

Moderating Role of Political-Will on the Relationship between Rural Electricity and Poverty Alleviation

Ahmed Shehu

Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru-Bida campus

Email - ahmedshehu76@gmail.com

Abstract: Poverty is one of a major threat to international peace and a contemporary theme of discussion in the development agenda. To break the cycle of poverty, governments at different levels introduced various agenda especially electrification of rural areas to combat the scourge. This paper adopts quantitative technique using Partial Least Square (PLS) to examine the moderating effects of political-will on rural electricity and poverty alleviation. The findings highlight that electricity is insignificantly related to poverty alleviation. However, political-will in the study will strengthen the relationship between rural electricity and poverty reduction if there is effective electricity distribution in the rural areas in Nigeria. The study shows that poor electricity distribution was as a result of corruption and absence of political-will, thus the study recommends for stiff penalties to curb the waste of scarce resource and accord it a required devotion. Political-will and good governance is the key to poverty alleviation, therefore, government should create coherent vision and concrete commitment administratively, politically and professionally to realize it. The study calls for the revolution in the judiciary sector to combat corruption and lead a crusade for the reinstatement of the good virtues entrenched in the public service to enhance a hitch free application of rule of law as a stepping stone to expedite economic development and poverty alleviation in the rural areas.

Key Words: Political-will, rural electricity, good governance, poverty alleviation

1. INTRODUCTION:

Poverty is one of the greatest threats to global peace and a topical topic in the development agenda (Roy, Cawood, Hordijk, & Hulme, 2016) to human development and the uppermost topic of deliberation in the development agenda of most nations. Poverty is a universal phenomenon (Ravallion, 2016) across countries of the world and a basic antithesis to human dignity. As a universal phenomenon, poverty affects approximately four billion people across the globe and more devastating in the developing world of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Greig, Hulme, & Turner, 2007). Out of the three continents, Africa remains the poorest (Tupy, 2016) most technologically regressive, most indebted, most crisis ridden, most politically unbalanced, most marginalized in the world. Poverty threat on the rural population was a driven force for the United Nations proclamations to fight the scourge across the globe, consequently, the Federal Government of Nigeria among comity of nations was inspired to direct significant resources into various institutions particularly Agricultural Intervention Programs (AIPs) to bridge the gap between economic growth and prosperity of the citizens. Famous among them are the National Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Agricultural Development Project (ADP), Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life Program (BLP), Micro Finance Bank, Bank of Agriculture, National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) among others (Dugguh, 2014; Ogwumike, 2002). The effectiveness of the schemes in combating poverty remains a recurring questions (Ighodalo, 2012).

Several countries like Ghana, South Africa and Malaysia (Hannan, Hoque, Mohamed, & Ayob, 2017) among others with related problems of poverty have long overcomes the challenge as a result of improve infrastructure particularly rural electricity, while Nigeria still looms in pitch of darkness (Adenikinju, 2003; Olaoye, Ajilore, Akinluwade, Omole, & Adetunji, 2016). This predicament has affected the production of industries (Milewski & Budzianowski, 2014) and also proliferate the rural-urban migration cum poor standard of living over the years (MacKay, 2008; Olaoye, 2016).

Researchers argue that paper persistence of poverty in emanates less in the lack of funds for its alleviation than in the failures of governance (Baker, 2013; Cain, 2016). In the same vein, (Devas, 2012; Grindle, 2011; Hulme & Shepherd, 2003; McFerson, 2013; Moore, 2001; Ogun, 2010; Sobhan, 1998) concurred that poverty has direct linkage with bad governance further affirmed that the incidence of poverty in developing countries of the world is related with bad governance and not dearth of financial resources as claimed by some scholars. The failures range from narrow-minded developmental vision, poor commitment and lack of political determination to translating the vision into attainable policies and programs.

In observing the challenges of poverty annihilation and hunger, absence of political-will is identified as the missing link. For instance, Kofi Anan in 1998 conceived political-will and good governance as the most essential factor required by every government to eradicate poverty and promote development (UN, 1998). Good governance entails improvement of all aspects of the society-the institutional rules, the intra and interrelation between the economic and political system (Aryeetey, Devarajan, Kanbur, & Kasekende, 2012; Bezold, Juech, Michelson, & Lyakurwa, 2009; Gul, Sajid, Afzal, Khan, & Mughal, 2012; Lusk, 2010; Murega, 2014). Consequently, Azam & Emirullah (2014) upheld that political-will expedite sustainable development vis-a-vis poverty eradication especially in the developing world of Asia, Latin America Africa where Nigeria belongs. Accordingly, good governance is perceived as a major precondition for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development (Anyang, 2001; Bolton, 2000; Craig & Porter, 2006b; Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2006; Frenk & Moon, 2013; Lyakurwa, 2009). In spite of the foregoing assumptions, there is paucity of empirical research that align good governance with intervention policies and programs, level of participation of target beneficiaries in policy formulation and implementation to determine the level of poverty in Nigeria. It has manifested in various studies that results on Intervention Programs (IPs) and poverty alleviation in Niger state rural areas were inconclusive and equivocal (Sanusi, 2015), thus requires the introduction of moderating variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986) to effectively assess the impact of IPs on poverty alleviation (Sanusi, 2015). This study is to provide new empirical evidence of the relationship between rural-electricity prevailing level of poverty and political-will.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 Political-will

Betancourt and Sanguinety (2008) define political will as a government's commitment and capability to act in the advancing or the reversing of a democratization process. In other words, it refers to political intent or aspiration to embark on project (s) that has direct bearing to the electorates or make lives very meaningful.

Political will in this study refers to a political determination and motivational force that generates political action. Political-will would be appreciated with the combination of three factors: opinion, intensity plus salience. Political-will would be achieved via absolute determination, concentration, and an inclusive, integrated long-term strategy across the entire value chain (Abdullahi & Abdullah, 2014; Little, 2010).

Political-will and good governance predetermines human development in its entirety. This is realizable through poverty reduction in the sphere of creative employment, integration of the taxpayers, principally the poor people in the social activities and policies that directly affect their felt-needs. Azam and Emirullah (2014) uphold that it is the worthiness of political determination that smooth the progress of sustainable development as well as poverty eradication in the emerging world of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Considering the significance of political-will and good governance, Africa Union (AU) advocates the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) which proclaims better governance as an fundamental requirement for the development of the African continent (Anyang, 2001). In a proclamation, Lyakurwa (2009) opined that good governance promote resilient, pro-poor growth, by allusion, it trim down poverty, promote peace, heartens political participation vis-a-vis social empowerment and development of any nation.

Similarly, Anyang (2001) observed that political-will is missing link that impinge on the effective combat of poverty in Africa (Nigeria inclusive). Therefore, to address the problem of poverty in Africa, the author suggested on the need to embrace democratic values, accord priority to security, emphasis on economic development, zero tolerance to corruption, just to mention but a few. This claim was further substantiated by (Craig & Porter, 2006a). The concept of political-will goes beyond the official apparatus of government, it refers to the entirety of ways in which humanity or the general society organizes and jointly manages its affairs. Global governance is an annex of this notion of the world as a whole. Equally, it involves formal decision-making processes of any nation or numerous processes that form the way we jointly address issues of concern that have global implication, such as financial stability or instability, environmental sustainability, peacekeeping and security, human rights, trafficking and many more (Bolton, 2000; Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2006; Frenk & Moon, 2013; Thomas, 2000). Similarly, Adejumbi (2006) disclosed that the right to make choice on the economic policy and agenda which each country intends to pursue without foreign intervention or imposition of market ideology that could facilitate poverty reduction is feasible through effective governance. In addition to the direct relationship that exist between good governance intervention programs and poverty alleviation, the study also proposed that good governance will moderate the relationship between intervention programs and poverty alleviation such that there is high degree of participation of target beneficiaries in policy formulation and implementation, accountability and application of rule of law.

3. METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts quantitative instrument to pull together a cross sectional data from 18 rural areas of Niger state to examine the relationship between political-will, electricity generation, electricity distribution and poverty

alleviation. A total of 440 structured questionnaires were administered and 347 were valid for analysis. The study adopts probability sampling technique which tolerate each item of the population the corresponding chance to be chosen as a sample so as to limit high rate of bias (Sekaran & Bougie, 2014). The study used multi-stage sampling method, where Niger state was clustered into three senatorial zones. Partial Least Square (PLS) software was used to run the data as it provide better prediction capacity and best option for data collected from social setting like rural areas which might not be absolutely normal (Hwang, Malhotra, Kim, Tomiuk, & Hong, 2010). Also, measurement of this study was adapted from the studies of (Ilemona, Akoji, & Matthew, 2014; Orji, 2005) with minor contextual modification that twinset the study area vis-a-vis to measure the independent and dependent variables using 5 Likert scale.

4.1 RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Measurement model

Tables 1 and 2 show the discriminant validity and result of composite reliability coefficients of the variables, each latent variable has .861 as the least and .954 as the highest. This mean that each exceeds the acceptable threshold of .70 suggesting tolerable internal consistency reliability of the measures adopted in this study (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Yet, it is important to note that the analysis of the outer model led to the deletion of 11 indicators out of 75. Nevertheless, none of the variables was removed as they have adequate number of indicators per each variable (Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper, & Ringle, 2012). The indicators removed are: Electricity Generation (EG10, EG11, EG12, and EG16); Electricity Distribution (ED01, ED09, ED10, and ED11); Political-will (PW05 and PW10); PAL (PAL08 and PAL13).

To define discriminant validity in this study, we compare the correlations among the latent constructs with square roots of AVE as the yardstick. Albeit, as a rule of thumb, the square root of Average Variance Extract (AVE) of each variable is expected to be higher than the correlation of the specific variable with any other constructs in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In Table 1, below, the correlations among the latent variables were associated with the square root of the average variance extracted (figure boldly typed). The table specifies that the square root of the average variances extracted were all greater than the correlations among latent constructs, suggesting satisfactory discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Consequently, the study concludes that latent variables for the study have shared more variance with their respective assigned indicators than with any other latent variable as indicated in Table 1

*Table 1
Latent Variable Correlation*

Variables	ED	EG	PW	PAL
ED	0.872			
EG	0.172	0.711		
PW	0.508	0.319	0.731	
PAL	0.465	0.3	0.624	0.76

Structural Model Results (PLS Path with moderator)

Hair et al (2013) conceived that there are four major criteria for evaluating the structural model in PLS SEM. These are: significance of the path coefficients, coefficient determination (R^2), the effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The default results for the assessment of the significance of path coefficients are obtainable in Table 3 below:

Table 2 <i>Direct relationship among the variables without moderator</i>						
Hypotheses test						
Hypotheses	Relationships	Beta value (β)	Standard Error	T value	P value	Decision
H1	EG -> PAL	.039	.024	1.614	0.05*	Supported
H2	ED -> PAL	.015	.036	.418	0.34	Not Supported

Source: Computation.

In line with the reviewed literature and developed hypothesis, the result of hypothesis 1 indicate that Electricity generation is positively related to poverty alleviation. Thus, the result in Table 3 revealed a significant

positive relationship between the generation of electricity and the phenomenon under study (poverty). Thus: $\beta = .039$, $t = 1.614$, $p = 0.05$ thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. In the same vein, hypothesis 2 predicted that Electricity Distribution is positively related to poverty alleviation in the rural areas of Niger State. Result in Table 3 did not support the prediction, because the t-value is below the recommended threshold (1.282) and the probability value above the cut-off point(0.34) (Fisher & Yates, 1974)($\beta = .015$, $t = .418$ and $p = 0.34$), thereby conflicting the postulation of Hypothesis 2.

Table 3
Indirect relationship

Hypotheses	Indirect Relationships	Beta value	Standard Error	T value	P value	Decision
H3	EG * PW -> PAL	.085	.034	2.487	.01***	Supported
H4	ED * PW -> PAL	-.146	.049	2.986	.00***	Supported

To determine the moderating effect of this study, we adopt a product indicator method using PLS to classify and estimate the influence of the moderating effect (political-will) between rural electricity and poverty alleviation. Consequently, H3 predicted that: political moderate the relationship between electricity generation III and poverty alleviation in the rural areas. The result tells that political-will moderates a positive relationship between electricity and poverty alleviation ($\beta=0.85$; $t = 2.847$; $p = 0.01$), thereby supporting H3. Again, H5 proposed that: Political-will moderate the relationship between electricity distribution and poverty alleviation in the rural areas of Niger State. The result further shown that political-will dampen the positive relationship between rural electricity and poverty alleviation, yet, the result of probability value (p-value) is significant and therefore supporting the non-directional H5 with: ($\beta= -1.46$; $t = 2.986$; $p = .00$).

Effect size (f^2) was computed to determine the degree to which individual exogenous latent variable contribute to the study and to assess whether the omitted exogenous variable has a significant impact on the endogenous variables (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The R^2 for the core effect model was 0.693 and after the introduction of the interaction effect model the R^2 shoot-up to 0.708. Therefore, the R^2 improved by 0.015 parallels to 1.5 percent additional variance. The effect sizes (f^2) of electricity generation, electricity distribution and political-will are 0.016, 0.19 signifying small effect for the former and interestingly, the effect-size (f^2) of political-will as the moderator is 0.834 which higher and consider larger.

Table 4
Effect size

Endogenous Variable	Exogenous Variable	R Squared Included	R Squared Excluded	f^2	Effect Size
PAL	EG	.693	.688	.016	Small
	ED	.693	.692	.019	Small
	PW	.693	.437	.834	Large

This study offers empirical proof on the significant contribution of political-will as a moderator between rural electricity and poverty reduction in the rural areas. The two hypotheses were significant and supportive suggesting that political-will will ease poverty alleviation. The result is consistent with our assumptions that poverty will be alleviated only if political-will which entails the determination or willingness to fulfil campaign promises.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION:

Basically, this study examines the direct effect of rural electricity on poverty alleviation. It equally examines the moderating role of political-will on the relationship between rural electricity and poverty alleviation. The result established a significant relationship between electricity generation and poverty alleviation and insignificant relationship between electricity distribution and poverty alleviation. Similarly, the introduction of political-will in the study will strengthen the relationship between rural electricity and poverty reduction if political stakeholders effectively fulfil their campaign promises. The study shows that poor electricity distribution was as a result of corruption thus, the study recommends for stiff penalties to curb the waste of scarce resource and accord it a required

devotion. Political-will and good governance is the key to poverty alleviation, therefore, government should create coherent vision and concrete commitment administratively, politically and professionally to realize it. The study calls for the revolution in the judiciary sector to combat corruption and lead a crusade for the reinstatement of the good virtues entrenched in the public service to enhance a hitch free application of rule of law as a stepping stone to expedite economic development and poverty alleviation in Niger state.

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