

# Impacts of Christian Religion on the Economic Development of Rural Community: Case Study of Ikeji-Arakeji Community, Osun State, Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

Community development is “the processes by which people’s efforts are united with those of government authorities to improve the ‘economic, social, political and cultural conditions of communities so to integrate those communities into the life of the nation hence, enable them contribute meaningfully to the national progress or rural community. The study sought to investigate impacts of Christian religion on the economic development of rural community. Two objectives were used in the study. Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study made use of survey research design. Population for the study were residents of Ikeji-Arakeji Community, Osun State. Sample size for the study were 400 residents of Ikeji-Arakeji Community. Primary source of data collection was used to obtain information from the study. Results in the study revealed that there is a significant influence of Christian religion on economic development [F (1, 398) = 8.701; p<0.05]; Christian religion has significant effect on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state. [f (2, 397) = 3.715; p<0.05]. It was concluded that Christian organizations have contributed greatly to achieving sustainable development, promoting development and encouraging progress, which helped in reducing poverty in rural communities. It was recommended that Christian organization should not only be effective in economic development of rural community rather contribute towards the livelihood of its residents. Community should encourage churches who are ready to aid economic development by giving them moral support.

**Keywords** – Rural Community, Economic Development, Real Estate Development, Poverty Reduction

## INTRODUCTION

In recent times, religions and religious beliefs represent an important aspect of the community yet do not neglect economic development in rural community (Ter Haar and Ellis, 2006). Christian religion may influence the perceptions and behaviors of her members in the development rural development. With regard to the recipients of development efforts, Ter Haar and Ellis (2006) claim that religious beliefs provide moral guidance and encourage people to improve their lives and standard of living. Religion may also influence agents of economic development of rural community. Christians religion and the church are called to convey integrity and fairness in the world and this call has broad implications for the church’s operation on economic development (Nkansah-Obrempong, 2018).

Regarding the role of religion in human social life, there are two general views among western scholars. Scholars, such as Karl Marx, posit that religion plays no role in human social life and it is even considered as “the opium of the masses” (Motahari 2001). Max Weber, emphasize the role of religion in public life and believe that religious values can lead to the development of rural community. Religion is essentially the product of a class society. In this society, ideas, thoughts and other cultural phenomena such as language, religion, law, etc., as superstructures, arise under the influence of infrastructures that form the nature of economic relations of the development of rural community. It means that only economic relations and production system are original and cultural phenomena are functions of this relation and production (Sanei, 1993). Ideology and social functions in

Marx's model were defined only from the perspective of the dominant class and it just means giving legitimacy to the positions and interests of the dominant class over other classes which is in the form of the opium of the masses and leads to a sense of alienation and disintegration of revolutionary energy towards development of rural community.

Rural development is a far-reaching strategy that combine different types of actions that facilitate, sustain and expand an area economy and in fact economic development is a vital element of rural development projects for any society or government (Phillips & Pitt, 2012). This age of neoliberal governance has, however, unfolded opportunities for revivification of faith-based activities within the public circle – activities that fills the gap left by the receding governments (Cloke et al., 2013). Marshall & Keough (2004) observes that the main principle of development solutions lies with worldwide community and therefore each system and people need to handle distortions that interfere with a more righteous and fair world. Rural community development embraces the provision of social amenities such as pipe borne water, electricity, good roads, etc. that would significantly improve the quality of life of the people.

Rural community development is “the processes by which people’s efforts are united with those of government authorities to improve the ‘economic, social, political and cultural conditions of communities so to integrate those communities into the life of the nation hence, enable them contribute meaningfully to the national progress”. In support of this, Oji (2004) stated that community development can seen in the light of establishing an organized systems of social services for the purpose of making the people self-reliant and capable of full participation in the overall development of the nation through complete integration.

### **Aim/Objective of the Study**

The general aim/objective of the study seek to investigate the impacts of Christian religion on the economic development of rural community: case study of Ikeji-Arakeji Community, Osun state,

Nigeria. Specifically, the study is to;

- i. Examine the influence of Christian Religion on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji Community Osun state.
- ii. Find out the effectiveness of Christian Religion on economic development of IkejiArakeji Community Osun state.

### **Hypotheses**

- i. There is no significant influence of Christian religion on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state.
- ii. There is no significant effect of Christian religion on economic development of IkejiArakeji community Osun state.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of Community**

As community is a group of people in a prescribed locality who have certain views and ideas in common. “They engage in some forms of interaction aimed at improving their lives, (Egwu, 2008). In support of this, Jazairy, (2018) defined community as” a group of people made up of adults, children and non-social people living together in certain territory where though they share all modes of life in common, but not all they are not conscious of its organization and purpose. In general, a community refers to a group of people living a specific geographical setting and who share certain things including social institutions and aspirations in common.

The usual common interests of a community, include; holding up a sense of oneness, space and unity, security, health care, political and economic activities, education, religious practice, government, social services, etc. “It

is true that a community may be rural or urban. “As! Evidence has shown that government pays more attention to urban community development while individual community and organizations contribute immensely in developmental projects of their communities.

### **Church and Development of Rural Community**

Rural Development is about people live in rural communities and it is not something that can be categorized through measurements (Belshaw et al., 2000). Community development hold foot in many spheres of our history including education, economic, sociology, political, urban as well as regional planning and it is one of the most diversified practice in history (Phillips & Pittman 2014 In many circles of development, faith-based organization have good background and operate extensively in communities in provision of social services, health, education and act as community organizers (Marshall & Keough, 2004). Faith-based organizations are defined as “self-identified religious groups or institutions from a wide variety of traditions that include but are not limited to various Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu groups” (Dionne & Chen, 2000). Faith-based organizations frequently play as sole providers of social services, they scheme out ideas and deliver services inform of developments in sectors that governments have failed to develop (Adkins et al., 2010). Belshaw et al., (2000) argue that most African Christians were molded by missionary theologies through development activities such as education, farming and health institutions. Omenya & Anum (2014) notes that the central objective of the missionary societies was to change African religion with Christian religion; but they also point that the early missionaries did not pay attention to African culture and African way of life became a major hurdle in the missionary field. Untold organizations engage in community development in various countries with diversified political systems to address astounding problems (Bhattacharyya, 2004). Community development is in fact a shifting system that operates professionally, and it is supported by different organizations as well as the public (Henderson & Verseg, 2010).

There are three objectives of sustainable development in society: economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability (Sachs, 2015). According to Henderson & Verseg (2010), community development practice is a crucial empowerment method for the people and this empowerment occurs through community activities and community efforts taking place by the guidance of a development worker. Non-governmental organizations actions can be church or mission hospitals and dispensaries, theology schools, orphanages, refuge homes and other drives that target skills development, scholarship to universities and even community mobilization (Marshall & Van, 2007). According to De Temple (2012) development indeed has a background based from church principles and these principles promote and shape our present-day world.

Rural community development include resources provision to the marginalized and it's about providing assistance that is sustainable. Providers of such resources can range from government institutions, non-governmental organizations, charity organizations, philanthropic individuals, faith-based organizations and even businesses (West et al., 2014). Just like religion which operate ultimately, development is all about enacting quality actions by mobilizing community to be self-reliant (De Temple, 2012). The church capacity to impact effectively to poor people is based on its followers and its stand in many countries through equitable evangelism (Belshaw, 2000). According to De Temple (2012) development can be anything that constructively defy institutions powers through actions, practices and ideas that are just and righteous. But, from a theology studies perspective it is captivating to highlight that there is a lot of argumentation about the concept of religion, and whether or not it contributes to development (Wijsen, 2011).

### **Economic Development of Rural Community**

Economic development is an essential measure of the living standard of residents of rural community (Sakwa, 2007). Complication can arise if one will argue that economic process may be essential for achieving community developments and bettering community differences, however it is not an adequate condition (Munck, 2011). This is because most projects are based on values of productivity, skillful use of economic resources and in some cases relationship or negotiations between sponsors and beneficiaries (Belshaw et al. 2000). According to Iheduru, (2001) economic consolidation has always been thought to be an essential and assured means of development strategy in African countries. This implies that although economic expansion is not enough condition to eradicate poverty, it is vital and important element for alleviating poverty

(Sakwa, 2007). Henderson & Verseg (2010) raises this question, “how do the economic criteria that are central to social enterprises and other types of community economic development relate to community development?” Maybe a more appropriate question would be “if development projects would perform better if they would take religions and religious leaders into account” (Wijsen, 2011).

Rural community acknowledges that the church role is not solely to preach and spread evangelism, but also to be included in progressive development (Alowode, 2016). DeTemple (2012) notes that development and faith are discourses that succeed physical, and historical boundaries. Diversification of earnings to help the poor is for example an important policy to ensure the poor benefit constructively from economic growth (Sakwa, 2007). Phillips & Pitt (2014) argues that putting together the financing for an economic development project entails calling the appropriate stakeholders and pinpointing assets they possess.

Rural Community development is widely, and with no doubt influenced by economic influence (Henderson & Verseg, 2010). Christian religion influence economic development depends on different aspects that varies from place to place (Clarke, 2013). On a religion perspective economic development depends on the way people understand and work together to improve their communities.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Theory of Human Diversity**

The theory of community dynamism demonstrates how the group of people in a society differs individually in number of categories which are not constant. This means within one community there are people with different characteristics such as level of income and wealth, culture, female and male individuals, youth and old, needs, abilities, skills, capacities, perceptions, ways of seeing the world, ethnic minority and majority, illiterate and literate people, employed and unemployed, and people with different type of employment. The developers of the theory argue that these human differences within a community define people’s behavioral characteristics and hence have the most important impact on local people’s involvement in communal activities (Miller, 2018).

Therefore, the application of this theory in this study is valid since the participation of churches in the community-based development projects is expected to be highly influenced by these human differences. So the theory will be useful in testing the validity of the factors such as the social cultural factors and individual factors (age of the people, education level and personal attitude) on the level of church participation in the rural community development by the local government authorities.

### **The Expectancy Theory**

The theory proposes that individuals will perform in a certain way after being motivated to select a specific way over the other ways because of what they expect the results of such conducts will be. The theory was proposed by Victor Vroom in 1964, and centers on believing that when having necessary support, people can make choices based on estimates of how well the expected results of given conducts are going to match up with the desired results. The theory argues that, people have a habit of choosing particular actions deliberately which are greatly grounded upon their views, attitudes and dogmas as a result of their desires to increase satisfaction and avoid dissatisfaction (Iffih & Ezeah, 2004).

The theory is very applicable to the study as when the church are well informed of the likely outcomes of the community development projects and the benefits of their participation in achievement of those outcomes, they are in a good position to participate well (Iffih & Ezeah, 2004). Therefore, if there is adequate information access on the implementation of the community projects, the local beneficiaries may be motivated for a great extent to participate in implementation of these projects over the other actions as long as the expected results are more likely to match up their desired results and avoid pains. Also the theory reveals that the decision or willingness of the individuals to participate or not participating is greatly depended on his or her perceptions and expectations.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researcher adopted the survey research design. The purpose of using this research design is to establish the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables and to establish the level of effect of the independent on the dependent variable. The population for the study are residents of Ikeji-Arakeji community, Osun state, Nigeria.

### Source of Data

The source of data is primary source of data collection which involve the use of self-designed questionnaires to obtain information from the participants in the study. Therefore, the major research instrument used in conducting this research work is questionnaires.

The sample size for the study was 400 residents of Ikeji-Arakeji Community, Osun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected from the participants were analyzed using inferential statistics like simple regression and one way Anova analysis and T-test to analyze hypotheses 1 and 2 respectively at

0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Hypothesis i:** There is no significant influence of Christian Religion on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji Community, Osun State.

**Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.242 <sup>a</sup>	.211	.139		5.01223

### a. Predictors: (Constant), Christian religion

Table 1 indicated that R= 0.242 which implies that there was a significant relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The R Square value of .211 indicated 21.1% of observed variance in economic development.

**Table 2: Summary of Regression showing the significant influence of Christian Religion on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun State.**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	P
1 Regression	2341.410	1	177.553	8.701	.000 <sup>a</sup>	<0.05
Residual	3256.322	398	18.025			
Total	5597.732	399				

### a. Predictors: (Constant), Christian religion

### Dependent Variable: Economic Development

From table 2, there is a significant influence of Christian religion on economic development [F (1, 398) = 8.701; p<0.05]. Therefore the null hypothesis i is rejected. This implies that churches has provided the adequate resources to help foster the economic development of rural community in Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state.

**Table 3: Summary of coefficients showing the significant influence of Christian Religion on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community, Osun State.**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	24.333	3.108		7.829	.000
Christian religion	.601	.142	.308	4.246	.000

**a. Dependent Variable: Economic development**

Table 3 shows that Christian religion has a standardized coefficient of [B (.308), t = 4.246. This implies that Christian religion is determinant to economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state.

**Hypothesis ii:** There is no significant effect of Christian religion on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state.

**Table 4: ANOVA showing the significant effect of Christian religion on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state.**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F	Sig.
Between Groups	493.520	2	256.760	3.715	< 0.05
Within Groups	19736.480	397	66.419		
Total	20230.000	399			

From the table above, Christian religion has significant effect on economic development of Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state. [f (2, 397) = 3.715; p<0.05]. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected. This implies that Christian religion impacts on the economic development of rural community by enhancing the economic status of the community ensuring suitable living for residents of rural community.

**CONCLUSION**

Christian religion in Ikeji-Arakeji community Osun state generate funds towards community development, this is in line with (Ajadi, et al., 2010) who posit that Christian Organizations have contributed greatly to achieving sustainable development, promoting development and encouraging progress, which helped in reducing poverty (Ajadi, et al., 2010). According to Onwubike (1990) who posit that Christian religion find it difficult to build an independent economic status without sufficient social capital and hence have limited development projects. The community and the church has to work together to enable the development of rural community. Christian religion plays significant role in enhancing economic development in rural community this is in line with the findings of Edward (2003) who posit that the type of occupation residents of rural communities engage in can easily influence their participation in economic development programmes either positively or negatively.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on findings in the study it was concluded that;

- i. Christian organization should not only be effective in economic development of rural community rather contribute towards the livelihood of its residents.
- ii. Christian organization should be supported by NGOs so as to enhance their effectiveness towards rural community development.
- iii. Community should encourage churches who are ready to aid economic development by giving them moral support.

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