbalance. In terms of development, it is almost non-existent. In some villages and communities, pipe-borne water and electricity are almost unknown while most of the young children receive education in dilapidated buildings. Nigerian rural communities are known for extreme poverty, environmental degradation, lack of basic amenities, insecurity, malnutrition, untimely death, high mortality rate, and lack of job opportunities (Anyanwu, 2012). The extreme incidence of poverty in Nigeria has led to new wave of rural-urban drift that has put the major cities in security alert. In some part of northern Nigeria and middle belt, the outbreak of diseases like kwashiorkor, malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, elephantiasis, night blindness and typhoid has put millions of lives under health risk (Agbiboa, 2011b). The living condition of most people in the rural communities is worrisome and government at the grass root level is made to be responsible for such. Unfortunately the gross ineptitude in government in Nigeria occurs at this level. Most of the allocation that come in every month, which is meant for improving the lots of rural communities are normally embezzled by the local government officials (Idzenga, n.d). This is not a surprise as it is a continuation of maladministration from the centre. Corruption, impartiality, embezzlement and misappropriation of fund are common syndrome in the local government administration in Nigeria. At present Nigeria operates 776 local governments which are established with the primary functioning capacity of eradicating poverty in the rural communities and provision of essential service to make life better for the people (Adejumobi, 2006). If corruption continues unabated at local government level then there is need to device a potent mechanism for rural development. This is because most Nigerian population at present still live in rural communities. Because of dearth of statistics on the percentage of Nigerian population living in rural communities, most of the figures are just mere speculations and predictions.

According to Ikeji (2013) most Nigerian population are confirmed to be rural dwellers despite the rapid in urbanisation in recent years. If this submission is tenable, it foretells that most Nigerian population lives in absolute poverty. It thus implies that rural development should become the priority of government in structural transformation.

6. Conclusion

The mere fact that good governance precludes poverty and underdevelopment indicates that for both scourges to be rectified it needs the blessing of governance overhauling. From all indications, nothing can work unless the Nigerian governance structure functions well. Many rural developmental programmes have been instituted for decades but they have born no fruit. Their impotency is attributable to governance structure in place. For example, government in 2001 instituted National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). There is no correlation therefore between the establishment, development and poverty in Nigeria. The much-touted Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) instituted in 1987 under the recommendation of IMF was a colossal failure in Nigeria. Such a programme was a success in countries like Malaysia and Thailand. The reason for successful implementation of the programme, according to scholars, cannot be divorced from domestic institutional mechanism. This therefore suggests that for any meaningful programme to work effectively in rural development there must be a proper adjustment in governance structure based on the

need of the entire populace. When this is done, then proper programme and policy can be implemented successfully with all certainty.

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