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Does Lawmaking Make Any Difference on Nigerians? Evidence from Selected Acts of the National Assembly

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Abstract

Since 1999, the National Assembly has been making laws for the country and studies have shown the performance level to be above average. However, the impact of these laws on the people is still questionable and has continued to raise concerns among scholars, practitioners and other stakeholders. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to examine the impact of these laws on the lives of Nigerians. In doing this, the paper adopted mixed method of research to analyze the selected laws enacted by the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Assemblies based on their objectives. The paper found that the objectives of the selected Acts were well thought-out but the level of impact on the people is very low. It attributed the major cause of this trajectory to executive's non-implementation or weak enforcement of these laws which was mainly as a result of the cold executive-legislative relations. Based on this, the paper recommended among others, better working relationship between the National Assembly and the Presidency to ensure harmony and increased capacity of the major political parties to mediate in occasional friction between the two arms in order to ensure holistic implementation of the Acts of the National Assembly.

Keywords: legislative effectiveness, executive-legislative relations, Bills, National Assembly, lawmaking.

Introduction

The discourse on the significance of the legislature in democratic governance seems no longer debatable. Studies have established that democracy cannot exist without the legislature as the former is weaved around the latter (Carey, 1996; Mayhew, 2000; and Best, 2014). Scholars have even taken a step further to argue that the status of the legislature depicts how strong or weak a democracy is (Fish, 2006). For a democracy to survive, the people must get value for their participation and support. Such democratic government must entrench good governance through what is today popularly termed 'dividends of democracy'. These dividends cannot be made available without effective legislative performance in terms of lawmaking, oversight, representation and budgeting.

Section 15-18 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria (as amended) provides for the objectives of government to make life worthwhile for Nigerians. To achieve these

objectives, section 4 of the Constitution empowers the National Assembly to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the country. The National Assembly has continued to perform this constitutional duty since 1999 with several Bills processed by the two chambers (Senate and House of Representatives). In view of this, several studies have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Nigerian National Assembly especially on lawmaking since the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999 (Saliu & Bakare, 2016; Adetula, 2009; and Ekor, Katz, & Iweala, 2014). There is convergence in the findings of these studies which show that the National Assembly is performing above average in terms of number of Bills passed. For instance, between 1999 and 2011, the National Assembly passed an average of 345 Bills out of which 183 were assented to, putting the lawmaking effectiveness level of the National Assembly at 53 per cent (Bakare, 2018).

However, as encouraging as this seems, little efforts have been expended on probing the extent by which these Acts of the National Assembly impact, whether positively or otherwise, on the people. This is in line with the position of Barkan (2010) that it is not sufficient to measure the effectiveness of the legislature by the number of Bills alone, rather, a step should be taken further to assess the impact level of the Bills on the people (i.e. number and content of Bill approach). It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to probe into the impact level of the Acts of the National Assembly on the people. The main objective is to examine whether or not these laws make any meaningful difference on the lives of Nigerians. Other objective is to identify the priority of the Nigerian legislators in terms of the policy direction. This will enable the identification of the area that attracted more attention of the lawmakers.

To achieve these objectives, the paper adopted mixed method research design. This entails the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. Data were sourced from official reports of the National Assembly and complemented with scholarly publications. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as simple percentage, frequency tables and percentiles. The numbers of Bills passed and the Acts enacted between 1999 and 2015, covering the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Assemblies were classified based on five objectives as identified by the National Institute of Legislative Studies (NILS- now National Institute of Legislative and Democratic Studies NILDS). Some Acts were purposively selected to measure their impact using simple impact analysis technique i.e. examining the situations before and after the enactment of the Act to ascertain the difference. In doing this, the paper is divided into five sections. The first is the introduction which is followed by aggregate analysis of the Acts in terms of objectives under the four Assemblies. The third section dwells on the impact analysis of selected Acts on the people. Section four deals with the challenges and implications of the findings, and the paper is concluded in the fifth section.

Aggregate Analysis of the Impact of Acts of the National Assembly on the People

Across democracies, the number of laws enacted by the legislature is an important yardstick to measure its effectiveness. However, the impact of such laws on

the people seems less attractive to most legislative assessors, whereas it ought to be the most important. This is premised on the fact that the extent to which the laws impact positively on the people significantly determines the ‘good governance’ nature of the democratic dispensation. In light of this, this section attempts to examine the impact of the Acts of the National Assembly by aggregate on the people. This is done by classifying the laws based on objectives which each law sought to achieve. Though there are many ways by which such classification can be done, this paper aligns with the classificatory method of the National Institute for Legislative Studies [NILS], (2013); where Acts are classified into five groups. These are: *Economic Development Acts* (incorporating all economic management and developmental related laws), *Social Development Acts* (all laws seeking to improve the wellbeing of the people in the areas of health, education, welfare, community development etc.), *Governance/Political Development Acts* (relating to entrenching good governance and good political practices), *Regulatory Acts* (relating to establishment and regulation of institutions), and *Cultural Acts* (all laws relating to cultural development).

Analysis of the Acts of the 4th National Assembly

The 4th National Assembly passed an average of 84 Bills, out of which 31 were signed into laws. The impact analysis shows that 17 laws were made by the Assembly for economic development (accounting for 55% of all the enacted laws). Seven (7) laws were enacted to promote social welfare of the people. To entrench good governance, the Assembly enacted five (5) laws on issues related to political development in the country. While two (2) regulatory laws were made, no law was enacted to promote the diverse cultural heritage of the country throughout the four-year tenure of the Assembly. This trajectory is graphically illustrated in Figure 1.

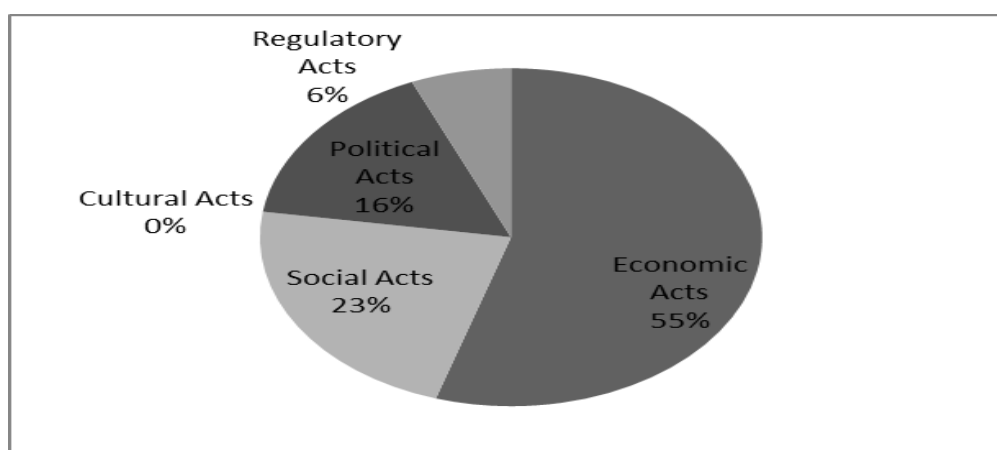


Figure 1: Graphical Illustration of the Classification of the Acts of the 4th National Assembly (1999–2003)

Source: Author’s computation with data from NILS, 2016.

The above analysis shows that the 4th National Assembly gave prominence to economic development over other aspects. Perhaps, this was as a result of the attempt by the Obasanjo-led administration to diversify the economy by allowing more corporate participation in economic activities. The policy direction was to move the country to be more capitalist oriented against the usual socialist tendencies.

Analysis of the Acts of the 5th National Assembly

Out of an average of 149 Bills passed by the 5th National Assembly, 99 were signed into laws. The impact analysis shows that the Assembly enacted 29 economic development laws, 10 social development laws and 1 cultural law. In addition, 10 laws were made on political and governance issues, with 14 laws to regulate and establish institutions in the country. This is graphically illustrated in Figure 2.

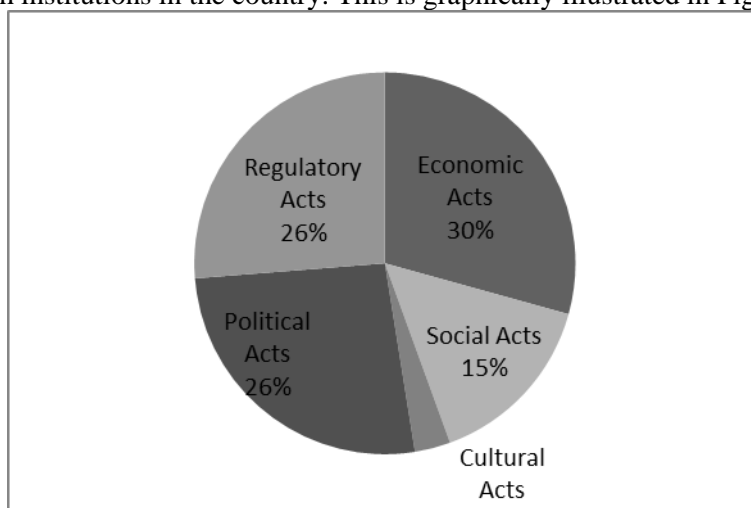


Figure 2: Graphical Illustration of the Classification of the Acts of the 5th National Assembly (2003-2007)

Source: Author's computation with data from NILS, 2016

The trajectory observed during the 4th Assembly also played out in the 5th Assembly. More economic laws were enacted at the expense of social development laws. However, unlike the 4th Assembly, the 5th Assembly not only gave primacy to economic laws but also political and regulatory laws over social development laws. This trajectory seems not unexpected given the fact that it was a continuation of the 4th Assembly with regard to executive composition and policy direction.

Analysis of the Acts of the 6th National Assembly

The 6th National Assembly passed an average of 112 Bills, out of which 51 were enacted into law. The breakdown shows that 18 laws were economic development related. 10 laws each were enacted to promote social welfare of the people as well as political and governance issues. While only 1 cultural development law was made, 14

laws were enacted to establish and regulate institutional behavior in the country. See figure 3 for the graphical illustration.

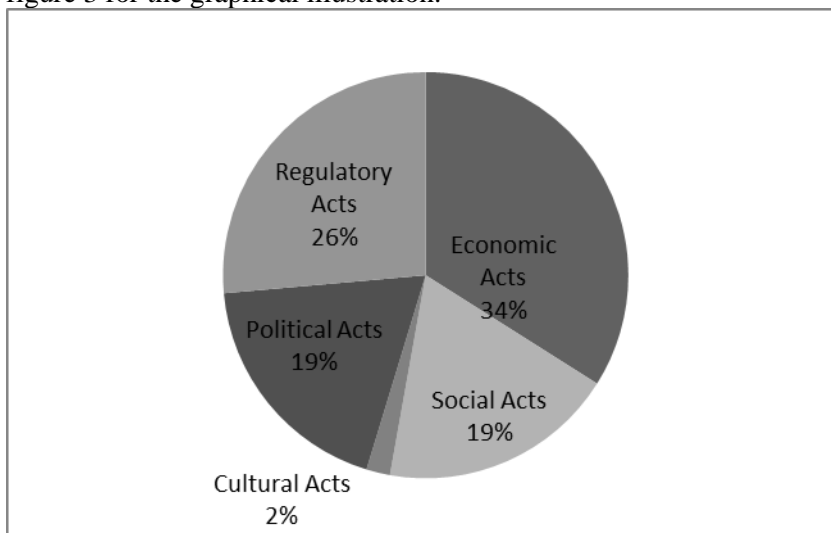


Figure 3: Graphical Illustration of the Classification of the Acts of the 6th National Assembly (2007-2011)

Source: Author's computation with data from NILS, 2016

Despite the change in the executive composition (i.e. the emergence of Yar'Adua/Jonathan-led executive with the 7-point agenda), the 6th Assembly also relegated the enactment of social development laws. More economic, political and regulatory laws were made to the extent that the number of economic law is exactly twice that of the social law.

Analysis of the Acts of the 7th National Assembly

The 7th National Assembly with an average of 159 passed Bills enacted 61 laws. The breakdown shows that laws that were economic development related were 18, while 13 laws were enacted to promote social welfare of the people. Only 5 laws were enacted on political and governance issues. While the number of regulatory laws increased to 25, not a single law was enacted for cultural development. See figure 4 for the graphical illustration.

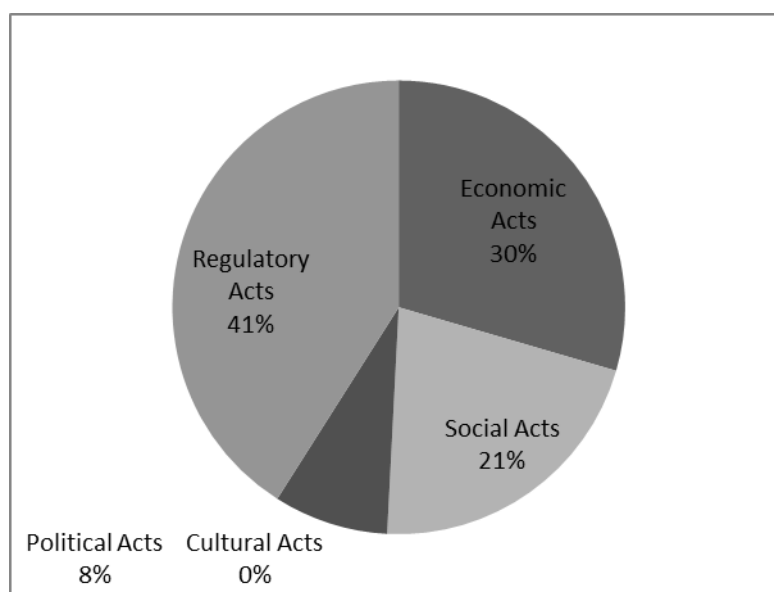


Figure 4: Graphical Illustration of the Classification of the Acts of the 7th National Assembly (2011-2015)

Source: Author's computation with data from NILS, 2016

Though, this period was largely seen as a continuation of the previous administration, it recorded difference policy direction. While preference for economic-related laws reduced, there is significant increase in regulatory laws. The Assembly placed less emphasis on political and governance laws with no interest in culture-related enactment. More energy was also expended on social laws compared to the previous Assembly.

Aggregate Analysis of the Acts of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th National Assemblies

The classification of Acts of the National Assembly for the period under review (1999-2015) is presented in table 1:

Table 1: Classification of the Acts of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th National Assemblies

| | 4th Assembly (1999 - 2003) | 5th Assembly (2003 - 2007) | 6th Assembly (2007 - 2011) | 7th Assembly (2011 - 2015) | Total |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Economic Acts | 17 | 29 | 18 | 18 | 82 |
| Social Acts | 7 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 45 |
| Cultural Acts | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Political Acts | 5 | 26 | 10 | 5 | 46 |
| Regulatory Acts | 2 | 26 | 14 | 25 | 67 |
| Total | 31 | 99 | 53 | 61 | 244 |

Source: Author's computation with data from NILS, 2016

From the table 1, it is observed that the National Assembly enacted 82 laws on economic development (34%), which is almost twice the number of social development laws. 46 political and governance laws and 67 regulatory laws were made with only 4 laws to promote the cultural heritage of Nigerians. This is graphically illustrated in figure 5:

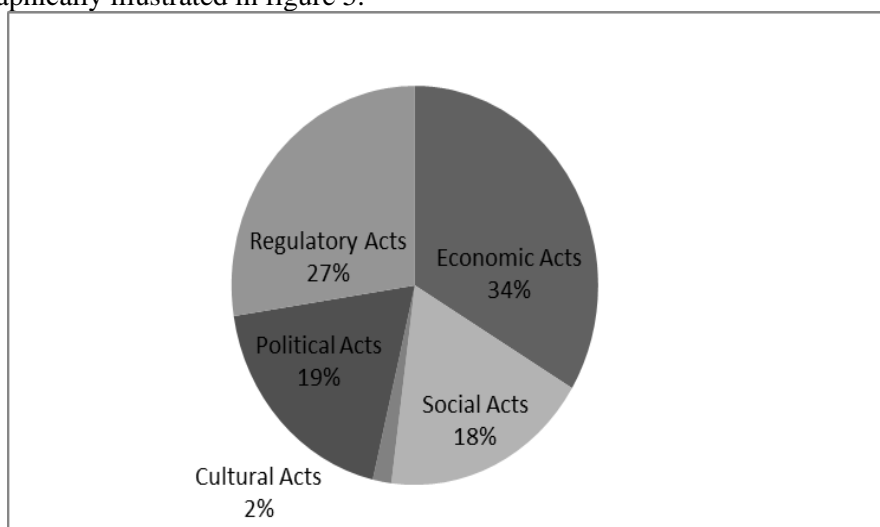


Figure 5: Graphical Illustration of the Classification of the Acts of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th National Assemblies (1999-2015)

Source: Author's computation with data from NILS, 2016

Premised on the number of economic Acts enacted, there is no doubt that the legislature believe that good governance and sustainable development can be entrenched in the country through enactment of economic laws that will reposition the country's economic sector. However, this view runs contrary to that of the participants at the United Nations World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, where the Heads of State and Government recognized the fact that social development and human well-being are significant to sustainable development, thus should be given the highest priority in national and international policies. The outcome of the summit which is the 'Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Program of Action' established a new consensus to place people at the centre of concerns by eradicating poverty, promote full and productive employment, and foster social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all (Fahrudin, 2005). All these are the focus of social development laws.

The basis of the people-centered argument hinged on the fact that the ultimate goals of development are to improve the living conditions of the people and to empower them to participate fully in the economic, political and social arenas. In view of this, one expects that the National Assembly ought to initiate and enact more laws on social development than economic development. But for the cultural sector, the social development sector would have been the least ranked in terms of priority of

the National Assembly. It is pertinent to note that sharing this view is not an attempt to relegate the significance of economic Bills. In fact, they are complementary as Midgley (1995, p. 25) contends that social development entails a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with process of economic development.

Analysis of the Impact of Selected Acts of the National Assembly on the People

Aside the above classification of the Acts by objectives, it is imperative to attempt a situational analysis of selected Acts that are adjudged crucial to socio-economic and governance development; in order to assess their impact on the lives of the people as well as promotion of good governance in the country. The selected Acts are: Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004 Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences (ICPC) Act 2003; Child Right Act 2003; Federal Road Maintenance Agency (Establishment) Act 2002; Pension Reform Act 2004 (repealed 2014); and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency (Establishment) Act 2003.

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act 2004 and Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences (ICPC) Act 2003

Corruption has been one of the greatest challenges militating against socio-political and economic development in Nigeria. Over the years, it has fuelled political violence, undermined infrastructural development, and caused other human rights violations. Its devastating effects on the nation have manifested in lopsided distribution of wealth, malfunctioned or decayed infrastructure and degrading living conditions among a great proportion of the citizenry. Since 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance, corrupt practices have been on the increase at all levels of public governance, to the extent that it is now a threat to the continued existence of the Nigerian state (Jega, 2010). Corruption is so pervasive in Nigeria that it has turned public service into a kind of criminal enterprise (Human Right Watch, 2011, p.1). Studies have shown that corruption is one of the greatest threats to Nigeria's democracy and national development (Imam and Mustapha 2008; Jega, 2010; Waziri, 2011; Ribadu, 2006; and Osoba, 1996). The country's governing elite continues to squander and siphon the nation's tremendous oil wealth, neglecting basic health and educational services for the vast majority of the citizens. Widespread graft has fuelled political violence, police abuses, and other human rights violations. Nigerians have had to grapple with the consequential negative effects of corruption to the extent that they see it as their number one enemy.

Muhammadu Buhari's record-breaking emergence as President in 2015, defeating the incumbent was partly attributed to the adoption of anti-corruption crusade as one of his major campaign points. While the citizens are not at ease with the corruption level, the international community is also fed up with the rate of the menace in Nigeria. Successive governments cannot but therefore respond to both domestic and international pressures to combat corruption with all possible strategies available. Paradoxically, the fight against the scourge can best be described as

driftwood without compass or direction. At a point in time, there may be concrete evidence that the anti-corruption project is moving forward. At another point, events show how confused Nigerian leaders are in the war on corruption (Bakare, 2015). The lack of political will and selective prosecution more often than not are responsible for the woeful tale of the country's experience.

In 1998 during the military era, Nigeria with corruption index of 1.9 was ranked the 4th most corrupt country out of 85 countries in the world. In 2001, democratic Nigeria with corruption index of 1.0 ranked 2nd most corrupt country out of 91 countries, coming above only Bangladesh that ranked most corrupt (Transparency International [TI], 2017). Disturbed by the trend, the Obasanjo's administration presented two executive Bills to the 4th National Assembly seeking to establish the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). The Bills, after series of political negotiations and considerations were passed, signed into law and the Commissions were established to complement the existing anti-graft agencies established by the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

Some of the major objectives of the anti-graft laws and functions of the Commissions include: to prohibit and prescribe punishment for corrupt practices; to investigate and prosecute economic and financial crimes; to adopt measures to eradicate the commission of economic and financial crimes; to carry out and sustain rigorous public enlightenment campaign against economic and financial crimes within and outside Nigeria (FRN, 2002).

The fight against corruption in Nigeria has not been without hiccups. The first litmus test which the Commissions faced was the suit filed by the Ondo state government to challenge the constitutionality of the Act. In the much celebrated case of Attorney General of Ondo State & Ors vs. Attorney General of the Federation & Ors. The Ondo State government challenged the power of the Federal Government to legislate on corruption. The Supreme Court in a landmark judgment upheld the constitutionality of the Act and held *inter alia* that the Independent Corrupt and other Related Offences Commission Act is an enactment for the peace, order and good governance of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Any legislation on corruption and abuse of power must be of concern to every Nigerian notwithstanding that its operation will affect property and civil rights of citizens in a state. Such an enactment like all enactment of the National Assembly will be of paramount force (Supreme Court, 2002). Subsequently, there were other damaging comments on the activities of the anti graft agencies, especially the popular argument that the then President Olusegun Obasanjo uses the agencies to settle political scores with opposition politicians and deviant allies (Obasanjo, 2003).

On impact of the laws, Nigeria with corruption index of 1.4 ranking 132 out of 133 in 2003 (making the country 2nd most corrupt) later attracted corruption index of 28 and ranked 136 out of 176 countries standing at 40th most corrupt in 2016 (Transparency International, 2017). The figures show stronger evidence of reduction in corruption prevalence in the country. Therefore, going by the ratio of 2:91 (2001) before the Acts and 40:176 (2016) after the Acts, there is continuous reduction in

corruption index and ranking. Though the menace of corruption is still perceived to be high in the country but, one can agree to the fact that the Acts have recorded some successes such as the prosecution of corrupt public officials and recovery of some of the looted funds.

Child Right Act 2003

Over the years, the prevalence of child abuse is very high with little attention to address it. Most of the interventions of government, NGOs and donor agencies have been on the aspects of malnutrition and disease control, overlooking the other aspects of torture, neglect, maltreatment, and exploitation. The situation became worse with high rate of purposeful neglect and abandonment of handicapped children as a result of traditional child rearing practices. In addition, rapid socio-economic and political changes led to the various forms of child abuse such as abandonment of normal infants by unmarried or very poor mothers in cities, increased child labour and exploitation of children from rural areas by urban elite families, and abuse of children in urban nuclear families by child-minders (Okeahialam, 1984). The ugly situation could be attributed to many factors, some of which include high rate of unemployment, poverty, neglect of rural development and corruption, among others.

For this to be corrected, the government discovered that the causal factors need to be addressed. In view of this, the Child Right Bill was introduced, passed and assented into law in 2003. The purpose and objective of the law is to provide and protect the Rights of the Nigerian child which include the right to: survival and development; a name; freedom of association and peaceful assembly; private and family life; freedom of movement; freedom from discrimination; dignity of the child; leisure, recreation and cultural activities; health and heal services; parental care, protection and maintenance; free, compulsory and universal primary education, among others (NILS, 2013). The law is expected to perform both prohibitive and mandatory functions. The essence is to identify and prescribe punishment for the violation of the Rights of the Nigerian child.

The first challenge (out of many) that hindered the enforcement of the law came from the refusal of many states to domesticate it (Ekeanyanwu, 2016), except in few states like Lagos. The consequence of this is the growing prevalence of child abuse, which according to the global survey conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2012, rated Nigeria as one of the worst countries in the world for children or for a child to be born (Olupohunda, 2016).

According to the findings of the '2014 Nigeria Violence Against Children Survey' conducted by the National Population Commission with the support of the United States Centre for Disease Control and UNICEF, there is a high prevalence of violence against children in all the states in Nigeria (Kai Kai, 2017). The report revealed that approximately 10 million out of school children and three-quarters of the suicide bombers in the north east are girls. According to the Human Rights Watch, one million children in the north-east have no access to education (The Cable, 2013a). Approximately 6 out of 10 children experienced some form of violence and 50 percent of all children in Nigeria experienced physical violence. One (1) in four

(4) girls and one (1) in ten (10) boys experience sexual violence, while one (1) in six (6) girls and one (1) in five (5) boys experience emotional violence by a parent, caregiver or adult relative. It was revealed that only 4 percent of the abused children actually get the needed help (Olupohunda, 2016).

In another dimension, the menace of child marriage is disturbing. It is observed that one in two under-age girls in Nigeria are married (Afri-Dev, 2015), mostly out of their own willingness and volition. According to the National Nutrition Health Survey conducted in 2013 by the Africa Health, Human and Social Development Information Service, about 800,000 children under five years die yearly and about 12.3 million children suffer from chronic malnutrition, out of which 300,000 are at risk of dying. In addition, 19.4 per cent of children under five years old are underweight (The Cable, 2013b). The consequence of the maltreatment and neglect of the children had led many of them to become hoodlums and miscreants, terrorizing their host community after they had earlier fled their homes. They often start by stealing food items in order to feed themselves having been denied by their parents or guardian. In most cases, their penchant for stealing increase as they grow old and some of them become sophisticated notorious robbers, drug peddlers and kidnappers thereby becoming threats to national security.

The study's 'after-the-Act observation' shows that the law has no significant positive effect as the menace of child abuse continues unabated. The law which was targeted at prohibiting violence against children is failing in this respect by not holding government and the society as a whole responsible to put an end to violence against the Nigerian children.

Federal Road Maintenance Agency (Establishment) Act 2002

Studies have shown that there is close correlation between effective transportation and economic development (Mensah, 2014; Ofoegbu, 2013; and Izuwah, 2017). However, out of the four means of transportation (road, rail, ocean and air) available to Nigerians, road transport seems more patronized. This notion was buttressed by the report of the Federal Office of Statistics in 1998 that road transport contributed about 92 percent of the total contribution of the transport sector to the GDP (Odeleye, 2000). The argument is premised on the fact that effective and efficient transportation provides socio-economic advantages which has multiplier effects on the living condition of the people as well as the economic development of the country. In response to this position, Mensah (2014) opined that any government that deprives its citizens of effective and efficient transportation infrastructure has successfully caused them to miss out on several economic activities. This is unconnected from the fact that good road networks afford the people especially farmers the opportunity to transport their farm produce to the market thereby improving the food security of the country. In addition, it will also lead to increase employment and investments making both the people and government to be better off.

Despite the utility of the road transportation to the socio-economic development of Nigeria, successive governments (both at federal and state levels) have neglected the sector. Before the advent of democratic rule in 1999, the military regimes abandoned the repair of road networks by budgeting less than N10Billion annually for the 195,000 km road network. Comparatively, this amount is far less than Zambia's annual road budget of about \$1Billion for total road network of 7,000km (Akuki, 2015). This led to deplorable roads across the country which was inherited by the civilian administration.

Recognizing the importance of good road networks to national development, the Olusegun Obasanjo led administration in conjunction with the National Assembly enacted the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (Establishment) Act in 2002. The objective of the law is to establish an agency with the statutory mandate of ensuring effective and efficient maintenance of all existing federal trunk roads and set guidelines for the working of concession contracts; plan and manage the development and implementation of the road safety standards; and make policy recommendations to the federal government on matters relating to the maintenance of federal trunk roads.

Notwithstanding the establishment of FERMA by the Act since 2002, the Nigerian federal road networks spanning about 35,000km (Akuki, 2015) are still in deplorable conditions thus becoming the major causes of road crashes (Ajijah, 2017) and economic decay. The agency that is expected to fix the roads is failing in its statutory role and the National Assembly is doing little or nothing to arrest the situation. As at 2017 for instance, between Forest, Abuja-Jos road to Mararaban Jamaar in Jos South, there are 1,674 potholes (Fadogba, 2017). The conditions of other roads are not different and they have become cause of deaths to many Nigerians (Ashiru, 2017) and economic hardship. For instance, 12,077 road crashes were recorded in 2015 out of which 5,400 people died (Premium Times, September 7, 2016). In 2016, 11, 363 road crashes were recorded (Vanguard, March 23, 2017). On the average, 15 people are killed daily through road crashes (Ogundipe and Ndukwe, 2016) which were all as a result of bad roads.

From the foregoing analysis, it can be inferred that road transportation is the most popular means of transport in Nigeria, and the impact of the FERMA law seems not to have positive impact on the lives of Nigerians. This is premised on the fact that the deplorable conditions of roads often lead to high rate of deaths, high cost of food and other essential needs and loss of economic gains in term of profit and time as a result of uneasy movement of goods and services.

Pension Reform Act 2004 (repealed 2014)

Man is expected by nature to be dependent twice in the life cycle: the beginning (early childhood) and the later stage (old age). While the parents are expected to cater for the man's needs at the former stage, the employer is expected to take charge at the latter stage having used youthful/working age to serve such employer. Wahab (2013) attested to this notion by arguing that it is the primary responsibility of the government and not the family to provide old-age security and

well being of the citizens. In view of this, the government or private employer is expected to pay a sum of money in form of pension to the retired workers to take care of themselves at old age when they are no longer physically fit to do any work. However, the pension administration system in Nigeria is faced with myriads of challenges among which are delayed or non-payment of pension entitlements, misappropriation of pension funds by the pension managers and administrators, variation in pension amount in comparison to inflation, frequent verification of pensioners leading to pensioners dying during verification exercises among others (Apere, 2015).

Consequently, pensioners in Nigeria are known for their unhealthy appearances, nursing of life-threatening illness, old age terminal diseases coupled with severe hunger. This informs why many civil servants constantly engage in age falsification to delay or postpone their retirement date. This also fuels corrupt and sharp practices among the Nigerian workforce with the intent of amassing wealth in preparation for life after service.

To address the challenges facing the old pension system in the country, the government enacted the Pension Reform Act in 2004 with the intent of establishing a contributory pension scheme for employees in the public and private sectors to: (i) ensure that every person who worked in either the public service or private sector receives his retirement benefits as at when due; (ii) assist improvident individuals by ensuring that they save in order to cater for their livelihood during old age; and (iii) establish a uniform set of rules, regulations and standards for the administration and payment of retirement benefits for the public service and private sector (NILS, 2013: 64).

However, despite the reform, the experiences of retirees in Nigeria after long years of serving the country are nothing to write home about. The Act fails to entrench easy access to retirement benefits as a result of continued delay in the remittance of monthly contributions to employees' Retirement Savings Accounts (RSAs), under the new 'Contributory Pension Scheme' (CPS) and the payment of their accrued rights, under the old 'Defined Benefits Scheme' (DBS) by employers which has over the year complicated pensioners' situation (Tolu-Kusimo, 2015). The liabilities of both categories of pension stood at about N100 Billion (The Nation, November 17, 2015). This contravenes the Pension Reform Act. In addition, it is reported that people who retire on level 12 earn N2,000 monthly (The Punch, July 24, 2017). The most prominent challenge of the old system which is the delay in pension payment still persists with the new law in place. This is so grave to the extent that after twelve years of retirement, some pensioners are yet to receive their pension benefits and gratuities (Tolu-Kusimo, 2015).

Given the prevalence of sufferings, sicknesses, deaths of pensioners and uneasy access to entitlements after retirement among others, it may not be out of point to conclude that the Pension Reform Act is less impactful on the people. The legislators seem to realize the ineffectiveness of this Act, thus Honourable Busayo Oluwole Oke had since initiated a Bill (among other Bills) which seek to amend some sections of the Pension Reform Act 2014. One of the aims of the amendments is to

exclude members of the Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Custom Service, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Nigerian Prison Service, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Nigeria Immigration Service from the Contributory Pension Scheme and returned them to the Defined Benefits System, where all the pension liabilities will be footed by the Federal Government from annual budgetary allocations (Punch, September 24, 2017). From previous experience of the DBS, one may not be out of point to argue that the amendment will further compound the problems of the pension system because it will increase the pension liability of the federal government given its fluctuating revenue and unstable economic growth.

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency (Establishment) Act 2003

Youth restiveness, high unemployment rate, increasing crime rate, advance fee fraud, commercial alms begging, prevalence of abject poverty among others are characteristics used to describe Nigeria (Onoge, 1988; and International Labour Organization, 2007). All these social vices are resultant effects of high rate of unemployment. However, since it is practically impossible for any government to employ all her citizens, it is expected that government should at the least, provide the enabling environment for private sector development. The Nigerian government has engaged in series of activities to encourage entrepreneurial development to reduce the bloating unemployment rate. Sadly, most of the businesses floated by the people were unable to survive the harsh business environment.

In order to address this challenge, the Small and Medium Scale Industries Development Agency (Establishment) Act was initiated in the Senate on November 14, 2000, passed on November 20, 2001 and signed into law on June 19, 2003. The purpose of the Act is to establish the Small and Medium Scale Industries Development Agency which is expected to: (i) initiate and articulate ideas for small and medium scale industries policy thrusts; (ii) serve as a vanguard agency and focal point for rural industrialization, poverty alleviation and eradication; technology acquisition and adaptation, job creation and sustainable livelihood; (iii) promote and facilitate development programmes, instruments and support services to accelerate development, modernization, networking and linkage of small and medium scale industries; (iv) mobilize internal and external resources, including technical assistance for small and medium scale industries, their support institutions; trade associations, and non-governmental organization; (v) oversee, co-coordinate and monitor development in the small and medium industries sector; (vi) design, package and promote small and medium scale industrial projects; (vii) provide industrial extension services to small and medium scale industries, fabricators of machinery and beneficiaries of micro-credit loans.

Other purposes of the Act include to: establish liaison between research institutes, local fabricators and small and medium scale industries; link small scale industrialists to sources of finance, technology, technical skill development and management; facilitate and promote and development of standard designs and quality assurance for machinery and equipment, and commercializing them to end-users;

promote and provide access to industrial infrastructure, including estates and layouts; and incubators; provide necessary assistance to small and medium scale industries in the marketing of their products; promote sub-contracting, clustering and networking relationship; provide and promote strategic linkages within small and medium scale industries; encourage and promote strategic linkages within small and medium scale industries, and between small and medium scale industries and large scale industries; establish and co-coordinate the institutional development and activities of Industrial Development Centres in Nigeria; and provision of and facilitating technical and managerial training to small and medium scale industries among others (FRN, 2003).

Despite the expectation that SMEDAN as an Agency will bridge the gap of unemployment and provide enabling environment for SMSEs to flourish, the reverse is the case. For instance, there were increasing demands for consumer products which create a large market for the SMSEs, yet, most of them are operating on the margin and the remaining have closed shop as a result of the harsh economic environment (Osolor, 2016). They are faced with a load of challenges which include: financial problems, strategic planning problems, lack of manpower and training, inadequate infrastructure, socio-cultural problems, unstable policy environment, multiple taxation among others (Mba & Cletus, 2014). The unemployment rate continues to increase at a geometric and alarming rate. The Agency that was established by the law to address these challenges is itself wallowing in the depth of poor funding, weak oversight, inept leadership etc. The high rate of unemployment and alarming rate of business collapsing yearly are signs that all is not well with the SMSEDA Act.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing aggregate and selected impact analysis of the Acts of the National Assembly, one can argue that the laws made by the National Assembly within the period under review have less impact and make little difference on the lives of the people. This position is premised on the fact that the country is still bedeviled with numerous social and welfare challenges despite the laws. In as much as all laws enacted are important, one expects that the National Assembly to enact more social development laws given the plethora of social and welfare decadence prevailing in the country. In addition to this, most of the laws enacted have less positive impact on the people. This could be attributed to two factors. Either the content of the laws are not auspicious or the executive who are constitutionally saddled with the implementation responsibility did not do enough to bring out the best of the laws on the people. This is because, about six decades after independence, the country is still grappling with high unemployment rate; high mortality rate, incessant endemic diseases outbreaks, and majority of the citizens are living in abject poverty, while illiteracy level is nothing to write home about among others; all of which can better be addressed through enactment of social laws.

The fact that the laws made have less direct impact on the people may be partly attributed to poor and negative public perception. An average Nigerian sees the National Assembly as an assemblage of politicians who are only interested in protecting their selfish interests at the expense of the public by milking the national

resources dry, thus becomes Nigeria's number one enemy (Nnamdi, 2017). The dust raised by the negative public perception of the National Assembly has refused to settle since 1999. This is largely because the National Assembly is seen as a conduit pipe through which public fund is siphoned (Oladesu, 2016), especially under the banner of constituency project fund and extraneous allowances that are shrouded in secrecy despite public outcry for the institution's finances to be made public. Though, the legislators are aware of the negative perception and described it as worrisome (Umoru, 2016), it is worthy to note that the legislature is not doing enough to correct it. Instead, the National Assembly features in the news on issues that are inimical to development and democratic survival such as the issues of corruption scandals, insensitivity and irresponsiveness to the needs of the people at critical periods (such as purchasing bullet proof vehicles during recession when government finds it difficult to pay workers' salaries), and refusal to pass important Bills like the Petroleum Industry Bill among others.

The paper concludes that lawmaking could have made significant positive difference on the lives of Nigeria because most of the objectives of the Acts were well thought-out to meet the needs of the people. However, the reverse is the case. This is attributed mainly to executive's non-implementation in some instances, and weak enforcement of these laws in other instances, which was caused mainly as a result of the cold executive-legislative relations. Other causal factors include: weak legislative oversight, systemic corruption, inadequate resources that can meet competing needs, divergence of policy direction between the executive and legislature and weak citizens' participation in questioning the public officers, among other factors.

To mitigate this trajectory, the paper recommends better working relationship between the National Assembly and the Presidency to ensure harmony and increased capacity of the major political parties to mediate in occasional friction between the National Assembly and the Presidency in order to ensure holistic implementation of the Acts of the National Assembly. The National Assembly is also enjoined to step up its oversight function and discourage sharp practices among its members. Lastly, it is recommended that the National Assembly should work closely with the executive through the President's aides on legislative matter to carry the executive along right from inception of when Bills are initiated. This will create opportunity to reconcile differences of the two arms and open the mind of the legislature to the Presidency's areas of policy priority. If laws are enacted in these areas, the tendencies for full implementation and strong enforcement will be very high, thus prompting lawmaking to be people-oriented.

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