

# Democracy and Social Welfare Services in Nigeria: A Perspective of the Forth Republic

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## Abstract

The concern for Social wellbeing of a nation's citizens is one of the top policy priority areas for any responsible government across the globe. This concern places a heavy burden on not only the national government but also attract international interest and interventions. Social welfare programmes emanating from this concern for wellbeing is one effort that is often used as criteria to measure the developmental interest of a government about its citizens. Given the fact that social welfare programmes remain people-oriented efforts, it is expectedly a close acquaintance of a democratic leadership. Democratic governance, having been experimented and accepted in Nigeria as the only people-oriented leadership process makes it an obvious sine qua non for an improved social welfare service delivery. This paper therefore explores the two separate but interrelated concepts of "democracy and social welfare" with a view to establishing the link and/ or extent to which democracy enhances qualitative social welfare services and improved living standard. The paper obtained data principally from field survey and documented opinion on the on the Nigerian governments' developmental and intervention policies and implementation strategies from 1999 to 2013. Aligning the paper to social democratic theory, it is maintained that democratic government provides premise for social welfare services and remains a veritable platform to identifying and /or providing transformational interventions that satisfy social needs at the grass root. The paper identifies some challenges for an effective and sustainable welfare service delivery to include inter-alia; lack of conducive environment for social welfare, inadequate demonstration of political will by the leadership to ensure wellbeing of citizens and whole scale corruption in the entire service delivery process. It is concluded that, the Nigeria government has well-articulated functional programmes that could address specific social needs but marred by the aforementioned challenges. Hence, social welfare services are operationally not effective to ensure wellbeing. There is need for a strong legislation to compel the provisions of necessary infrastructure for such interventions to be meaningful, prompt disbursement of funds, stiffer penalty on corrupt officials of service agencies, amongst other recommendations.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Welfare, Wellbeing, Corruption

## 1.1 Introduction

The universal consensus on the need for good governance is essentially linked to the growing thirst for an improved and qualitative living standard and a secured environment. These growing demands on governance bring to fore a mandatory appeal for a participatory and democratic governance to allow for a proper articulation of social needs and problems to guide policy formation. Democratic governance has therefore been accepted and tested to have acquired the requisite ingredients and paraphernalia to serve as an effective platform for not only a people oriented governance but a sure way of ensuring result oriented governance and development. As part of its structural strategies to fulfil its going concern, democratic practice has within its credentials social welfare services orientation, Social services that guarantee a gradual but a steady improvement on the living conditions of its subjects and a general transformation of the society. Social welfare is now a common characteristic of modern democracies to the extent that democratic performances are measured through welfare programs and the wellbeing of the citizenry.

From the theoretical point of view and indeed critical examination of these concepts (democracy and social welfare) there will be no need contesting the rewarding fraternity between them especially when viewed against the philosophy of the welfare state. Democracy and social welfare are not only seen as being related but a corollary of the other. Relying on the perception of democracy as a platform for transformational and improved services, it is expected that the return of democracy in 1999 to Nigeria with the euphoria of hopes it generated, a decade and more years down the line would be a major phase of celebrating a land mark economic maturity, improved living condition and social transformation. Against these expectations and hopes, Nigerian democratic experience has rather been awash by economic hardship, rising unemployment rate, hunger, vagrancy and growing social injustice among other problems (Bakare, 2013). Without a deliberate attempt to pre-empt or demean the performance of some of the social welfare programmes like the millennium development goals

(MDGs) initiative, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and other social services agencies in Nigeria, there is hardly a noticeable improvement in the quality of service provided by the democratic Nigerian government which can be measured through the wellbeing of its citizenry since 1999. The aim of any social welfare service will be squarely defeated if it fails to be a major manifesting character on the status and wellbeing of the beneficiaries. The task of this paper is to determine the impact of democratic governance through social welfare services on the wellbeing of Nigerians and to determine the capacity of those welfare agencies for impactful results. It is also within the concern of this paper to explore the relationship inherent between democracy as a government and social welfare services as an effort for improved social wellbeing since 1999.

### Research Questions

1. To what extent has democratic governance improved social wellbeing of Nigerians through welfare services?
2. What is the environment of social welfare in Nigeria
3. Do the welfare programmes have the capacity to improve social wellbeing of the impoverished Nigerians?

### 1.2 Conceptual Clarification of Welfare

The state of welfare and the surrounding variables that uplift the living status of a man to near perfect stage of wellbeing is subject of many considerations. If the purpose of welfare is to attain wellbeing, it then suggests a whole range of interventions to include choice and unhindered expression of liberty on the part of the recipient and complete absence of promiscuity in welfare administration. However, the character content of the welfare recipient being vulnerability, abandoned and societal casualties makes it difficult because the nature and pattern of services provided to this group of people come in form of intervention to address certain basic needs or to ameliorate some identified deformities in them. The question of wellbeing therefore remains elusive. This scenario posed a great challenge to a universal definition and also makes “welfare” a relative concept that has a common foundation of “help” but lacks a common acceptable operational module. Providing a working definition of the concept therefore remains a subject of situational and / environmental context.

Although welfare is widely seen to be a non- profit motivated services but that which is aimed at satisfying basic needs of the less privileged provided by individuals, group or government (Dolgoft, 2012). It is social when the services are articulated for group and community interests for the sole purpose of improving the living conditions of the citizenry. This correlates with the opinion of Richard (2012), which saw social welfare to involve those non profit functions of the society, public or voluntary, that are clearly aimed at alleviating distress and poverty or ameliorate the conditions of casualties of society. As apt as this view is in identifying the basic elements of welfare, it fails to provide the main purpose of welfare which is the state of wellbeing. This definition is only confined to intervention or efforts to remedy the conditions of the societal casualties and alleviate poverty and not to uplift the living condition to attain the state of wellbeing.

Robert, M.S (1998), on his part sees social welfare to include programmes whose explicit purpose is to protect adults and children from degradation and insecurity of ignorance, illness, disability, unemployment and poverty. Gutman (1998) presents social welfare as a deliberate set of government intervention in form of policy expressed through programmes of action targeted toward addressing social problems in the society. Although welfare is not a state monopoly that necessarily requires policy and a designed programme of action but involves residual intervention that begins from family unit and groups of common interest. The idea of charity and concern for one another predicated on the spirit of common bound of humanity is completely lost if Gutman’s (1998) view is to be considered. Welfare, as given within the context of this paper, is an institution comprising policies and laws expressed by organised activities of voluntary ( private) and / government (public) agencies by which a defined minimum of social services, money and other consumption rights are distributed to individuals, families and groups by criteria other than those of the market place or those prevailing in the family system, for the purpose of preventing, alleviating or contributing to solution of recognised social problems, so as to improve the wellbeing of the individual, group and communities directly.

Democracy on the other hand represent a manifestation of a society where government is only one element coexisting in a societal fabric of many and varied institutions, political parties, organisation and associations. A true democratic state is one that operates in accordance with a constitution that limits the power of the government and guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens (Wikipedia). The central concern remains the people which therefore underscores the growing demands for people-centred policies and programmes without which makes governance worthless. As aptly captured by bakare ..

*“when we talk about the people in a democratic system of government, we mean the people, the masses, the folks, the community, the proletariat, the common people, through whom the privileged occupiers of office derived their power. Power belongs to the people, and democratic governance recognises it holds power in trust for the people.*

*It therefore listens to the people, not out of a sense of benevolence but because it has no choice. It has to carry the people along all the time to retain its legitimacy. But all these of course, are near-ideal or ideal situation” ( Bakare, 2013)*

The success of any government policies and programmes is measured by the extent of human growth and development recorded within a period of time. Pennock (1979;7), describes democracy as that government by the people where liberty, equality and fraternity are secured to the greatest possible degree and in which human capacities are developed to the utmost, by means including free and full discussion of common problems and interest. This description has by no small means sufficiently highlighted the basic link and determining factors of democracy, which is “people” all inclusive government. Equality, liberty and fraternity provide unparalleled propensities for the growth, development and survival of man and his society. His mental and physical capacities can only be adequately harnessed and utilised if he is free and treated with equal opportunity under an economic, political and socially conducive infrastructures. On the part of Schmitter and karl (1991;76), democracy represents a modern political economy as a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizen, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representative. This is yet another emphatic postulation on the right of man as a veritable factor in democratic governance. Accountability, probity and transparency are the hallmarks of a democracy. It is indeed an opportunity on the part of the governed to demand and also hold leaders accountable for any failure especially when social conditions are unfavourable.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

This study is conducted within the context of the “theory of social democracy”. This is because, social welfare administration is highly connected to the driving philosophy of democratic governance, that is, service for the common good and promotion of equality. Social democracy theory has all the requisite premises and analytical properties to accommodate this study for knowledge contributory outcome

Social democracy is a political ideology that officially has its goal as the establishment of democratic socialism through reformist and gradualist methods (Levine, 1976). Alternatively, social democracy is defined as a policy regime involving a universal welfare state and collective bargaining schemes within the framework of a capitalist economy (Meyer, 2007). It is often used in this manner to refer to the social models and economic policies prominent in Western and Northern Europe during the latter half of the 20th century.

Following the split between reformists and revolutionary socialists in the Second International, Social democrats have advocated for a peaceful and evolutionary transition of the economy to socialism through progressive social reform of capitalism. Social democracy asserts that the only acceptable constitutional form of government is representative democracy under the rule of law. It promotes extending democratic decision-making beyond political democracy to include **economic democracy** to guarantee employees and other economic stakeholder’s sufficient rights of co-determination. It supports a mixed economy that opposes the excesses of capitalism such as inequality, poverty, and oppression of various groups, while rejecting both a totally free market or a fully planned economy. Common social democratic policies include advocacy of universal social rights to attain universally accessible public services such as education, health care, workers’ compensation, and other services, including child care and care for the elderly. Social democracy is connected with the trade union labour movement and supports collective bargaining rights for workers. Most social democratic parties are affiliated with the Socialist International.

### **1.4. Methodology**

This research is a survey type which seeks to examine first, the relationship between democracy and social welfare administration in Nigeria and secondly, to determine the impact of democratic governance on social wellbeing of Nigerians. Scholarly opinions were sought through administration of questionnaire on academic staff that are vast and not only experienced but specialised on the field of governance and administration. Samples were drawn from the Universities of Abuja, Nassarawa State University, Federal University lokoja and Kaduna State University, Kaduna. A total of 65 lecturers were consulted and administered questionnaire

### **1.5. Presentation of Findings**

The research outcome is presented as arranged in the questionnaire instrument with the issues raised for examination. Table 1.5.1 captures issues that seek to weigh the impact of the Nigerian government through those institutions of social service. Table 1.5.2 presents responses on the environment of social welfare; this has to do with social amenities and infrastructures that propel socio economic growth of the masses. The belief here is that when socio economic infrastructures are available the average individual in the society will harness his full potentials whereby government will have to contain with the real vulnerable and societal casualties.

**Table 1. 5. 1. Social Welfare Services and Democratic Governance**

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	successive governments of the fourth republic have significantly reduced the level of poverty through NAPEP	65	2.4	1.609	Disagree
2	the amnesty program has significantly improved the people of the Niger delta	65	3.31	1.413	Agree
3	the universal basic education system has provided basic education to large population of the poor	65	3.72	1.281	Agree
4	The federal housing authority has provided adequately equal opportunity for housing to all at affordable rate	65	2.20	1.289	Disagree
5	the NHIS has made health care services accessible and affordable available	65	2.95	1.419	
6	The Nigerian government has also been promptly responsive to the plight of disaster victims Through NEMA	65	3.40	1.235	Agree
7	The NPHCS has also made significant impact on the prevention of child killer and other related disease	65	3.63	1.153	Agree
8	The MDG intervention has been effective and has made significant improvement towards realization of its goal.	65	3.32	1.251	Agree

From the above analysis on the impact of government through these institutions or services on the living condition of Nigerians it shows that the respondents Disagree that successive governments of the fourth republic have not significantly reduced the level of poverty through NAPEP and the federal housing authority. The FHA remains inadequate in ensuring equal opportunity for all Nigerians with apparently unaffordable rate of housing to the average Nigerian. The calculated mean of 2.20 is evidence that the authority has done less in meeting the yearnings of Nigerians and the 2.40 also indicates a gross disenchantment on the performance of NAPEP

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid N (listwise)	8	2.94	3.72	3.3088	.28216

Generally the result shows that the respondent generally agreed that Governments has slight significant impact on the living conditions of Nigerian through those institutions with a mean of 3.3088 and a standard deviation of 0.28216. this suggest that the Nigerian government has functionally deviated from its main responsibilities which makes it less effective in the provision of needed services that will promote growth and development of its citizenry through those specialized institutions like NAPEP and FHA amongst others.

**Table 1. 5. 2. The Environment of Social Welfare**

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	SD	REARKS
1	Irregular and unstable power supply have significant relationship with the poverty situation of Nigerians	65	3.11	1.382	Agree
2	Lack of accessible and affordable housing for all is significantly connected to the poor living conditions	65	3.29	1.497	
3	Lack of government controlled transport system based on susidy	65	2.94	1.435	
4	poor standards of education in the public schools which neccsiteded the patronage of the private schoolin search	65	3.35	1.408	
5	Poor medical services in the public health facilities led to the growth of the private couterparts at economic detriment of the masses,thus placing more economic burden to little income of an average Nigerian	65	3.45	1.370	
6	deplorable conditions of the Nigeria roads reduce vehicles life span and other means of transportation,thus increase spending on maitenanceand /or umduereplacement whichtherefore entraps one another into shackles of poverty	65	3.58	1.368	
7	The welfare service institutions lack the capacity to address the dynamic social problems in Nigeria and cannot significantly improve the living conditions of the downtrodden	65	3.14	1.446	

From the above table it has shown that the impact of governments on social welfare is insignificant supported by the table below with a grand mean of 3.2867 and a standard deviation of 0.23157. This is a

practical demonstration of failure of government in making the environment of social welfare conducive. It is a fact that, these essential services provide a premise and create an avenue for human growth and development. This therefore establishes a gap between those with the natural capacity to strive and make meaning to their lives and environment and those who are incapacitated by nature or other factors of life and therefore require intervention. But when those factors are insufficiently provided, even those with relative capacities became vulnerable

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Grne	6	2.94	3.58	3.2867	.23157
Valid N (listwise)	6				

**Test of Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested for the study.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between democracy and social welfare administration in Nigeria

H<sub>02</sub>: Democratic governance has no significant impact on the social wellbeing of Nigerians through its social welfare services

**Correlations**

		Q	S
Q	Pearson Correlation	1	-.626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	65	65
S	Pearson Correlation	-.626**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	65	65

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result on correlation shows that there is a significant relationship between the Democracy and living condition of people through social welfare since alpha value 0.05 is less than the p – value 0.00.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.626 <sup>a</sup>	.391	.382		.82272

a. Predictors: (Constant),

the impact of government on the living condition of Nigerian

**The regression model summary shows that the relationship between** ), the impact of Democratic government on the living condition of Nigerians through social Welfare services in Nigeria is 0.626 indicating that change in government contribute only 39% change in the environment of social welfare administration in Nigeria. The environment here refers to those essential services that have direct bearing on living conditions of Nigerians. These include motorable road networks, qualitative and functional education services, affordable healthcare services, affordable housing, and functional transportation services amongst others.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.204	.473		13.127	.000
l the impact of democratic government on the living condition of Nigerians through social welfare	-.888	.139	-.626	-6.366	.000

a. Dependent Variable: The environment of social Welfare Administration in Nigeria.

The table of coefficients reveals using standardized Beta shows that the impact of government on the living condition of Nigerian through social welfare administration is reducing by 63% based on the analysis.

## 1.6. Discussion of Findings

The data generated from the field were analysed and interpreted using statistical tools of regression and correlation in order to strengthen and or properly define the position of the opinion harvested from the study. Table one contains institutions and areas of social welfare services that have direct impact on the living conditions of Nigerians at all levels. NAPEP and FHA for instance are established to address issues of poverty through empowerment schemes and available but affordable housing respectively. They are a conscious and deliberate policy framework that seeks to provide intervention services that will alleviate the suffering conditions of the impoverished Nigerians. This programmes and institutions are placed under review to harvest scholarly perception of Nigerians on their performances and also their connection to social wellbeing. It is evidenced from the finding that the institutions of welfare services like NAPEP has not only failed to record significant improvement on the poverty situation of larger population of Nigerians but have also slightly deviated to the tone of 1.60 on government approaches to social services. This means therefore that conscious and sincere determination to actually face the menace of poverty is convincingly absent. In other words, the needed political will on the part of the political leadership to spur the institutions in achieving on their mandate is conspicuously lacking.

Except for the amnesty programme which is a special intervention programme meant for a particular target beneficiaries, government intervention in this regards received endorsement as it is supported with 3.3 mean score to agree strongly on its impact. Same goes for the NEMA on its emergency response to disaster victims. It is agreed that government through this agency remains responsive only to the extent of first aid and temporal interventions, which scored 3.40. The government's primary healthcare services programme has also been applauded as it scored 3.6 mean to signify effectiveness. This is true especially when viewed from the polio immunisation programme and other immunisation exercises against child killer diseases. The result is quite conspicuous as such diseases are reduced to the lowest ebb.

Table two looks at governance in relation to the living conditions of the Nigerian masses. It considers those aspects of services that justify the existence of government; services that are of primary concern to the government and the governed; services that remain the pillars to socio economic growth and survival of the society. This is to determine whether provision and availability of such services will shape the living pattern and conditions of the average man. For instance, adequate and stable supply of electricity, affordable housing, subsidised transport system, qualitative education services, medical services, good road network amongst others services are and should be provided as a primary responsibility of government, this is what obtains across the globe. These services are assumed to be a veritable premise and of course a starting point for an average Nigerian to strive and even excel, except for the vulnerable, depending on the individual capacity to explore opportunities available to him. It is against this backdrop that this research determines the likely influence these services have on the lives of an average Nigerian. This will to a large extent suggest how effective welfare services will be sustained.

Table two shows 3.11 mean score to indicate total acceptance that there is indeed an inherent correlation between electricity supply and the living condition of the average Nigerian. The necessity and importance of electricity to the socio economic survival of community and individuals oblige man to acquire it even at high financial rate with the entire concomitant health hazard that traced it. The idea here is the extra spending attribute of the alternative source of power which inadvertently entraps the community and individuals into the shackle of sustainable poverty if the income remains the same. Same opinion applies to transportation, roads, education, medical services, and housing as contain in table 2. Although there is considerable variations in the level and degree of acceptance, but the respondents are of the view that absence of those services further made life difficult for an average man. These services are expectedly provided free or on subsidy, which would have made savings easier for proper utilisation and improvement in life pattern. On the last item which determines the capacity of these welfare institutions to effectively improve the condition of life of an average Nigerian, it indicates 3.40 mean score to also align with the existing positions. This is because; the environment for the effective welfare administration is regrettably not conducive as the pillars for economic and social transformations remain painfully wishy-washy. The environment here refers to those essential services needed to encourage those with the capacity to domesticate nature and utilise available resources for self growth while the wicker ones can easily be identified for support /intervention. But the absence of such services makes virtually larger percentage of the society vulnerable, thus making welfare administration too complex to handle. The forces of Poverty (institutionally induced poverty) are pre eminently alarming to have marred the success of any welfare service aimed at improving the social conditions of the down trodden.

## 1.7. Summary and Conclusion

The target of this research is simply one, to establish the relationship between social amenities or real infrastructures (environment of social welfare) and the social condition of the average Nigerian. Secondly, is to determine the impact of those available social welfare service institutions in Nigeria with a view to assessing

their contributions to the improvement of the social conditions of Nigerians. The scholarly views harvested from the field in the course of the research indicate a complete dependency and sustainability of the social welfare services on the availability of the real infrastructures (environment of social welfare). This means that all efforts to improve the social conditions of the downtrodden through social services can only be effective if those real infrastructures are adequately provided. This therefore suggests the necessity to pay a considerable attention to the real infrastructure which guarantees conducive environments and propensities for individual and collective development. In conclusion therefore, the failure of social policy in Nigeria is not just with the design and corrupt practices that characterised the implementation of social policies but largely for the lack of needed infrastructure that exposes the real vulnerable and societal casualties who social welfare services are meant for. By way of recommendation nonetheless, there is need for the Nigerian government to reset its priorities and pay adequate attention to qualitative provision of infrastructural and / or social amenities. The incentive here is a twin benefit of addressing poverty because individuals with entrepreneur capacities will utilise the available resources to strive. The second incentive is that the real vulnerable groups in the society will be identified for efficient and effective welfare services. The anti corruption institutions should be properly repositioned with sufficient funding and decentralised for effective operations across public institutions. There is need for periodic review of performance of those service institutions against their mandate as this will inadvertently introduce a regime of management by objective that will metamorphosed into a result oriented institutions like what obtains in the USA and the Scandinavians countries.

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