
Impact of Civil Society Organizations on the Promotion of Democratic Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assesses the impacts of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Kano State, Nigeria. The study used probability sampling technique of simple random and selected two hundred and twenty seven (227) respondents from the total population (1028) to represents the sample size of the study using Kriejcie and Morgan (1970). The study employed descriptive and inferential statistics. Based on the multiple regression result, social and Professional groups had a positive coefficient (0.0974349) and were statistically significant at 5% level. This indicates that increase in Social and Professional groups participations in CSOs lead to promotion of democratic governance by 97%. Nongovernmental organisations had positive coefficient (0.2102746) and was statistically significant at 5% level. This indicates that increase Nongovernmental organizations activities lead to promotion of democratic governance by 21%. This shows that Nongovernmental organizations promote democratic governance. Community based organizations had positive coefficient (0.0199122) and was statistically insignificant. This indicates that increased community-based organizations participation leads to promotion of democratic governance by 19%. Based on the findings, the study recommended CSOs should double their efforts in monitoring elections so as to have free and fair elections that will provide good democratic governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Civil Society Organisations, Democratic Governance, Good Governance

1.0 Introduction

Civil society Organizations are recognized as key actors in democratization processes worldwide. It acts as intermediaries between the state and citizens, advocating for policy reforms, monitoring government actions, and providing services where public institutions are lacking (Manju et al, 2024). Globally, civil societies are non-state actors and advocates of democratic governance saddled with different responsibilities, including the provision of humanitarian services, human capital development, social welfare, political participation, economic empowerment, and involvement in other economic activities, making them a significant agent of good democratic governance agents by promoting the rule of law, answerability, protection of human rights, transparency and protection against capitalist exploitation, referred to as the third sector (Ikelegbe, 2013).

Civil society organizations in Nigeria have been attributed to recent events that characterize the recent domination of neoliberal democratic institution. Therefore, it is expected that they create an avenue through which the interests of the people are aggregated in demanding from the government the delivery of good governance, and speaking and holding government accountable for their actions, thereby serving as a watchdog against excesses of government and capitalists (Ejeh & Orokpo, 2022). Civil society organizations are always better placed to apply pressure on the government and demand for policies that foster democracy, development and good governance (Nwachukwu, 2008).

Democratic good governance is a set of behaviours that aim at enhancing public benefits. Accountability, transparency, openness, true democracy, and respect for law and order are the tenants of democratic good governance (Rahman, 2016). Ashafa and Buhari (2015) rightly puts that the growing concern of the civil society organizations in Nigeria is how to influence the policies, decisions, and actions of the government in a way that will favour the realization of good governance in the democratization process. This is glaring that civil society organizations have played a pivotal role in influencing the government's commitments toward good government in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Good governance as expressed through factors like reliability, predictability, and accountability is increasingly seen as a key factor of ensuring national prosperity. Democracy is about effective and efficient representation and delivery of the dividends of good governance to the masses (Ikenna, 2016). Civil society is sine qua non to democratic governance, which explicitly is about providing social security, expanding and advocating for economic opportunities, rule of law, freedom of press nipping in the bud ethno - religious violence, provision of basic infrastructural facilities, guarantee of oppositions and a regular free and fair election.

However, in Nigeria since the return of the civilian regime in 1999, democratic system is confronted with an increased number of problems such as corrupt practices, over dominance of the ruling party in democratic activities of the state, absence of popular participation, poor policy implementation strategies, violation of human rights and disrespect for rule of law, lack of accountability, transparency and sound financial management, low standard of services and other perennial activities serving as decliners to the practice of good governance.

In Nigeria, for many decades civil society's organizations have been played major roles in addressing the above stated problems that hinders the promotion of democratic governance in the country. But, the problems still persisted. Therefore this study intended to assess the

impacts of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Kano State, Nigeria

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to assess the impacts of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Kano State, Nigeria

While the specific objectives are to:

- i. describe the socio economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area
- ii. assess impacts of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria
- iii. identified the challenges facing civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria

2.0 Literature Review

Concept of civil society organizations

Hall (1995) defines it as “an opposite of despotism, a space in which social groups could exist and move, something which exemplified and would ensure softer, and more tolerable conditions of existence.” Diamond (1996), conceived civil society organization “as the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by the legal order or set of shared rules ... It involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express Their interest, passions and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. It is an intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the state”.

Bayart (1986), conceived civil society “as society in relation with the state ... in so far as it is in confrontation with the state, or more precisely as the process by which society seeks to breach and counteract the simultaneous totalization unleashed by the state” Merkel and Lauth (cited in Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006), define civil society organizations as the “arena of voluntary, un coerced collective actions around shared interests, purposes and values”(p.2).

Concept of Democracy

The term democracy can be traced to the Greek political history that stressed much on a governmental system that allows every individual to take part in the affairs of the state. Therefore it is from this basis that the concept is seen as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Otoghile 2012). However, Schumpeter, (1967) posits that the democratic method is that institutional arrangement which realizes the common good by making the people themselves decide who are to assemble in order to carry out its will. And this generalization of the term has prompted imam (1991) to conceptualize democracy as the people’s right to participate fully in the discussions and decision on the issues that affect them and take control over their lives. This right may however be very difficult to be claimed in today’s Nigerian democratic environment because the right to participate fully in decisions is contradictory with the right to be involved in the democratic process that brought the governance itself. This means that the choices of the masses are not truly the representation of the people at the government. The practice of democracy as mentioned earlier in Nigeria today, is supposed to be in line with the view point of Enemuo (1999) who sees democracy as a system of government referring to political situation that is characterized by qualities of liberty, freedom of speech and freedom of action.

Concept of Good Governance

Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. It involves the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes, the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interaction among them (World Bank, 2000). Good governance, on the other hand, refers to a set of practices and principles that promote effective and efficient governance. It is characterized by participation, adherence to the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability (United Nations, 2016).

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2022, p.7), a champion of good governance on the African continent, outlines four main pillars of good governance. This include security and rule of law; participation, rights and inclusion; foundations for economic opportunity; and human development. Furthermore, good governance ensures that political, social, an economic priority is based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of resources. According to United Nations (2007), good governance encourages public participation in government, inclusion in law-making and policy making, and accountability of elected and appointed officials. It also enables civil society to become actively involved in policy making which leads to wide representation of societal interests in decision-making. Therefore, good governance result in laws and policies that better respect cultural diversity contribution to the resolution of social conflicts and tensions, and address the challenges of inequality and poverty.

3.0 Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive survey design because it provided a high level of general capability in representing a large population of the rural people in the study area and the researcher deployed structured questionnaire for the collection of data from the respondents. Both descriptive and multiple regression were used to analyse the impact of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The target population of this study comprises of Transparency International Nigeria, Human Rights watch Nigeria, Save Nigeria group and Africa Arise for change making the total of 1028 respondents.

Sampling Size and Sampling Technique

The study used probability sampling technique of simple random, where the researcher selected some members of Human Rights watch Nigeria, Save Nigeria group and Africa Arise for change Nigeria. Hence, it will give every member in the population an equal chance of being selected as a sampled.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher selects two hundred and twenty seven (227) respondents from the total population (1028) to represents the sample size of the study in order to come up with various opinions on the subject matter of the research so as to make reasonable generalization to the whole population. This was drawn using Krijcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample.

Instrument of Data Collection

The data collection instrument was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three (3) sections namely; A, B, C “Provided information on socio economic characteristics of the respondents, “B” focused on the impact of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria, “C” identified the challenges facing civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria.

Technique of Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive involved the measures of central tendency such as frequency distribution, percentage. For the inferential statistics multiple regression models was used to achieve the objectives of the study. These analyses were achieved using STATA software.

4.0 Results

Socio Economic Characteristics of the respondents

The respondents are classified based on gender, age, marital status, level of qualification and membership of civil society organizations. Below we present the demographic distribution of the collected data.

Table 1: Socio Economic Characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative frequency
Sex			
Female	82	35.81	35.81
Male	147	64.19	100.00
Age			
Less than 20	16	7.05	7.05
21-30	64	28.19	35.24
31-40	113	49.78	85.02
41-50	27	11.89	98.92
51 and above	7	3.08	100.00
Marital status			
Single	82	35.81	20.05
Married	147	64.19	100.00
Level of education			
Non formal	20	8.81	8.81
Formal	207	91.19	100.00
Membership of CSOs			
Non member	90	39.65	39.65
Member	137	60.35	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows that, the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents show that male 64% and female 36%. The result shows that majority of the respondents were males. The finding is in line with that of Abdullahi (2023) which found out that majority of the participants were male. The variable age of the respondents depicts that most of the respondents were within the productive age bracket of 31-40 years representing 49.78% this also showed they were in their active and productive age. It also implied that younger people engaged actively in civil society organizations in the study area. The age was important in this study since in the study areas age has a correlation with socio economics activities. This finding is in line with finding of Bichi (2021), who also discovered that, the respondents were within the age bracket of 31-40 year.

Table 1 shows that, marital status of the respondents' shows that 64% married and 36% single. This shows that most of the respondents in the study area were married this could be attributed to the norms and culture of the people in the area that supported early marriage. This indicates that the married people are the majority in civil society organizations in the study area. This result is consistence with the findings of Azis, (2018) which found out that majority of the respondents was married. Table1 shows that, level of education of the respondents' shows that, 9% have informal education and 91% have formal education. This shows that respondents had attended formal school. The implication of this result is that, most of the respondents can read and write either in Arabic or in western education which can positively affect their decision in promoting good and democratic governance. This is a similar finding of Ayodeji, (2018) who discovered that, level of education of the participants was high. Table 1 shows that, membership of civil society organizations of the respondents 137 were members representing 60% and 90 were non members representing 40%. This shows that most of the respondents in the study area were members of the civil society organizations in the study area. This is in line with work of Adamu, et al, (2020).

Result for multiple regressions on the impact of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria

The results in Table 2 revealed that the Pseudo R^2 (0.4701), Adj R-squared (0.5107), F (3, 327) 2.19, Prob> F (0.0891), this showed that the estimated model and the set of explanatory variables fit the data. R^2 value shows that the independent variables have explain the variation in the dependent variable by 47%.

Table 2: impact of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-statistics	P-Value
Social and Professional groups	0.0974349	.0856355	1.14	0.056
Nongovernmental organizations	0.2102746	.0967245	2.17	0.030
Community based organizations	0.0199122	.0690043	0.29	0.773
Cons	26.39022	2.75213	9.59	0.000
R-squared	0.4701			
Adj R-squared	0.5107			
F(3, 327)	2.19			
Prob> F	0.0891			

Source: Field survey, 2025

The result in Table 2 showed that Social and Professional groups had a positive coefficient (0.0974349) and was statistically significant at 5% level. This indicates that increase in Social and Professional groups lead to promotion of democratic governance by 97%. This shows that having in the area such as teachers, lecturers, lawyers, doctors and engineers promotion of democratic governance. This is in line with the finding of Abdullah, (2023) which showed that Social and Professional groups lead to promotion of democratic governance. Nongovernmental organisations had positive coefficient (0.2102746) and was statistically significant at 5% level. This indicates that increase Nongovernmental organizations activities lead to promotion of democratic governance by 21%. This shows that Nongovernmental organizations promote democratic governance. This is in line with the finding of Abdullahi, (2023). Community based organizations had positive coefficient (0.0199122) and was statistically insignificant. This indicates that increase community based organizations participation lead to promotion of democratic governance by 19%.

Challenges facing civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria

The analysis of the challenges facing civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria is presented in Table 3 The results show that the major challenge was Poor and inadequate funding (84.00%). Another major challenge was inadequate ideological base and poor internal management (100%). Other challenges were Inadequate structural & org foundation (71.97%), Lack of coordination and unity among CSOs (77.71%). The finding of this study is in line with findings of past work of Adamu, et al, (2020).

Table 3: Challenges facing civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance

Challenges	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Poor and inadequate funding	Yes	191	84.14
	No	36	15.86
Inadequate ideological base and poor internal management	Yes	227	100.0
	No	0.00	0.00
Inadequate structural & org foundation	Yes	184	81.06
	No	43	18.94
Lack of coordination and unity among CSOs	Yes	190	83.70
	No	37	16.30

Source: computed and compiled by the researcher, 2025

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The study assesses the impacts of civil society organizations on the promotion of democratic governance in Kano State, Nigeria. Based on the multiple regression result, it can be concluded that social and Professional groups had a positive and statistically significant impact on the promotion of democratic governance. This indicates that increase in Social and Professional groups activities lead to promotion of democratic governance. This shows that having in the area such as teachers, lecturers, lawyers, doctors and engineers promotion of democratic governance. It also concluded that nongovernmental organisations had positive and statistically significant impact on the promotion of democratic governance. This indicates

that increase nongovernmental organizations activities lead to promotion of democratic governance. This shows that nongovernmental organizations promote democratic governance. The study further concluded that community based organizations had positive and statistically insignificant. This indicates that community based organizations participation does not significantly lead to promotion of democratic governance. Based on the findings, the study recommended CSOs should double their efforts in monitoring elections so as to have free and fair elections that will provide good democratic governance in Nigeria.

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