

ATTITUDES OF THE PUBLIC TOWARDS GOVERNMENT-OWNED ASSETS IN BENUE STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This study investigated the Attitudes of the Public towards Government-owned Assets in Benue State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and three hypotheses formulated for the study. The area of study was Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The research adopted a descriptive survey research design. Multistage sampling was used to draw a sample of 600 respondents. A structured questionnaire designed by the researchers titled 'Attitudes towards Government-owned Assets Questionnaire, AGAQ' was used for data collection. Mean scores and Chi-square were used to answer the research questions and test the research hypotheses respectively. The study found out that illiteracy, lack of adequate security on social amenities and the feeling that government's property is nobody's belonging were all factors responsible for negative attitudes of the public towards government-owned assets in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state. The study recommended that the government agencies and community leaders should embark on aggressive campaign to create awareness in the public concerning the development of the right attitudes towards government-owned assets and that adequate security should be provided around government-owned assets in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state to protect them from vandalization.

Keywords: Attitudes, Right Attitudes, The Public, Government-owned Assets.

1. Background to the Study

The offhand attitude of the Nigerian public towards government-owned properties to a certain degree militates against the sustenance, usability and maintenance of such government properties. According to Adeleye (2009), most people, especially the illiterates, feel that the government has the sole responsibility of taking care of her assets, projects and properties. With their ignorant credibility, people justify over issues concerning the

government that, government officials loot and exploit the nation's wealth from all the corners of the economic sectors, therefore all the projects and properties owned by the government should as well be maintained and cared for by those that imitated them. According to Ajibola (2009), most people just for some reasons best known and confidential to them hate everything concerning the government and for this they hardly value anything belonging to the government. Lipiel, (2020) is of the opinion that we should ask ourselves, what or who is this government in question?

Government can be referred to as a body, institution or machinery that directs the affairs of a given nation or state. Sorkaa (2002) noted that these affairs revolve around all the things concerning the livelihood and activities of the populace of the nation. Therefore, Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) argued that, this equally means that helping the government to maintain her properties will also support the growth and development of the country as well as individual citizens. Akinyemi, Gambo, Ankel, and Dabara (2016) argue that, most of the government-owned assets are beneficial to the populace and not necessarily to the government officials that provided them. It is therefore dangerously unwise for the users of government-owned assets to exhibit lukewarm attitudes towards the sheer existence of government-owned assets installed around them for their personal use. Fanti (2011) defined government-owned assets those essential or basic amenities provided by both the government to improve the living conditions of the people. Such assets include hospitals, schools, pipe-borne water, electricity and roads among others. Dabara, Ankeli, Guyimu, Oladimeji and Oyediran (2015) observe that the mere installation of government-owned assets in a community is for the betterment and development of such a community and the government is mere fulfilling her responsibility of catering for the welfare of her citizens. This is the reason why in all modern societies, efforts are usually made to maintain government-owned assets which are veritable tools for improving the living condition of the people through such social amenities which have direct bearing on the lives of the people.

When such amenities are adequately provided, such a society seems to be up and doing. Ankeli, Dabara, Oyediran, Guyimu and Oladimeji (2015) opined that the people of such a community are always very active and serious on how to develop and shape the life style of that community such that there will be social development, and in fact, a general societal transformation towards better and higher standard of living. One thing we must know is that, it is when proper care and maintenance is given to such amenities that the government is motivated to proved more. In a situation where public attitudes towards social amenities veer towards total negligence and destruction, Dabara, Lawal, Adebawale, Ankeli, and Gambo, (2016) noted that the government may not want to provide more of such amenities for the people of such a community. Dabara et al however found out that the government does not provide adequate security around her assets which is an invitation to vandalization and neglect by the public. In Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state for instance, historical sources have shown that in the past when the rate of illiteracy was high, the people of the area were not able to appreciate the importance of few amenities that were put in place by the government. Today the situation seems to be almost on the same page with what was obtained in the days of high illiteracy level among the people of the local government. This calls for research to examine the factors responsible for the public's negative attitudes towards government's assets, hence, the present research.

2. Statement of the Problem

With the unequivocal importance of government-owned assets to the survival, livelihood and sustainability of the people of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State, cursory observation by the researchers on the status of government-owned assets in the area of study reveals that most of these assets are in a state of disrepair. Government-constructed roads that are hardly plied by government officials are left surrounded with towering bushes and crawling shrubs which endanger the use of such roads. The researchers' visit to most government-established health institutions in the area revealed an appalling scenario where many of such institutions are surrounded either by refuse dumps or a hoard of herbs and shrubs calumniating into an unhygienic environment unbefitting of the status of such establishments. Government-installed electric poles which supply electricity being used by the locals are left to be devoured by towering inferno during the dry season's incessant and indiscriminate bush burning. Infrastructure in the government-established schools are either pilfered or handled with a reckless abandon resulting to rapid deformation of their life span as well as usage. At times one is left to assume the government to be wrong by citing such assets in certain communities where the beneficiaries brazenly display a nonchalant attitude towards the existence of such assets. Consequent upon this, the problem of the research is stated thus: What are the attitudes of public in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue State towards social amenities?

3. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study.

- i. In what ways does illiteracy contribute to negative public attitudes towards social amenities in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state?
- ii. To what extent does lack of adequate security on government-owned assets contribute to the negative attitudes towards such assets?

4. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

- i. Illiteracy does not significantly contribute to the public's negative attitudes towards government-owned assets.
- ii. Lack of adequate security does not significantly contribute to the public's negative attitudes towards government-owned assets.

5. Research Methodology: This section treated the research methodology under the following subheadings: Research design, area of the study, population, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, validation of the instrument, method of data collection as well as method of data analysis.

6. Research design: This research adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is a research design that collects data from only a portion of a population considered a good representative sample of the entire the population, makes analysis and generalization about the entire population. This research design was appropriate for this research because it was not possible for the researchers to reach out to all local communities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

7. Area of the Study: The area of the study is Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State was formerly known as Katsina-Ala Division of Benue State. It has an estimated area of about 183.4 square kilometers and a projected population of about 191, 679 based on the 2006 national census figures. It is located between latitude 6°N and 8° and longitude 7°E and 9°N. The area comprises of four clans; namely: Ikyura-Tyev I & II, Tongov and Shitile. It is composed of a guinea savannah that favours agricultural activities.

8. Population of the Study: The population of the study comprised all the inhabitants of Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state. There are about 191, 679 people living in the area of study based on the 2006 national population census result.

9. Sample and Sampling technique: A sample of 250 respondents was drawn in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State for the study. The sample was obtained through multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, the researchers used proportionately stratified random sampling to divide the local government area based on the existing four sectional lineages of Ikyura-Tyev I & II, Tongov and Shitile. In the second stage, the researchers adopted simple random sampling to sample fifty (50) respondents from each of the four major sectional clans in the area of study. In the last stage, the researcher adopted cluster sampling by administering the item on any respondents who were met at any form of social gathering.

10. Instrument for data collection: The researchers designed a structured questionnaire titled "Attitudes towards Government-owned Assets Questionnaire, AGAQ for data collection. The questionnaire contained items that respondents were expected to tick an option that best represented their choice.

11. Validation of instrument: In order to elicit relevant information from the respondents the constructed questionnaire was presented two lecturers from the department of Political Science and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation of Benue State University, Makurdi, to ascertain the relevancy of the instrument used. This was done in order to eliminate ambiguous statements from the questionnaire while those that were not relevant were eliminated based on experts' advice. The experts made necessary correction after which the researchers effected the corrections.

12. Data collection: The researchers personally collected data from the sampled respondents. They visited each form of social gatherings in the area of study and administered the questionnaire on them. In some cases, the researchers had to translate the statements into the local dialect to aid the respondents in responding on the instrument. After the completion of the questionnaire, the researchers collected it from the respondents. This increased the return rate of the distributed questionnaire, however, six copies of the questionnaire were not returned.

13. Data analysis: A four point modified rating scale was used to establish the disparity in the respondents' opinions. Thus, Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) =3; Disagree (D) =2; Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 were used by respondents to respond to each item in each cluster. The descriptive statistics of Mean Score were used to answer the research questions. A cut-off

point of 2.50 was used for decision making. Chi Square statistics was used to test the hypotheses 0.05 level of significance.

14. Data presentation: Data was presented based on the postulated research questions and formulated research hypotheses.

Research question 1: Is illiteracy a factor that contributes to negative public attitudes towards social amenities in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue State?

The table overleaf provides information that was used in answering the above research question.

Table 1: Mean Scores of the Influence of Illiteracy on the Attitudes of the Public towards Social Amenities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

S	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Most illiterate publics feel government's assets are to be manhandled without remorse.	246	92	101	23	30	3.41	Agree
2	Most illiterate publics do not report to security agencies when they notice government's assets being vandalized	246	79	129	28	10	3.47	Agree
3	Most literate publics vandalize government's assets at will.	246	28	14	69	135	1.47	Disagree
4	Most illiterate publics aid and abet the vandalization of government's assets.	246	138	82	7	19	3.15	Agree
5	Most illiterate publics take good care of government's assets located within the environment in which they live.	246	11	3	98	134	1.82	Disagree

As shown on table 1 above, respondents agreed with items 1, 2 and 4 which have a mean score above 2.50 but rejected items 3 and 5 which have a mean score below 2.50. The implication of the responses is that respondents were of the view that illiteracy influences the publics' attitudes towards government's assets.

Research hypothesis 1: Illiteracy does not significantly contribute to the public's negative attitudes towards government-owned assets.

Analysis of generated data relating to the above hypothesis is presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis on the Influence of Illiteracy on the Publics' Attitudes towards Government's Assets

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	12	61.5	-49.5	.05	3	282.05	.001	Ho rejected
D	8	61.5	-53.5					
A	126	61.5	64.5					
SA	100	61.5	38.5					

(*P-value=0.001; P=0.001<0.05; Ho rejected*).

Table 2 shows Chi-square (χ^2) value of 282.05 at 3df, $P<0.05$ and H_0 rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that illiteracy does not significantly contribute to the public's negative attitudes towards government-owned assets was rejected. From the result above, the implication is that illiteracy is a contributory factor towards negative attitudes of the public towards social amenities in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state.

Research question 2: Is lack of adequate security a cause of the public's negative attitudes towards social amenities? The table overleaf provides information that was used to answer the above research question.

Table 3: Mean Scores of the Influence of Lack of Adequate Security on the Attitudes of the Public towards Social Amenities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

S/N	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
6	The presence of strong community surveillance apparatus contributes to the negative of most publics towards government's assets	246	12	7	57	286	1.06	Disagree
7	The government does not construct perimeter fences around her assets exposing such assets to vandals.	246	7	4	139	212	3.15	Agree
8	Most security personnel are concerned about properly guarding government's assets.	246	9	18	88	247	1.21	Disagree
9	The presence security posts encourage vandalization of government' assets.	246	24	14	106	218	1.24	Disagree
10	Most community leaders do not sensitize their subjects on the importance of maintaining government's assets.	246	206	132	9	8	3.35	Agree

As shown on the table above, respondents disagreed with items 6, 8 and 9 and accepted only items 7 and 10. The implication of the responses is that respondents agreed with the absence of viable security network encourage the publics' negative attitudes towards government's assets

Research hypothesis 2: Lack of adequate security does not significantly contribute to the public’s negative attitudes towards government-owned assets.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis on the Influence of lack of adequate security on the Publics’ Attitudes towards Government’s Assets

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	1	61.5	-49.5	.05	3	282.05	.001	Ho rejected
D	8	61.5	-53.5					
A	126	61.5	64.5					
SA	100	61.5	38.5					

(P-value=0.001; P=0.001<0.05; Ho rejected).

Table 2 shows Chi-square (χ^2) value of 282.05 at 3df, P<0.05 and Ho rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that illiteracy does not significantly contribute to the public’s negative attitudes towards government-owned assets was rejected. From the result above, the implication is that illiteracy is a contributory factor towards negative attitudes of the public towards social amenities in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue state.

15. Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study revealed that illiteracy is a contributory factor to the negative attitudes of the public towards government’s assets in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The null hypothesis stating that illiteracy has no significant influence on the public negative attitudes towards government’s assets was rejected implying that illiterate people display negative attitudes towards government’ assets. This finding agree with Adeleye (2009), who reported that most people, especially the illiterates, feel that the government has the sole responsibility of taking care of her assets, projects and properties.

The second finding of this study revealed that lack of strong security network around government’s assets contributes to the public’s negative attitude towards government’s assets. The null hypothesis which states that lack of adequate security does not significantly contribute to the public’s negative attitudes towards government-owned assets. This implies that the lack of a robust security network around government’s assets encourages the public’s negative attitudes towards government’s assets. This finding corroborates previous findings by Dabara, Lawal, Adebowale, Ankeli, and Gambo, (2016) who found out that the government does not provide adequate security around her assets which is an invitation to vandalization and neglect by the public..

16. Recommendations/ Implications for Educational Management

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers therefore recommend that:

1. Government at all levels should wage war against illiteracy rate in our country by encouraging adult education and mass literacy in our communities. The policy of free education for all citizens at the primary and secondary school levels should be supported. Educational management can encourage educated adults can support adult literacy campaign by volunteering to teach fellow citizens how to read and

write. This will to large extent curb negative attitudes of the public towards social amenities in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue State.

2. The government and community leaders should provide adequate security measures and apparatuses to safeguard the establishment as well as maintenance of social amenities in the communities. People caught vandalizing or neglecting social amenities around their areas should be made to face the wrath of the law in order to act as deterrence of intending offenders. Educational managers can organize seminars and conferences to sensitize the learners about the essence of protecting and maintain government's assets as they are provided for the benefit of people living around them.

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