

FACTORS INFLUENCING ROLE PERFORMANCE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated crucial factors influencing role performance of community leaders in rural development activities (RDAs) in Southwestern Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents. Primary data were collected from 352 respondents using structure interview schedule while key informants were subjected to in-depth interview. Appropriate descriptive statistical tools were used to summarise quantitative data while content analysis was used for qualitative data. Factor analysis was used to isolate crucial factors influencing role performance. The results showed that majority (78.7 % and 89.2 %) were male and married respectively with a mean age of 51.83 ± 8.91 years. Also, honesty (92.9 %) and individual contributions to RDAs (84.7 %) were the major criteria used for leadership emergence. Protecting the welfare of the community members (mean = 2.42) and community mobilization (mean = 2.28) were the major roles performed. Crucial factors found to be associated with role performance of community leaders in RDAs were household, socio-economic status, bases of influence, institutional support among others. The study concluded that the identified factors were germane to role performance. It was therefore recommended that these identified factors should be considered in selecting people into leadership position to enhance formidable rural leadership structure and sustainable rural development.

Keywords: community leaders, factors, leadership emergence, role performance, rural development activities, southwestern Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas (Vfoundation, 2017). It is an integrated approach to food production as well as

provision of physical, social and institutional infrastructure with an ultimate goal of bringing about both quantitative and qualitative changes which result in improved living standard of the rural population (Adelakun, 2013 and Otigba, 2013). In developing countries like Nigeria, rural development is faced with several challenges

including leadership problem. This account for the reason why many of the rural development projects initiated by past successive governments and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) were either poorly implemented, not well maintained or not sustainable. For instance, development projects that were initiated in the 80's and the 90's in rural areas of Nigeria such as establishment of oil palm processing centres, cassava processing centres, vocational training centres and hand pump bore holes executed by programmes/projects like Better Life for Rural Women, River Basin Development Authorities, Operation Feed the Nation, Agricultural Development Projects among others have become abandoned or malfunctioning while some of them are in the state of dilapidation in spite of huge amount of money spent on them (Ayinde and Akinmusola, 2014). This is because good leadership is required to co-ordinate the action of beneficiaries towards sustainability of the projects.

Success of any development projects has been attributed to effective leadership at the local level who mobilise followers to actively participate in such projects/programmes (Hagberg, 2006). In the same vein, development can only be sustained over the long-term if these leaders are motivated and committed to keeping the momentum going. Despite the fact that many of the rural development projects initiated and executed by government and NGOs are failing in Nigeria, there still abound many self-help projects in most rural communities that are well executed, properly maintained and sustained. This is because in these communities, there are structures occupied by the community leaders who are the drivers of these projects. These community leaders still value the norms and customs of their communities. However, the way these leaders get into leadership positions in their communities is also very germane to the performance of these leaders in their various rural communities.

Community leaders are one of the major key players in Nigerian rural development programmes who influence the thoughts, ideas, actions, behaviour and feelings of other people in their communities. These leaders must be involved at every stage in any rural development programme before such can bring any meaningful result. According to Mgbada and Agumagu (2007), community leaders are people that can influence and direct the activities of a group of people towards the achievement of their target goals. They constitute a part of the power structure in the community and may also belong to one higher economic class or the other. They also ensure that

progress is made in line with group needs and have the capability to influence the behaviour of other members of the community. Mgbada (2006) regarded the community leaders as the people who have some amount of influence in the community even though they may not hold any formal position. They are role models in the community as other villagers look up to them for advice, consultation and others tend to imitate them.

There is no doubt that scholars such as (Akwa and Kpalo, 2013), (Baba *et al.*, 2014), (Mgbada and Agumagu, 2007), and (Oladosu, 2000) have identified different roles performed by community leaders in Nigerian rural development including pioneering of development projects; making decisions on different issues affecting the community; playing influential roles in sourcing for project funds; legitimising of extension programmes; making decision on suitability of extension projects; contributing land and other resources for projects and mobilizing community members' participation in rural development projects. However, the performance of these roles in RDAs by community leaders could be influenced by certain factors which have not been exhaustively investigated, hence, this study.

The main objective of this study was to investigate crucial factors influencing role performance of community leaders in RDAs in Southwestern Nigeria. The specific objectives were to describe socio-economic characteristics of community leaders; identify criteria for leadership emergence; identify roles performed by community leaders and isolated crucial factors associated with their role performance in rural development activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted between January 2016 and March 2017 in Southwestern Nigeria. Combination of methods including positional, reputational, decisional and personal influence or opinion leadership approaches were used to identify influential people in the selected communities. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents (community leaders). At the first stage, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States were purposively selected for the study due to high concentration of rural communities in the States. At the second stage, one rural Local Government Area (LGA) was randomly selected from each of the three Senatorial Districts in each State, making a total of nine LGAs in all. At the third stage, 5 percent of communities in each of the selected LGAs were chosen to make a total of 44 rural

communities. At the final stage, eight community leaders were randomly selected from each of the rural communities, making a total of 352 respondents to elicit quantitative information. Two key informants each were selected for in-depth interview from each selected LGAs, making of 18 respondents. Duly pretested and validated structured interview schedule was used to collect quantitative data while in-depth interview were used to elicit qualitative data.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software while simple descriptive statistical techniques such frequency counts and percentages, means and standard deviation were used to summarize the data collected. Factor analysis was used to isolate crucial factors influencing role performance of community leaders. Variables were grouped using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. The cut-off point for constant loading was 0.30 and the constant loading less than 0.30 was discarded as stipulated by (Anselm and Taofeeq, 2010; Brooks *et al.*, 2006 and Madukwe, 2004). Also, Kaiser's criterion was used to determine the factor to retain in the result of the analysis, thus factors with Eigen value greater than one were retained. The factors were thereafter named based on the following criteria as employed by (Ogunjimi *et al.* 2012).

- i) Picking synonyms of the highest loaded variables on each factor.
- ii) Retaining the name based on the similarity of the features reposed in the variables contributing to the factors.
- iii) Joint explanation or interpretation of the positive and highly loaded variables on each other.
- iv) The researcher's subjective interpretation of experiences from literatures.

Qualitative data were analysed through the use of content analysis. Content analysis is the systematic analysis of the content of a text (e.g., who says what, to whom, why, and to what extent and with what effect) in a quantitative or qualitative manner (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The key informant interviews carried out were recorded with an electronic device and transcribed. The data collected through electronic device was coded by grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts or themes that were discovered in relation to the objectives of the study. Quotations were used to convey key points from the responses which were used to support the quantitative findings.

Role performance was measured by asking the community leaders to indicate the extent to

which they perform their expected roles in rural development activities. Their responses were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from never performed (0 point), rarely performed (1point), occasionally performed (2 points) and always performed (3 points). The total scores of each respondent were calculated as role performance score. These scores were added to obtain a value of 6 which was divided by 4 to get a benchmark of 1.5. Any role with mean score ≥ 1.5 was regarded as major role performed by the respondents while any role with mean score < 1.5 was regarded as minor role performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Results in Tab. I show that majority (83.4 %) of the respondents were within the age groups of 31 to 60 years with the mean age of 51.8 ± 8.9 years. Age is usually regarded as one of the parameters generally used for measuring level of biological, intellectual maturity and experience. It also forms a major criterion for most leadership appointments because wealth of experience coupled with physical ability of the leader could enhance their performance when they give their opinions on community issues. The result is in tandem with the findings of Kuponiyi (2008) and Ojo (2006) who reported that the mean age of local leaders was 53 years in their studies. This finding indicates that majority of the community leaders were still agile and active; and could cope with community responsibilities alongside with their economic activities in order to move their communities forward. Majority (78.7 %) of the respondents were male while 21.3 percent were female. The result indicates that majority of the community leaders involved in rural development activities in the study areas were dominated by male folk. This might be due to the fact that culturally, there is prejudice against women occupying leadership positions in the study area. This result corroborates the findings of Udensi, Udoh, Daasi, and Igbara, (2012), Oyeleke (2013) and Kuponiyi (2008) which established that majority of the local leaders involved in community development projects were male. Majority (89.2 %) were married implying that they were people with responsibilities Marriage is often considered as a respected institution and married people are regarded as mature and responsible people whose views are often to be respected within their rural communities. This is because having a settled home is regarded as

an index of an individual's leadership ability in the study area. This is in line with the findings of Baba *et al.*, (2014), Deji and Makinde (2006), Ojo (2006) and Farinde, Okunade, and Laogun, (2004) which established that majority of local leaders in rural development programmes were married.

Tab. I also reveals that majority (70.2%) of the respondents were indigenes of their communities and 29.8 percent were non-indigenes. Further analysis shows that majority (83.2 %) had lived more than 10 years in their communities with mean year of residence of 28.5 ± 17.5 years. This result corroborates the findings of Deji and Makinde (2006) and Oladosu (2000) which reported that majority of the local leaders were indigenes.

This finding indicates that securing leadership position in rural settings is often attached to indigenous status of the people concerned. This might be connected to the assumption that indigenes are likely to demonstrate higher level of commitment to community development than non-indigenes. The finding also implies that majority of the community leaders had lived for so many years in their various communities and this conforms to the finding of Udensi *et al.*, (2012). The length of period that a leader resides in an area could be a determinant to success of community development projects. This finding is supported by (Lawton, 2005) who reported that duration of residence in the community plays an important

I: Distribution of respondents by their selected personal and socio-economic characteristics (n=352)

Personal Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std Deviation
Marital status				
Single	20	5.7		
Married	314	89.2		
Widow/widower	15	4.2		
Divorced	3	0.9		
Sex				
Male	277	78.7		
Female	75	21.3		
Age in years				
≤ 30	14	4.1		
31–60	294	83.4	51.8	8.9
> 60	44	12.5		
Religious affiliation				
Christianity	255	72.2		
Islam	90	25.7		
Traditional	7	2.1		
Indigenous status				
Indigene	247	70.2		
Non indigene	105	29.8		
Length of residence (years)				
≤ 10years	59	16.8		
11–30 years	156	44.3	28.5	17.5
> 30 years	138	39.2		
Experience in leadership position				
≤ 5 years	101	28.7		
6–10 years	139	39.5		
11-15 years	62	17.6	10.3	7.9
16-20 years	20	6.7		
>20 years	30	8.5		

Source: Field survey, 2017

role in supporting community development. The number of years spent in leadership position could be a yardstick for measuring level of experience in leadership position which may influence effectiveness of community leaders in any developmental activity. The mean years of leadership experience of 10.3 ± 7.9 years, indicating that majority of the community leaders in the study area had been in the leadership positions for quite a long period of time which could enhance their awareness of the roles expected from them by their community members. The finding also suggests that community leaders have gained enough experience which could enhance better performance of developmental projects in their respective communities.

Criteria for Leadership Emergence

The results in Tab. II reveal that the criterion which was mostly considered for leadership emergence across the communities in the study area was integrity or honesty (92.9%), closely followed by individual past contributions to rural development (84.7%), educational status (64.5%), diligence in their occupations (41.5%), years of residence in the community (37.2%), competence of the person in community (29.8%), indigenous status (28.1%), marital status (27%), family background (25.6%), age of the person (25%), gender (15.1%) and financial status of the person (4.3%). Information gathered during the key informant interview (KII) sessions also confirmed that honesty, individual contribution to rural development, educational status and

family background were the important criteria used in selecting people into leadership position in the study area. This implies that in most rural of the communities, honesty, hard work and individual contributions to community activities were the most valued criteria for selecting leaders. This is to ensure transparency and accountability in all transactions especially in money matters resulting to good performance on the part of the leaders and consequently, sustainable development in the communities. This is contrary to the submission of (Ekong, 2010) who reported that some people in leadership positions in rural areas of developing countries see the position as opportunity to enrich themselves. This finding is in consonant with Deji and Makinde (2006) and (Oladosu, 2000) which established that majority of the local leaders in their study areas emerged based on honesty/integrity, hard work, family backgrounds, educational status, experience on community issues and age. The results also conform to the submission of Mensah and Antwi, (2014) who reported that level of education has become one of the criteria for selecting a prospective individual for various leadership positions in the African society.

Role Performance of Community Leaders in RDAs

The results in Tab. III reveal the rank mean order of community leaders' roles in RDAs and show that protecting the welfare of the members (mean = 2.42), mobilizing community members to participate in RDAs (mean = 2.28), maintenance

II: Distribution of respondents according to community leadership emergence criteria (n = 352)

Community emergence criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Integrity/honesty	327	92.9
Individual contributions/activities to RD	298	84.7
Educational status	227	64.5
Diligence in their occupations	146	41.5
Years of residence in the community	131	37.2
Competence	105	29.8
Ethnic/indigenous status	99	28.1
Marital status	95	27.0
Family background	90	25.6
Age	88	25.0
Sex	55	15.1
Financial status	15	4.3

Source: Field survey, 2017

and sustainability of RDAs (mean = 2.25), participating in planning of RDAs (mean = 2.22), contributing resources for RDAs (mean = 2.21) and supervising and coordinating RDAs (mean = 2.16), giving approval to RDAs (mean = 2.09) had mean scores above the benchmark of 1.5 implying they were the major roles performed by the community leaders in RDAs. Others major roles include liaising between governmental agencies and other non-government agencies for assisting in new projects (mean = 2.01), settlement of household disputes or conflicts (mean = 1.76), removal of barrier to development process (mean = 1.75) and conceiving and selling ideas on RDAs (mean = 1.73). On the other hand, awakening political consciousness among community members (mean = 1.42), ensuring conformity to community norms and values (mean = 1.41) and punishing unacceptable behaviour or ostracising erring members of the community (0.91) were minor roles performed by community leaders with mean scores below the benchmark of 1.5. The finding is line with Akwa and Kpalo, 2013, Baba *et al*, 2014, Mgbada and Agumagu, 2007 who established that community leaders performed important roles in rural development in Nigeria.

Below KII excerpts conducted further strengthened the quantitative findings on roles performed by community leaders in rural development activities:

As a leader, on many occasions I have liaised with people in authority to assist our community in providing social amenities and development projects; I donated personal money and resources for community development projects; called meetings to sensitise members of new projects initiated by government and ensure the welfare of my community member. I also used money realized from an international award I got to established 10 hectares of oil palm plantation in this community for the benefit of members. Electricity and other rural empowerment projects were brought into this community through my liaising with government.

(KII excerpt from a community leader from Bamikemo community in Ileoluji/Oke-Igbo LGA, Ondo State)

Whenever any new developmental programme gets into the community, I make announcement about it and give support to the programme; encourage others to participate fully in it and ensure people live peacefully in the community without any rancor and bitterness through peaceful reconciliation of dispute that arises among community. I have mobilized many of members to participate in many

rural development projects such as Fadama III and national programmes on food security where I donated my land for building of community market. (KII excerpt from a community leader from Ikoro Ekiti in Ijero LGA, Ekiti State)

I have personally given my money to assist some indigent members of this community that need help; have taken some decisions on behalf of the community to solve urgent problems like locating the cite for borehole donated by UNDP, have represented my community in many occasions to seek for assistance and sometime have been involved in planning and execution of rural development projects.

(KII excerpt from a community leader from Ode-omu in Ayedaade LGA, Osun State)

A closer look at both qualitative and quantitative results show that majority of the community leaders demonstrated much enthusiasm and commitment to support the development of their various communities. This was exhibited through their efforts in contributing resources to aid community development, playing intermediary roles (acting as a liaison) to get development projects into their communities, giving support for projects and also taking part in settling dispute among community members.

Factors Influencing Role Performance of Community Leaders in Rural Development Activities (RDAs)

Results of factor analysis in Tab. IV show the contribution of each of the highly loaded variables to role performance as follows: Factor 1 – household factor accounted for 15.56 percent, followed by factor 2 – socio-economic status (12.44 %), factor 3 – residency status (10.79 %), factor 4 – bases of influence (8.27 %), factor 5 – institutional support (8.02 %), factor 6 – community related (7.53 %) and factor 7 – leadership characteristics (6.78 %) with the total cumulative variance of 69.4 % while unknown factor accounted for 30.63 %.

Household factor

Results in Tab. V show four variables that contribute significantly to household factor. These were marriage type (L = 0.839), household size (L = 0.797), number of wives (L = 0.792), indigenous status (L = 0.670) and religious affiliation (L = 0.564). Criterion two was used to name the factors (as discussed in the methodology).

It implies that number of wives, marriage type whether monogamy or polygamy and household size in term of number of children also contributed to household factors which could influence role performance of community leaders in rural

development activities. Community leaders from polygamous family are favoured with large household size that could standby in farm work and other enterprises they engaged in whenever they have community development engagements.

III: Distribution of respondents by role performance in rural community development activities (n=352)

Roles in RDPs	N P	R P	O. P	A. P	Ranked mean	S.D
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)		
Protecting the welfare of the community members	20(8.5)	12(3.4)	83(23.6)	227(64.5)	2.42	0.90
Community mobilization	29(8.2)	20(5.7)	116(33)	187(53.1)	2.28	0.88
Maintenance and sustainability of CDAs	55(15.6)	17(4.8)	73(20.7)	207(58.8)	2.25	1.00
Participating in planning of RDAs	64(18.2)	28(8)	94(26.7)	166(47.2)	2.22	1.02
Contribution of resources to RDPs	37(10.5)	37(8.8)	122(34.7)	162(46)	2.21	0.91
Supervision and coordination of RDPs	62(17.6)	31(8.8)	109(31)	115(32.7)	2.16	0.94
Giving approval to RDAs	42(11.9)	34(9.7)	112(31.8)	164(46.6)	2.09	1.00
Liaising with government and NGOs for assistance	76(21.6)	36(10.2)	103(29.3)	137(38.9)	2.01	1.09
Dispute settlement	70(19.9)	46(13.1)	119(33.8)	117(33.2)	1.76	1.20
Conceiving and selling ideas on CD	121(34.4)	35(9.9)	81(23)	115(32.7)	1.73	1.20
Awakening political consciousness	162(46)	45(12.8)	47(13.4)	98(27.8)	1.42	1.29
Ensuring conformity to community norms.	109(31)	72(20.5)	79(22.4)	92(26.1)	1.41	1.18
Ostracizing/punishing erring members	177(50.3)	102(29)	44(12.5)	29(8.2)	0.91	0.96

Benchmark = 1.5, NP = Never performed, RP = rarely performed, Occasionally Performed, AP = Always Performed, SD = standard deviation

Source: Field survey, 2017

IV: Results of principal component analysis showing the initial eigen values of factors influencing role performance of community leaders in rural development activities (n = 352)

S/N	Factors	Initial Eigen values		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	Household	5.377	15.56	15.56
2	Socio-economic	4.411	12.44	38.00
3	Residency status	3.820	10.79	38.79
4	Bases of influence	2.685	8.27	47.06
5	Institutional support	2.621	8.02	55.08
6	Community related	1.537	7.53	62.61
7	Leadership characteristics	1.417	6.78	69.37
8	Unknown factor	< 1.00	30.63	100

Source: Computed from data, 2017

This would enhance their role performance in RDAs since they have people who can continue their farm works when they are not there.

Socio-economic factor

Results show that this factor was named by using seven positively loading variables. These were years of formal education ($L = 0.688$), farm size ($L = 0.554$), occupation ($L = 0.536$), cosmopolitaness ($L = 0.535$), competency ($L = 0.460$) and community recognition ($L = 0.441$). The factor was named based on criteria three and four. Many years of formal education, high external orientation, large farm size and sustainable occupation of the respondents were summed up to form socio-economic factors which could increase the role performance of community leaders in RDAs. This is because a community leader that has high level of education and travel wide would have high level of exposure that could assist him in making quality decision in the community. Also, the kind of occupation and amount of money earn from the job could also influence his role performance in RDAs.

Residency status factor

Tab. V shows that variables which significantly contributed to residency factors were years of residence ($L = 0.926$), nature of residence ($L = 0.777$) and indigenous status ($L = 0.733$). It was only two variables, years of residence and nature of residence that were positively loaded. Criteria three and four were used to name the factor. The period and nature of residence of a community leader are likely to influence his role performance in RDAs. This implies that those leaders who maintained single and permanent residence within their communities are likely to be more supportive to rural community development activities because of their availability in the communities. Therefore, they are likely to be better disposed to role performance in RDAs. Besides, the length of residence of a leader in a community is a key factor that has been attributed to success of rural community development projects.

Bases of influence factor

Results show that home ownership ($L = 0.889$), year of residence ($L = 0.796$), age in years ($L = 0.691$), experience in leadership position ($L = 0.548$), marital status ($L = 0.441$) and competence ($L = 0.366$) were variables found to have positively

and significantly contributed to bases of influence factor. This naming was based on criteria three and four. Age of a person, length/year of residence of a person, years of experience in leadership position, having a settle home and the level of competence of a person are bases through which community leaders influence their members. The findings imply that role performance of a community leader depends largely on the qualities possess as a leader to influence the community members into action.

Institutional support factors

Results in Tab. V reveal three variables were found to be positively and significantly contributed to this factor. These were roles of government ($L = 0.980$), availability of infrastructural facilities ($L = 0.701$) and roles of family members in rural development activities ($L = 0.681$). The factor was named based on criteria two and four. If government as an institution performs her roles such as provision of social infrastructural facilities, promoting rural development policies, subsidizing farm inputs, funding rural development projects among others; family as an institution also performs her roles by supporting community leaders and infrastructural facilities are available in the rural communities, this could enhance role performance of community leaders in RDAs.

Community related factor

Results show that four variables were positively and significantly contributed to community related factor. These were community experience ($L = 0.879$), community culture ($L = 0.732$), community attitude ($L = 0.651$) and community recognition of leaders ($L = 0.389$). All these variables put together form community related factors which could influence role performance of community leaders in RDAs. The name was based criteria three and four. This implies that positive experience of community members to rural development projects, favourable attitude community of members towards RDAs and recognition of active and committed leaders to rural development would enhance role performance of community leaders in rural development activities. Besides, prevailing culture in the community could influence participation of people in rural development programmes which would eventually influence role performance of community leaders in RDAs.

V: Factor analysis showing variables contributing to each of the factors (n = 352)

Factors and contributing variables	L	L ²	Λ
1. Household factors			
Marriage type	0.839	0.7039	
Household size	0.797	0.6352	
No of wives	0.792	0.6272	2.734
Indigenous status	0.670	0.4489	
Religion	0.564	0.3181	
2. Socio-economic factors			
Years of education	0.688	0.4733	
Income	0.669	0.4476	
Farm size in hectares	0.554	0.3069	
Occupation	0.536	0.2873	2.2074
Cosmopolitaness	0.535	0.2862	
Competency	0.460	0.2116	
Community recognition	0.441	0.1945	
3. Residency status factors			
Years of residence	0.926	0.8575	
Nature of residence	0.777	0.6037	1.9985
Indigenous status	0.733	0.53731	
4. Bases of influence factors			
Home ownership	0.889	0.7903	
Year of residence	0.796	0.6336	
Age in years	0.691	0.4775	2.3947
Experience in leadership position	0.548	0.1648	
Marital status	0.441	0.1945	
Competency	0.366	0.1340	
5. Institutional support factors			
Roles of government	0.980	0.9604	
Availability of infrastructures	0.701	0.4914	1.9192
Roles of family members	0.681	0.4637	
6. Community related factors			
Community experience	0.879	0.7726	
Community culture	0.732	0.5358	
Community attitude	0.651	0.4238	1.8835
Community recognition	0.389	0.1513	
7. Leadership characteristics factors			
Emotional stability	0.785	0.6162	
Competency	0.712	0.5069	1.6640
Ability to delegate leadership roles	0.488	0.2381	
Empathy	0.458	0.2098	
Communication skill	0.305	0.0930	

L = Loading for factors, L² = Square of loading factors

λ = Latent root for the factor (summation of the square loading)

Source: Computed from data, 2017

Leadership characteristics factor

The results show that this factor was named by using five positively loaded variables. The naming was based on criterion three. These were emotional stability ($L = 0.785$), competence ($L = 0.712$), ability to delegate leadership roles ($L = 0.488$), empathy ($L = 0.458$) and communication ability ($L = 0.305$). This finding corroborates Oladosu (2000) who first identified and coined leadership characteristics as a factor

for role performance effectiveness of local leaders. This implies that the higher the leadership characteristics possessed by community leaders, the higher the role performance of such leaders in RDAs. This is because when a leader is emotionally stable during crises situation and patience, competence in performing his/her roles, has empathized with his/her members and also has ability to put across information on development projects to his members, it would enhance his performance.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that most rural communities in the study area considered integrity, individual contribution to rural development in the past, diligence and educational status as the major criteria for leadership emergence. Furthermore, major roles performed by the community leaders were protecting the welfare of the members, community mobilisation and maintenance and sustainability of rural development project activities. It was also established that the factors that influence role performance of community leaders in rural development activities were household factor, socio-economic factor, residency status factor, bases of influence factor among others. It is therefore recommended that these identified factors should be considered in selecting people into leadership position to enhance formidable rural leadership structure and sustainable community development, since possession of these qualities would promote effective role performance.

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