

People's Perceived Developmental Impacts of Creating States and Local Government Areas in Southwestern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The major rationale for this study was the belief that the empirical evaluation of peoples' perception of existing decentralisation efforts would help shed more lights on the degree to which decentralisation is perceived to have contributed to regional development, and pave ways for evolving better policies to enhance regional development. Southwestern Nigeria, where decentralisation has taken place over a period of more than four decades, was used as a case study. Pre-tested questionnaire were used to collect primary data used for the study. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select sixty interviewees from each of the five states covered by the study. The questionnaire involved each interviewee rating his/her perception of gains of decentralisation. Rating here ranged from 'Above average' (at least 60%), through 'Average' (50%-59%) to 'Below average' (less than 50%). The data collected were analysed using percentages. The study revealed that though states and LGAs were rated relatively high in terms of reducing 'marginalisation', more than 60% of the respondents rated the contributions of new states and LGAs to regional development (perceived in terms of employment opportunities, industrialization and access to basic facilities and amenities) to be 'below average'. The conclusion is that the states and LGAs were perceived more as engines of reducing marginalisation than engines of growth and regional development. The implications of the findings revolved around the need to substantially re-orientate governance at the state and local government levels to be more concerned with improving the quality of life of the citizens within their jurisdictions.