

Interrogating Good Governance and Development in Taraba State: 2015 – 2023

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Abstract

Good governance is a critical component for fostering sustainable development in states, and this study focuses on the period from 2015 to 2023 in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study examined the relationship between good governance practices and development outcomes in the state during this time frame. The problem at the heart of this study is the need to assess how good governance practices have influenced the developmental trajectory of Taraba State from 2015 to 2023. By analyzing the governance structures, processes, and performance indicators, this study identifies impact of good governance on service delivery, infrastructure development, and overall socio-economic progress in the state. To address this research objective, a descriptive approach based on qualitative data collection methods was employed. Documentary sources were also utilized to provide a comprehensive understanding of good governance and development dynamics in the state. The Institutional Theory of Development served as the theoretical framework for this research, guiding the analysis of how formal and informal institutions shape governance practices and development outcomes in Taraba State. One major finding of this study is that the effectiveness of governance institutions and practices significantly impacts the pace and quality of development initiatives in Taraba State. Improved governance structures and processes will lead to more efficient resource allocation and service delivery, thereby enhancing overall development outcomes. The study concluded that there is strong relationship between good governance and development. A major recommendation is the need to strengthen institutional frameworks, promote transparency, accountability, and citizen participation to foster good governance practices and drive sustainable development in Taraba State.

Keywords: Good governance, Development, Transparency, Accountability, Rule of Law, and Citizen Participation.

Introduction

Taraba State, Nigeria has been in existence for 33 years and has been governed by both military administrators and civilian governors. Over this period, development efforts were deployed, which resulted in the few ‘foundational legacies’ that exist. They are called few foundational legacies because; compared to the abundant natural resources and other endowments in the State, the level of development should have surpassed this stage. The socio-economic growth and development of Taraba State is apparently stunted because of some challenges of inadequate infrastructure, insufficient finance, moribund bureaucracy, plethora of ethno-religious crises, deep-seated rancor

between the political class and the civil servants, widespread nepotism and proliferation of mediocrity, and above all, an entrenched political polarization. These major actors, together with other silent issues, have held the socio-economic growth and development of Taraba State hostage. Thus, the question of good governance and development in Taraba State from 2015 to 2023; underscores the crucial role good governance can play in the development and progress of any state or nation. This is based on the notion that good governance ensures transparency, accountability, and effective management, leading to the efficient and effective delivery of services and implementation of policies that benefit the citizenry. Taraba State is supposed to have experienced important political and administrative changes capable of enhancing profound impact on its governance and development landscape. This is based on the fact that, various initiatives and policies have over the period been implemented to promote good governance, enhance public service delivery, and stimulate socio-economic progress across the state. However, despite the initiatives and policies, evidence on ground suggest that not much has been achieved in the area of socio-economic and political development of the state.

This paper, delve into the key developments and reforms efforts that took place in Taraba State within the period under investigation, with a particular focus on the efforts to promote good governance and drive sustainable development. The paper also examined the challenges encountered and the outcomes achieved during this period, providing insights into the progress, successes, and as well as highlights improvements in the state's governance and development agenda. Furthermore, the paper analyzed the strategies and approaches adopted by the government under review, as well as the role of stakeholders and the impact on the overall well-being of the people of Taraba State.

Objectives of the Study

The following will serve as the objectives of study:

- i. To assess the role of good governance on development in Taraba State
- ii. To identify key factors influencing good governance and development outcomes in Taraba State.
- iii. Identify challenges militating against good governance and development in Taraba state

The corresponding research questions as follows:

- i. How have efforts at entrenching good governance enhanced development in Taraba state?
- ii. What are the key factors needed to enhance good governance and development outcomes in Taraba State?
- iii. What is the challenges militating against the provision of good governance and development in Taraba State?

Conceptual Clarifications

Governance: Governance-broadly defined as the framework of rules, institutions, and practices by which authority is exercised is a key foundation of a well-functioning market economy and a major ingredient to growth and equitable development (Al-Marhubi, 2004). The use of the term governance by the World Bank signaled a new approach to development that was based on the belief that economic prosperity is not possible without a minimum level of rule-of-law and democracy. At the same time, use of the seemingly apolitical term “governance” was valuable in preventing criticism that the World Bank was trying to interfere in the political decisions made by debtor countries (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2004). Indeed, governance can be addressed analytically by describing institutions as ‘the patterns that emerge from the governing activities of social, political and administrative actors but also by emphasizing processes meant for guiding, steering, controlling or managing sectors or facets of societies (Kooiman, 2003).

Good Governance on the other hand, refers to the effective and accountable management of public institutions and resources. It involves promoting rule of law, transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making processes. According to Minka and Fornadel (2018), good governance is essential for sustainable development as it ensures that resources are used efficiently, corruption is minimized, and the needs of all citizens are taken into consideration. Good governance is the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, encompassing the processes whereby decisions are taken and implemented, including decision-making, planning, and management" (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1997). It is along this line that the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan gave one of the definitions of good governance as ensuring respect for human right and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration (Annan, 2000). Good governance involves those structures and processes that support the creation of a participatory, responsive and accountable-polity that is embedded in a competitive, non-discriminatory, yet equitable economic development. Good governance is characterized by six dimensions, namely accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and evaluating good governance in various contexts. In essence, good governance consists of the following key principles:

- i. *Transparency:* All decisions, actions, and processes are conducted in a clear and open manner, allowing for scrutiny and accountability.
- ii. *Accountability:* Those in positions of power are held responsible for their actions and decisions, and mechanisms are in place to ensure that they can be held to account.
- iii. *Participation:* All stakeholders, including marginalized groups, have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and have their voices heard.
- iv. *Rule of Law:* Decisions and actions are based on established laws and regulations, rather than on personal interests or arbitrary power.
- v. *Effectiveness and Efficiency:* Policies and programs are designed and implemented in a way that achieves their intended goals and objectives in a timely and cost-effective manner. Good governance is essential for creating a stable and prosperous

society, as it helps to prevent corruption, promotes economic development, and upholds the rights and well-being of all citizens. By adhering to principles of good governance, governments and organizations can ensure that resources are used effectively, trust in institutions is maintained, and the needs of all members of society are addressed.

Development: Development on the other hand, refers to the overall growth and progress of a society in terms of economic, social, and political development. According to Sen (1999), development should not be limited to economic growth but should also focus on improving the quality of life for all individuals, including access to education, healthcare, and basic services. Sustainable development, as highlighted by Sachs (2015), emphasizes the importance of balancing economic growth with environmental protection and social inclusion. This means that development is all encompassing and should permeate every aspect of human existence.

In another sense, development refers to the process of growth, change, and adaptation that individuals, societies, and organizations undergo over time (Burton, 2010). It involves not only physical maturation but also psychological, social, and cognitive advancement. Development can occur at various levels, including individual, family, state, nations and global scales. This process is influenced by a multitude of factors, such as genetics, environment, culture, and experiences. Development unfolds in a series of stages, each characterized by specific challenges and milestones. These stages build upon one another, with successful resolution of earlier challenges laying the foundation for healthy development in later stages. Development is not a linear process, but rather a complex and dynamic interplay between various factors and influences (Lerner, 2018). Thus, development is a multifaceted and ongoing process that involves growth, change, and adaptation across different domains and levels. It is shaped by a range of factors and experiences, and unfolds through a series of stages and challenges. Understanding development is essential for promoting individual well-being, fostering healthy relationships, and creating thriving communities.

Good Governance and development in Taraba State: The Nexus

Governance in Taraba State from 2015 to 2023 has been a subject of interest for researchers and scholars focusing on political science and public administration. Several studies have examined various aspects of governance in Taraba State during this period, including issues related to transparency, accountability, public service delivery, and political stability. A study by Akintomi and Aremu (2017) explored the challenges facing governance, highlights issues such as corruption, lack of infrastructure, and political instability. The authors emphasized the importance of effective governance in addressing these challenges and promoting development in the society.

Ezeani (2019) conducted a study on the impact of governance reforms, focusing on efforts to improve transparency and accountability in the public sector. The author discussed the role of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in promoting good governance practices in the society. Another study by Lawal (2021) examined the role of leadership in governance in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the policies and strategies implemented by the government to address development challenges. The author highlighted the importance of visionary leadership in driving effective governance and fostering sustainable development.

These studies have a bearing on, the assessment of governance in Taraba State from 2015 to 2023 underscores the importance of effective leadership, transparency, and accountability in promoting good governance and driving development in the state. To achieve development, governance quality is needed and therefore all the obstacles, must be eliminated if the objectives is to be achieved.

Governance quality and development outcomes in Taraba State

The relationship between governance quality and development outcomes in Taraba State between 2015 and 2023 was influenced by various key factors. Scholars and researchers have identified several factors that played a significant role in shaping this relationship, including transparency, accountability, political stability, leadership, and institutional capacity. A study by Akintomi and Aremu (2017) emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in governance for promoting development outcomes. The authors highlighted that a lack of transparency could lead to corruption, inefficiency, and mismanagement of resources, thereby hindering the development efforts. Ezeani (2019) examined how political stability influenced the relationship between governance quality and development outcomes. The author found that political stability was crucial for creating an enabling environment for effective governance practices and sustainable development initiatives.

Lawal (2021) discussed the impact of leadership on the relationship between governance quality and development outcomes in Nigeria. The author emphasized that visionary and effective leadership was essential for driving policy reforms, building institutions, and implementing development initiatives that yield positive outcomes for development to thrive. Institutional capacity was identified as a key indicator influencing the relationship between governance quality and development outcomes in Nigeria. Studies have shown that strong institutions with the capacity to implement policies and programs effectively are essential for achieving sustainable development (World Bank, 2018).

Therefore, the relationship between good governance quality and development outcomes in Taraba State was influenced by factors such a lack of transparency, accountability, political instability, leadership deficit, and poor institutional capacity. Understanding and addressing these key factors is essential for promoting effective governance practices and achieving positive development outcomes in the state.

The impact of good Governance on development differs in political system and structures, governance characteristics and contextual factors. Although development outcomes are influenced by contextual determinants, good governance characteristics are of greater importance.

Strategies for improving governance and enhancing development outcomes in Taraba State

Improving governance practices and fostering development in Taraba State requires the implementation of specific strategies and interventions. Scholars and researchers have identified several key strategies that can be employed to enhance good governance and drive development. Some of these strategies are as follows:

- i. **Strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms:** Akintomi and Aremu (2017) emphasized the importance of promoting transparency and accountability in

- governance to combat corruption and ensure efficient allocation of resources. Implementing measures such as open budgeting processes, financial auditing, and citizen participation can help increase transparency and accountability in Taraba State.
- ii. **Building institutional capacity:** According to studies by the World Bank (2018), enhancing the capacity of institutions at all levels of government is crucial for effective governance and sustainable development. Investing in training programs, improving bureaucratic efficiency, and strengthening regulatory frameworks can help build the institutional capacity necessary for implementing development policies and programs.
 - iii. **Promoting citizen engagement and participation:** Ezeani (2019) highlighted the role of civil society organizations and community participation in promoting good governance practices. Encouraging citizen engagement through mechanisms such as town hall meetings, feedback mechanisms, and public consultations can help bridge the gap between government officials and citizens, leading to more responsive and inclusive governance.
 - iv. **Developing strong leadership:** Lawal (2021) underscored the importance of visionary and effective leadership in driving governance reforms and development initiatives. The political leadership in Taraba State need to demonstrate commitment to promoting the welfare of their citizens by implementing policies that prioritize development outcomes, and fostering a culture of integrity and service-oriented governance;
 - v. **Investing in infrastructure and service delivery:** Improving access to basic services such as healthcare, education, water, and sanitation is essential for fostering development in Taraba State. Allocating resources towards infrastructure development, enhancing service delivery mechanisms, and prioritizing investments in key sectors can help improve the quality of life for residents and drive socio-economic development. Implementing these strategies to strengthen transparency, accountability, institutional capacity, citizen engagement, leadership, and service delivery is essential for improving governance practices and fostering development in Taraba State.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on institutional theory. Institutional theory of development posits that the quality of institutions within a society, such as the legal system, governance structures, and social norms, significantly influences the long-term economic and social development of that society. This theory emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining strong institutions to promote sustainable development. The institutional theory of development was first proposed by Douglass C. North, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, in the mid-20th century. North's seminal work, "Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance," published in 1990, laid the theoretical foundation for understanding the role of institutions in economic development. In addition to Douglass North, other prominent proponents of the institutional theory of development include Avner Greif, Daron Acemoglu, and James Robinson. These scholars have further expanded the frontlines of institutional theory by North's work and contributed to the understanding of how institutions shape economic and social outcomes in different contexts.

The theoretical underpinning of institutional theory of development is essential to understanding the complexities of economic, social, and political progress in different societies. According to Sen (1999), development should not only be measured by economic growth but also by the capabilities and freedoms that individuals have to live the kind of lives they value. That is why the Institutional Theory of Development was chosen to serve as lenses to this research. This theory

emphasizes the importance of strong institutions, such as government structures, rule of law, and administrative systems, in promoting sustainable development. It suggests that effective governance and institutional capacity are critical for achieving development goals. The institutional theory of development focuses on the role of institutions in shaping economic, political, and social development (North, 1990). By applying this theory to the specific context of Taraba State, you can analyze the role of institutions in shaping development in the state. The institutional theory of development focuses on the role of institutions in shaping economic, political, and social development. It emphasizes the significance of formal and informal rules, norms, and organizations in influencing the behavior of individuals and groups within a society, as well as the overall trajectory of development. The basic assumptions of Institutional Theory of Development are here by discussed below:

The institutional theory of development assumes that institutions play a crucial role in shaping the economic, social, and political outcomes of countries. Institutions, such as property rights, rule of law, bureaucracy and democratic governance, provide the framework within which individuals and organizations interact, make decisions, and allocate resources. Strong institutions are considered essential for fostering economic growth, reducing poverty, and promoting social stability (Ezeani, 2019; North, 1990).

The institutional theory of development recognizes that historical trajectories and past decisions can have a lasting impact on a country's development path. Path dependence refers to the idea that institutions are often sticky and difficult to change, as they become deeply embedded in society and shape the behavior of individuals and organizations (North, 1990). This implies that countries with a history of weak institutions may struggle to overcome their legacies and achieve sustained development. It highlights the importance of understanding the interconnections between different institutions within a society. Institutions are viewed as complementary and interdependent, such that changes in one institution can have ripple effects on others. For example, a strong legal system may be undermined by weak enforcement mechanisms, leading to impunity and corruption. Therefore, efforts to reform institutions must take into account their interrelations and possible trade-offs.

The institutional theory of development emphasizes the importance of considering the unique institutional context of each country when assessing development strategies. Different countries have distinct historical, cultural, and political factors that shape their institutions and development challenges. One-size-fits-all approaches to development may not be effective, as they often overlook the contextual nuances that influence the success or failure of institutional reforms (Smith, 2018).

The institutional theory of development views development as a dynamic process of institutional change. Development is not simply about increasing economic growth or income levels, but also about transforming institutions to be more inclusive, accountable, and responsive to the needs of society (North, 1990, cited in Ezeani, 2019). This requires building consensus among stakeholders, fostering social trust, and promoting a culture of good governance.

Overall, the institutional theory of development provides a valuable lens through which to analyze the complex interactions between institutions and development outcomes. By understanding the

major assumptions of this theory, policymakers and researchers can better design policies and interventions that address the root causes of underdevelopment and promote sustainable progress.

One critique of institutional theory of development is that oversimplifies complex social and economic dynamics by focusing primarily on formal institutions, while neglecting the influence of informal norms, power relations, and cultural factors (Pierson, 2000). Additionally, some critics argue that the theory may not adequately address the challenges of institutional change and adaptation over time. Despite the critiques, the institutional theory of development is highly relevant to the contemporary development challenges of Nigeria and Taraba state in particular. Understanding the role of institutions in fostering inclusive governance, economic diversification, and sustainable development is crucial in achieving the desired development in the state. By leveraging the insights of institutional theory, the state government and other stakeholders can assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing institutions; identify areas for reform, and design policies and programs that promote positive institutional change and development outcomes in Nigeria. The institutional theory of development is highly relevant to the contemporary development challenges of Nigeria and Taraba State in particular. In the Nigerian context, understanding the role of institutions in fostering inclusive governance, economic diversification, and sustainable development is crucial. This theoretical perspective not only provide a foundation for understanding development but also offer practical insights for policymakers and development practitioners in addressing the multidimensional challenges of development.

The institutional theory of development is highly relevant to good governance in Taraba State as it emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining strong institutions to promote sustainable development. By focusing on improving governance structures, enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, Taraba State can create an environment conducive to economic growth, social development, and overall wellbeing of its citizens. Implementing institutional reforms based on the principles of good governance can help address governance challenges in the state and drive progress towards sustainable development.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, using qualitative data obtained through secondary method of data collection techniques such as books, journals, reports, and documentaries to gather information. Data from past government officials, some retired and serving civil servants, were to generate relevant data and a qualitative descriptive content analysis was employed in analyzing the issues under investigation.

Content Analysis

Good governance and the level of development in Taraba State changed

Governance and development in Taraba State (2015-2023) has been a mixed bag of the following: poor political governance, lack of sound economic development, absence of social services delivery, infrastructure development deficits and general lack of improvement in the quality of life for the residents of Taraba State. These scenarios are discussed under the following thematic areas:

Political Governance: The period under review covers two tenures of one executive governor whose process of emergence may be said to have lacked transparent and accountable process. The period under review is said to have witnessed monumental mechanisms and initiatives aimed at promoting accountability and transparency within the state's governance. One key initiative was the establishment of the Taraba State Open Government Partnership (OGP), which aimed to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance. The OGP attempted in promoting open governance through commitments to improve fiscal transparency, citizen engagement, and access to information. The performance of the government in political governance also saw the establishment of Public Complaints and Anti-corruption Commission, Town hall meetings, community development Committees in all the Local Government Areas, use of online platforms to solicit citizens views on government and responsiveness to the needs of the citizens were all tried at one point or the other in the life of the administration. Despite these efforts, there seems to be no concrete achievements made especially in the area of transparency and accountability which is the hall mark for good governance.

Economic Development: The State Government implemented the Treasury Single Account (TSA) system to consolidate all government funds into a single account, thereby promoting transparency and accountability in the management of public funds (Ibrahim, 2017). The state also adopted the use of technology, such as the deployment of e-procurement systems, to ensure transparency in government procurement processes. All these initiatives were aimed at promoting accountability within the state's governance structure. As a consequence of the deliberate actions of the government, there was a marginal increase in IGR of the state from 1.4 to 6.3 billion annually (stateofstates.kingmakers.com.>state 2020), and this eventually led to GDP growth, some level of employment, reduction in poverty levels, investment inflow, and overall economic performance in Taraba State. This economic development had earned the state government some commendations as the initiatives and mechanisms seems to have contributed to promoting accountability and transparency within the state's governance under the period under study and may have been instrumental in fostering good governance practices in Taraba State. However, the outcome of these initiatives did not last as almost all the areas of the new reforms were abandoned and, in its place, unethical behaviours and lack of accountability sets in.

Social Service Delivery: Despite the revenue accruing to the state, Taraba State did not make significant progress in areas such as health, education, and poverty reduction. In terms of health, there has been no significant improvement in access to healthcare services neither has there been a reduction in disease prevalence. The state government did not invest in improving education facilities so as to enhance increased enrollment rates, which could have led to higher literacy rates and improved educational outcomes. Despite declining social services, the government did not prioritized initiatives in the areas of healthcare and education, thereby neglecting the overall improvement in the wellbeing of citizens. Rather than increase accessibility and quality of services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare programs, it rather decreased in Taraba State.

Infrastructure Development: Infrastructure development is key towards development of the society. Improvement in infrastructures such as construction of new roads, bridges, and other public amenities has potential for socio-economic development of the state. Indeed, the progress made in expanding and upgrading critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, flyover, electricity, water supply, and telecommunications in Taraba State did not meet the desired expectations of the people. Thus, the impact of infrastructural projects on economic growth, social development, and

overall quality of life for the residents continued to deteriorate leaving the greater number of the people under squalor and conditions of deprivation.

Quality of Life: The various socio-economic measures taken and indicators such as health outcomes, education levels, access to clean water, housing conditions, and overall well-being of the residents in Taraba State did not achieve the desired outcomes. Instead, they have contributed in increasing the poverty level among the citizen of the state, raised the level of unemployment and social ills in the state such as kidnapping, communal conflicts and negative social vices. In fact, in 2021 NBS classified the State as being amongst the poverty states in the North-East and Nigeria. This outcome shows clearly absence of good governance which is *sine-qua-non* to development.

Quality of governance and development outcomes in Taraba State

The relationship between good governance and development outcomes in Taraba State under the period of study was influenced by several key factors. One of the main factors was the level of transparency and accountability in the state's governance system. According to Rose-Ackerman (2016), transparent and accountable governance is essential for ensuring that public resources are effectively and efficiently used for development purposes. In Taraba State, this lack of transparency and accountability in the governance operations might have hindered the effective implementation of development projects and initiatives. Another factor that influenced the relationship between poor governance quality and absence of development outcomes in Taraba State was the high level of political instability and leadership ineffectiveness. Daron *et al* (2018) argues that political instability and ineffective leadership are crucial for fostering poor environmental and sustainable development. In Taraba State, political instability and leadership inefficiency hindered government's ability to effectively address the development needs of the state's population, as resources meant for development were said to have been diverted and expended on enhancing peace in the troubled communities.

The capacity of government institutions in Taraba State were never enhanced to effectively to implement policies and programs capable of impacting positively on the social and economic development which also has to do... the relationship between poor governance quality and lack of development outcomes. Corrupt practices lead to misallocation of resources and hinder economic growth and development. Corruption which has been a major obstacle to good governance and development in Taraba State clearly manifested in the poor development outcomes thereby, leading to absence of socio-economic development of the state. Near absence of prudent management of resources resulted in lack of development outcomes. Economic factors, including access to resources and economic opportunities, also influence the relationship between governance quality and development outcomes in Taraba State. A strong economy can support good governance practices and lead to better development outcomes. This was also seen to be non-existent especially in areas such as education and healthcare. Poor access to quality education and healthcare services are an impediment for sustainable development. Again, poor infrastructural development due to lack of accountability and transparency also contributed to the absence of essential services such as, roads, electricity, and water supply. All these indices played a crucial role in the poor development outcomes. The relationship between good governance quality and development outcomes in Taraba State therefore, can be said to be complex and influenced by various factors that influenced development outcomes in Taraba State.

Improving good governance and enhanced development outcomes in Taraba State?

Improving governance and fostering development in Taraba State requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses key challenges and leverages opportunities for sustainable growth and progress. Thus, several strategies can be considered to address the challenges and enhance the quality of governance in the state, leading to better development outcomes. One vital strategy is enhancing transparency and accountability in government operations, including regular public disclosures of financial transactions, budget allocations, and procurement processes. Ensuring that public officials are held accountable for their actions and decisions through oversight mechanisms. Independent institutions are also crucial for building trust and credibility in governance (Transparency International, 2018). In addition to that, strengthening institutions and legal frameworks is essential for effective governance. This includes improving the capacity and effectiveness of government institutions through training, resources, and support for public officials, as well as reviewing and updating legal frameworks to align with international best practices and local needs.

Promoting citizen participation and engagement is another key strategy for enhancing good governance which could usher in development in Taraba State. Providing platforms for citizen participation in governance processes, such as community engagements and public consultations, can empower individuals to have a voice in decision-making. Encouraging civil society organizations and grassroots movements to actively engage in advocacy for good governance is also crucial for fostering accountability and transparency in governance processes. Thus, investing in human capital and infrastructure is fundamental for sustainable development. Prioritizing investments in education, healthcare, and skills development can enhance the human capital of the state and drive economic growth (World Bank, 2015).

Improving infrastructure, such as roads, water supply, and electricity, is essential for supporting economic activities and improving the quality of life for residents. It is therefore; clear that by implementing these strategies and fostering a culture of good governance, transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement, Taraba State can create an enabling environment for sustainable development and progress. It is crucial to tailor these strategies to the specific context and needs of the state, with a focus on inclusivity, equity, and the well-being of all residents. Achieving these strategies is hallmark of good governance and development which the state so much desires.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the three objectives of the study, the study revealed valuable insights into good governance and development trajectories in the state during the period under review:

Good governance and development in Taraba State from 2015 to 2023: Under this objective, the findings shaded light on the overall performance of governance in Taraba State over the past eight years. The findings revealed absence of good governance leading to lack of transparency, accountability, and the rule of law within the state administration that led to little or no development in critical sectors of the state. The findings also revealed that despite the establishment of Open Government Partnership, Public Complaints and Anti-corruption Commission, adoption of Treasury Single Account (TSA), e-procurement e.t.c not much was

achieved in terms of development of the state. Findings also identified some weaknesses in terms of ethnic tensions, lean resources in governance structures, practices, and institutions, as some of the reasons that contributed to the development challenges in the state.

Factors influencing governance quality and development outcomes in Taraba State: The findings under this objective uncover the factors that have negatively influenced the relationship between governance quality and development outcomes in Taraba State. This includes factors such as corruption in the civil service despite the establishment of Public Complaints and Anti-Corruption Commission, adoption of TSA and others. Political instability, lack of institutional capacity, policy incoherence, and lack of involvement of key stakeholders in decision-making processes, lack of adherence to open Government Partnership, Town hall meetings, Community Development Committees in all Local Government Areas and deployment of online platforms for feedback were all factors that impacted negatively on the state's development trajectory during the period under review.

Strategies for improving governance and enhancing development outcomes in Taraba State: The study's findings under this objective identified practical and actionable strategies to enhance good governance practices and promote development in Taraba State. These includes: strengthening institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, enhancing citizen participation, investing in human capital and infrastructure, and fostering a culture of good governance within the state administration structure. The study also found out that tailoring these strategies to the specific context and needs of Taraba State, can be the basis for development of the state.

Overall, the study's findings have provided policymakers, development practitioners, and stakeholders with valuable insights and recommendations for addressing governance challenges and fostering sustainable development in Taraba State. By understanding the dynamics of good governance quality and its impact on development outcomes, the state can chart a new course towards inclusive growth, prosperity, and well-being for all its residents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey towards good governance and development in Taraba State (2015-2023) has been marked by challenges, progress, and opportunities. The State could not be said to have made significant strides in improving governance structures, promoting transparency and accountability, and fostering development initiatives that benefit all of its citizens. The study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between good governance and development in Taraba State. Despite the modest achievements recorded, there were areas that require attention and improvement in order to ensure sustained growth and prosperity for the people of Taraba State. The study also concludes that, there were no serious efforts to enhance transparency and accountability, strict adherence to the implementation of the open government initiative, establishment of anti-corruption mechanisms, that could help to build trust between the government and the people. The lack of promotion of participatory decision-making processes also hindered citizens to have a voice in governance and hold their leaders accountable, hence poor governance output and performance generally in the state.

Recommendations

The following are the general recommendations drawn for the study:

- i. **Strengthening institutional capacity:** One of the key recommendations for the study is the need for the government to focus on strengthening the institutional capacity of governance structures in Taraba State to uphold the tenets of good governance and development of the state. This involves investing in training programs for public officials, enhancing transparency and accountability mechanisms, and ensuring that institutions have the resources and expertise needed to effectively deliver services to the citizens. By improving institutional capacity, Taraba State can enhance the quality of governance and promote better development outcomes.
- ii. **Enhancing citizen engagement:** Another important recommendation is the need for government to prioritize citizen engagement and participation in the governance process. Citizens should be empowered to hold government officials accountable, provide feedback on policies and programs, and participate in decision-making processes. This can be achieved through the establishment of civic education programs, public consultations, and mechanisms for public feedback. By enhancing citizen engagement, Taraba State government can build trust between government and citizens, improve the quality of governance, and promote inclusive development.
- iii. **Addressing structural challenges:** The study also recommends addressing structural challenges that hinder good governance and development in Taraba State. This could involve tackling issues such as corruption, political instability, ethnic tensions, and weak rule of law. Structural reforms may include strengthening anti-corruption agencies, promoting and strengthening political dialogue and reconciliation, and strengthening the legal framework for protecting human rights. By addressing these underlying challenges, Taraba State can create a more conducive environment for sustainable development and improved governance.

Overall, by focusing on strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing citizen engagement, and addressing structural challenges, Taraba State can take steps towards improving good governance and development outcomes in the state. These recommendations can guide policymakers and stakeholders in implementing effective strategies for promoting sustainable development and inclusive governance in Taraba State.

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