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## Local Government Administration and Rural Development in Nigeria: The Missing Link

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**Abstract:** This study assesses involvement of local government administration in rural development in Nigeria. The study adopted cross-sectional survey that drew data from Ministry, Department and Agencies (MDAs) of state and local governments, and rural dwellers from two states in each geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Structured questionnaire, oral interviews, and field observation were used in generating data from 889 respondents, and data collected were analysed using chi-square, regression and content analysis. Secondary data was obtained from official and historical documents. The result showed that local government administration has not been effective in the provision of earth and tarred road networks, rural electrification, potable water, and agricultural extension services to rural farmers. The result also revealed that poor revenue base, inadequately funding, corruption, overdependence on statutory allocation, interference by federal and state governments, and incessant dissolution of local government executive councils are challenges affecting rural development in Nigeria. The result further admitted that local government administration in Nigeria have not been involving the grassroots especially in the rural communities in political participation. The study concluded that the continual sidelining of rural dwellers by state actors remains the missing link to achieving rural development.

**Keywords:** Local Government, Administration, Development, Rural, Rural Dwellers.

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## INTRODUCTION

Rural development occupies a critical part in global governance; hence United Nations in its bid to reduce poverty in the world came up with the millennium development goals (MDGs) in 2000. Nevertheless, the fifteen years' plan could not be achieved through the MDGs, hence the plan was reviewed and rechristened sustainable development goals (SDGs) in 2015 in order to address global poverty and underdevelopment. Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions in the World that is most backward in terms of poverty, hunger, unemployment and underdevelopment, especially the rural areas, where most of the population resides. Most rural areas in Nigeria lack the basic amenities and infrastructure that is to help reduce poverty, improve the skills of the rural dwellers, and in turn contribute to rural development.

Odoh (2004) adduced that over 100 million Nigerians still lack access to electricity, and about 60% of the population did not have access to potable water coupled with bad road infrastructure, which has exacerbated underdevelopment, vulnerability and poverty in rural areas of Nigeria. Hence, Abah (2010) acknowledged the depth and deplorable state of underdevelopment situation in the rural areas of the Nigerian state. Describing one of the features of underdevelopment in the rural areas, Abonyi & Nnamani (2011) recognized lingering rural poverty, which accounts for inability of rural dwellers to fulfill their basic needs such as food, water, good healthcare

and shelter. Lack or inadequacy of these basic needs continue to exacerbate the poverty incidence, thereby resulting in increasing deterioration of living condition in the rural areas of the country.

The purpose for the establishment of local government as a third tier of government in Nigeria was to promote, provide and sustain development at the grass root level (rural areas). However, the rural communities continue to suffer from underdevelopment, which has led to massive migration from the rural areas to urban areas thereby distorting the demography of the urban areas through increase in population of urban centres. This in turn has led to increase in unemployment rate in the urban centres, increase in the cost of living in the urban centres and increasing insecurity in the cities.

Despite the seeming influence of local government in undertaking rural development, there is very little substantial data about the contribution made to the development of rural areas by governmental and quasi-governmental activities. The amount of critical assertion over a period of years indicate that the current organization and structure of local government, especially in rural areas, impede accomplishment of quintessential service levels. Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence that local governments often do not have sufficient funds to undertake these services. The current situation of the rural areas in Nigeria raised certain pertinent questions concerning the contribution of local government administration to rural

development such as: in what ways have local government administration contributed to rural development? What are the constraints facing local government administration in rural development? The conglomeration of these myriad problems constitutes the thrust of this paper, which seeks to evaluate involvement of local government administration in rural development in Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Clarifications

In order to establish a milieu for a clearer understanding of the discussion and analysis, some concepts need clarification. Rural development implies focusing on the development of rural environment and its dwellers. This means that rural development can only be measured in terms of rural human development as well as rural community development. In this light, Okoli & Onah (2002) inferred that rural communities are depicted poor or inadequate social amenities, and lack of skilled human resources, thereby leading to deprivation of human resources and critical infrastructure. Hence, Ele (2006) surmised that rural development goes beyond providing infrastructure, rather, it also involves empowering the rural dwellers so that they can improve their lives and carry out activities that will lead to development of their environment.

Development needs of rural communities are multifaceted, hence Olayiwola & Adeleye (2005) categorised infrastructural development of rural areas into three types: basic, social and institutionalised infrastructure. Basic infrastructure involves projects such as road networks, potable water, and rural electrification, storage, and processing facilities etc. Social infrastructure includes healthcare and educational facilities, community centres, fire and security services etc. Institutionalised infrastructure entails credit and financial institutions and agricultural research institutions to improve the economic activities and income of the rural population. The provision of these infrastructure will lead to integrated rural development that activates rural productive activities, promoting human resource development and re-building of existing rural infrastructure.

Local government plays critical role in rural development because it is the closest to the rural communities. This accounts for the allocation of certain legislative functions that places it in vantage position to provide social services and promote rural development to the grassroots. Local government councils in Nigeria have been constrained in providing rural infrastructure due to continual starving them of funds by state governments. Ikelegbe (2005) sees local government as a component of a state or region of a country. Adamolekun (1983) affirms that local government was established for the purpose of providing efficient service delivery vis-à-vis rural development.

Agagu (1997) views local government as a government at the grassroots level of administration with the purpose of achieving the need of people at the grassroots. He sees the local government as an instrument of achieving development at the grassroots. Describing the local government in terms of its functions, Appadorai (1975) portrays local government as government by popularly elected bodies mandated with administrative and executive roles in matters affecting dwellers of a specific location. Also, Lawal (2000) describes local government as the closest tier of government to the people and designated with responsibilities to administer authority over the affairs of people in its domain. Providing an in-depth analysis in terms of political and socio-economic development, Erero et al. (2004) describes the local government as a tier of government, which is closest to the rural citizens and assigned with functions of ensuring political, social and economic development of its area and people.

### Local Governments and Rural Development

Barraclough & Ghimire (1995) adduced that the rural dwellers in most developing countries have been disregarded, ignored and relegated to the task of dormant beneficiary of any valuable development strategies and policies which impact their lives. Thus, they cope with the effect of the fall out of decisions they were not a part of. In order to curb state powers in development processes and involve members of the community, Rodrik (2000) suggests employing democratised political institutions in implementing development strategies and policies. Rodrick averred that these institutions play significant roles in rural socio-economic development due to the predisposition of democratic practices to preside over social conflict and bring about compromise. In order to achieve this purpose, Rodrik advocated decentralization.

Santiso (2000) ascribe the essence of local institutions in bringing about local development because it was apparently a strategy for clearer insight of rural communities, and be more incisive to the purported desires and limitations of rural people. Local Governments have been regarded to be crucial and effective in nurturing local participation and empowerment, democracy and cost effectiveness within the framework of One-Party System. The devolution of power to local government is one form of development from the bottom.

Sen (1999) appraised the effectiveness and performance of local governments as institutions saddled with the task of being at the forefront of implementing rural development. Sen further investigates the relationship between freedom and development, and the manner in which freedom is both inherent and external to development, that is essential component of development in itself and a facilitating necessity to other perspectives such as stability and security. Sen advocates an emphasis on what he refers

to as capabilities, that is, fundamental human freedom, constituting processes and favourable moment, and for acknowledgement of the diversity of definite constituents of freedom.

Sen (1999) reiterated that development comprises the elimination of the diverse kinds of incarceration (like political freedom) that provide people with limited decision and minimal opportunity of carrying out their reasoned agency. To put it another way, Sen contends for an emphasis on the capabilities of people to act and be what they value. Local government performance concerning their efforts on bringing development to the rural areas have been dismal. In order to hasten development to rural dwellers, many states embarked on the creation of local council development areas (LCDAs). States that create LCDAs include Lagos (2001); Yobe (2003); Bauchi (2004); Imo (2011); Osun & Ogun (2016); & Ekiti (2021) and so on. Despite, the creation of LCDAs, rural development has continued to suffer neglect.

In spite of various reforms in local government administration in Nigeria, the rural areas still suffer from lack of development as the effort of the local government have not achieve visible results in terms of provision of essential and social services. Akhakepe et al. (2012) stated that local governments as instrument of development depends on allocation from federal and state governments and their internally generated revenue so as to execute projects that will not only enhance the lives of the rural dwellers but also lead to provision of physical infrastructure and social amenities such as provision of access roads, potable water and rural electrification; enhancing rural livelihoods through the provision of credit facilities for agriculture, arts, crafts and small scale business; and motivating formation of cooperative societies and other economic consortium.

## THEORETICAL EXPLICATIONS

Several theories have evolved empirically to expound the divergent typical trajectory, strategies utilised in various circumstances along with policy formulation and implementation. The rationale for the continued existence of underdeveloped economies and social services in developing countries have been propounded by modern writers drawn from different development theories. Though theories are abstractions, the utilisation of development theories in case studies tend to differ subject to circumstantial differences in economic, social and cultural structures and historical experiences.

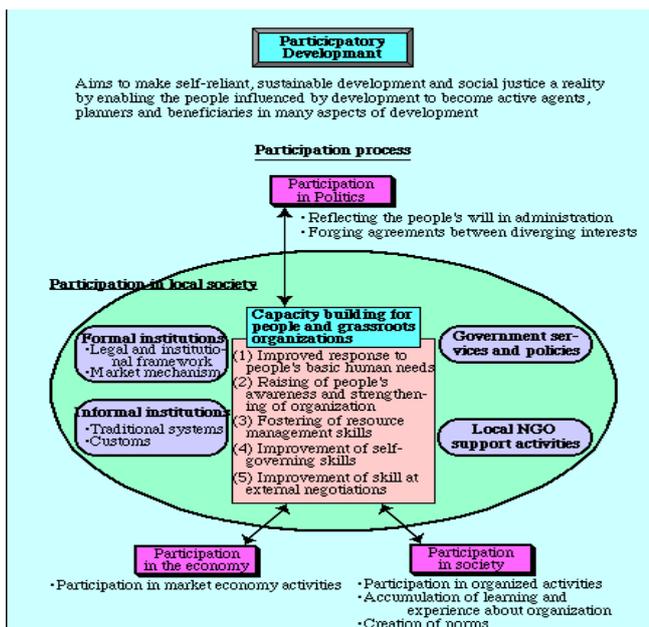
Yoon (1995) alluded that participatory approaches in rural development came to limelight in the 1970s. The concept of participatory models came into view from the development community. Under the 'modernization' school of thought, the usual practice

was to apply the 'western' processes and approaches to the developing world and expect the locals to replicate these methods and get the same results as the west. The outcome of the application of the western processes and approaches in the 1970s did not achieve the expected results and the rural dwellers started questioning these methods. This led to the acceptance of the participatory method as an alternative strategy, where local processes and practices and expectations begun to be integrated in the methods suggested as a development method.

The rationale behind emergence of the participatory development approach is the participation and involvement of rural dwellers and enhancing their capabilities in development initiatives. This empowers, and leads to self-transformation and self-reliance (Penderis, 1996; Rahman, 1993; & Conyers & Hills, 1990). In achieving rural development through participatory development approach as shown in figure 1, Dennis (1997) highlights the principles of the participatory approach, which includes involving rural dwellers in the decision or process that the outcome will affect (Inclusion), identifying the skill, ability and initiative of every rural dweller and ensuring that they are given equal right to be involved in the process, irrespective of their status (equal partnership); rural dwellers must beget a conducive environment that promotes an open communication and builds dialogue (Transparency); distribution of authority and power equally and uniformly among all stakeholders in order to prevent ascendancy of one group over the other (Sharing power); also, interested parties must have equal task and functions for decisions to be taken and each party should have clear functions within each process (Sharing responsibility); participants with expertise in disciplines should be motivated to assume responsibility for duties within their specialty, but should also ensure that others are included in fostering mutual learning and equipping (Empowerment); and apportioning responsibilities based on individual strength will avert the likelihood of failure by individual's weaknesses in discharging their duties (Cooperation).

Roodt (2001); & Dodds (1986) claimed that the participatory development model emphasises the engagement of the greater number of the population (particularly those earlier on omitted namely CBOs, Women, Youth and the illiterate) in the course of development program as shown in figure 1. This theory sees development as a course of action that gives attention to community participation in their own development utilizing available resources and directing the future development of their community. This approach stresses concepts like capacity building, empowerment, sustainability and self-reliance. Korten (1987) affirm that bureaucracy is in conflict with in bringing development to developing countries, but rather in the communities themselves.

The major principle that govern the conduct of participatory community development is that all the participants collaborate in any development undertakings from inception of project identification, prioritization, planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring. The purpose of the collaboration is aimed at attaining feeling of ownership and sustainability of the projects (GTZ-OSHP, 2002). Compared to the traditional rural development approach, the participatory approach offers a larger emphasis on building capacity, empowerment, self-reliance and sustainability of the projects. Participatory approaches (figure 1) can also confront perceptions, bringing about a change in attitude and agendas (Farm Africa, 2002).



**Figure 2:** Schematic Illustration of Participatory Development

Source: Jica Research Institute

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a cross-sectional survey that drew data from Ministry, Department and Agencies (MDAs) of state and local governments, and rural dwellers. Multi-stage sampling technique was used for this paper. At the first stage, two states were randomly selected from each geopolitical zone of the country, namely Plateau and Niger states (North-central), Taraba and Jigawa states (North-east), Katsina and Kebbi states (North-west), Abia and Imo states (South-east), Edo and Cross River states (South-south), and Ekiti and Osun states (South-west). At the second stage, one rural Local Government Area (LGA) was selected using stratified random sampling technique. At the third stage, one village was randomly selected from each local government. Finally, using structured questionnaire, oral interview and field observation data were generated from 864 respondents. The sample's constituents included: (1) only rural based local government areas; (2) residents/dwellers in the villages; and (3) staff of

ministry of local government and chieftaincy affairs and those of local government area; and (4) community leaders. Analysis of data was done using chi-square and regression.

## Local Government Administration and Rural Development

Local Government was established to be an instrument that will facilitate rural development in Nigeria. However, there have been mixed views as regards the extent to which local government administration has performed in transforming rural areas through provision of the needed facilities and infrastructure. Table 1 shows the linear regression results indicating involvement of local government administration in rural development in Nigeria.

The result ( $\beta=.014, t=.325, p>.05$ ) shows that local government administration's involvement with the local citizenry in political participation for rural development is statistically not significant. This implies that local government administration in Nigeria have not been involving the grassroots especially in the rural communities in political participation. A Director in one of the local governments in Imo State stated that local government administration in the state do not involve local citizens in political participation for rural development. She attributed this to corruption at the local government in Nigeria because they prefer to award contracts for execution of projects that will benefit them through kickbacks. This findings was in consonance with the studies carried out by Ele (2006); Okoli & Onah (2002); & Abah (2010). In their study, Okoli & Onah (2002) reported that rural development can be effective only when rural dwellers are well integrated. Ele (2006), on his part, reiterated the views of Okoli & Onah (2002) when he concluded that rural development can only be achieved when its implementation is comprehensive, entailing every facet of rural life and the joint efforts of the local, state and federal governments along with communities and civil society organisations.

The effect of local government administration on provision of earth and tarred roads is statistically not significant in the Nigerian rural areas ( $\beta=.015, t=.250, p>.05$ ). This indicates that local administration has not been effective in the provision of access earth and tarred road networks. This can be attributed to the intergovernmental fiscal crisis between the state and local governments, whereby state governments interfere in local government finances by utilising local government funds domiciled in the state joint local government account for other purposes outside the grassroots. Visitation, observation and interviews with residents of Guni village (Munya LGA in Niger State), Yanturaku village (Batsari LGA in Katsina State), Boole village (Odo-Otin LGA in Osun State) and Etekwuru village (Ohafia/Egbema LGA in Imo State) shows bad roads due to water logged earth/untarred

road with gullies due to erosion and floods. This has limited means of transportation of the rural dwellers to foot paths, bicycle and motorcycles to convey their farm produce from their farms to the market. This result was in consonance with the assertion of a Director in one of the Department of works who stated that most local governments do not have the caterpillars and bulldozers they used to have to deploy to rural communities to rehabilitate or construct new earth roads. Many of these caterpillars have been abandoned due to lack of funds because the higher levels of government deprive local governments of their allocation. This result ratified the findings of Olorunfemi (2020) who admitted that accessibility to the rural communities by road is imperative to achieving Sustainable Development Goals. However, these rural communities are disconnected from the major roads and public transport services that should link them to the economic and social opportunities in urban centers. Gbadamosi & Olorunfemi (2016) also attributed the poor road network that is supposed to connect rural communities to urban centres as being responsible for medical and health personnel rejecting their posting to rural areas of the country.

The result ( $\beta = -.125$ ,  $t = -2.879$ ,  $p < .05$ ) shows that local government administration involvement in rural domestic waste management is negative and statistically significant. This means that local government administration is not involved in waste management in the rural areas of Nigeria. However, the rural dwellers adopt unorthodox method in waste management. They indiscriminately dispose and burn their domestic waste in the open and at different locations, thereby polluting and destroying their environment. This finding was corroborated in an interview with the women leaders in Mai-Zagga village (Dakingeri LGA of Kebbi State), Kungana village (Bali LGA of Taraba State), and Urokuosa village (Uhunmwode LGA of Edo State) during interview session that the rural dwellers manage their domestic waste themselves through burning. They further claimed that the local government administration or their representative have never been seen for the past 20 years collecting and disposing waste. This result substantiates findings of Nwankwo (1994) who affirms that increasing growth in population and changing consumption patterns combine to aggravate solid-waste problems in Nigeria. Nwankwo reiterated that the challenge of effective solid-waste management in Nigerian cities and urban centers has reached mammoth proportions, as heaps of refuse are found along major roads, riverbanks, and in open spaces. The result was consistent with the outcome of the work of Ogbonna et al. (2002) who admitted that domestic waste management in Nigeria is faced with many obstacles, ranging from economic, environmental, sociocultural to sociopolitical issues. The level of enlightenment and environmental awareness about likely vulnerability to danger from a polluted environment is still abysmally

low, and rural dwellers are more concerned with daily survival and will not be bothered with “elitist” concepts like waste management. Ogbonna *et al* reported that inadequate.

Management skills in the handling of domestic waste at the rural level are also a major problem because the attitude of government at the grassroots level encourage open dumps as a waste-disposal method. In many of such situation, these waste dumps are located wherever land is available without regard to safety, health hazards, on the aesthetic values of the locations.

With regards to local government administration involvement in rural electrification, the result is statistically not significant ( $\beta = .049$ ,  $t = .638$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This insinuates that the reason many rural communities are still in perpetual darkness and not attracting the industries that require the raw materials that are produced in these areas is as a result of the inability of the respective local government administration in Nigeria to invest in rural electrification. This also accounts for the reason youths are migrating from rural to urban areas. This result confirms the findings of Ezeah (2005) who established that rural areas in Nigeria are suffering from neglect in basic amenities like electricity. The result was in consonance with the position of United Nations (2007) who enunciated that the provision of electricity has however been a difficult task for the government in developing countries, particularly in Africa. The UN contended further that although, Africa constitutes approximately 10% of the world population; yet the total primary energy consumption of Africa is only about 3% of the world total energy consumption. The result also supported the views of Aklilu (2004) who acknowledged that rural electrification has occupied the development agenda towards enhancing the welfare of rural dwellers, nevertheless, majority of the rural populace are still in darkness due to lack of electricity. The work of Idachaba (2006) advocated that provision of rural infrastructure such as electricity is one of the main methods and means of improving the standard of living and accelerating rural development. While Osanyinlusi et al. (2017) concluded that rural areas in Nigeria have been experiencing severe neglect and inadequate rural electrification infrastructural development.

From the the results, provision of agricultural extension services by local government administration to farmers in rural areas is negative and statistically not significant ( $\beta = -.062$ ,  $t = -1.500$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This means that local government administration has not been effective in providing agricultural extension services to rural farmers. This result validates the findings of Ijere (1992) who asserted that the rural areas in Nigeria which produces 95 percent of the food crops in the country is plagued with poverty, underdevelopment, poor standard of living and lack of basic agricultural

facilities and other farm inputs like fertilizer for enhanced rural agricultural activities for promotion of rural industrialization. The result also was in congruent with the views of Ekong (2003) who established that prompt delivery of inputs to farmers and evacuation of farms produce to market as a vital process of rural development.

The result of the study ( $\beta = -.007$ ,  $t = -.110$ ,  $p > .05$ ) revealed that involvement of local government administration in provision of potable water to rural communities is negative and statistically not significant, which established that local government administration have not been committed in the provision of potable water in rural communities. This may account for the high rate and widespread of water borne diseases in Nigerian rural areas. This result give credence to the findings of African Development Bank (2014), which reveals that rural dwellers do not have access to appropriate locally produced technology for water that will facilitate provision of water supply in order to improve the health and socio-economic benefits of rural communities.

In the same vein, the results ( $\beta = -.001$ ,  $t = -.018$ ,  $p > .05$ ) show that local government administration's effectiveness in the management of public primary schools is negative and statistically not significant, indicating that local government administration have not been effective in the management of public primary schools in the rural areas. This result validate the findings of Ijere (1992) who asserted that primary education facilities in the rural areas is devoid of functional facilities like classrooms and furniture, adequate funding, library and adequate, qualified and competent teachers. The result further collaborated the outcome of Nwankwo (2002) findings, who adduced that the local government has not been effective and responsive in fulfilling the needs of rural dwellers in respect of rural development, and this has resulted in the inability of the local government to finance the primary and adult education at the grassroots. Thus, many local governments are not efficient in deriving funds from internally generated revenue internally and this affect their effectiveness in funding primary education.

Likewise, result shows that local government administration effectiveness in the management of primary health centres negative and statistically not significant ( $\beta = -.076$ ,  $t = -1.271$ ,  $p > .05$ ), implying that local government administration is not effective in the management of primary health care in the rural areas. This result is in agreement with the findings of Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013) who reported that the inadequacy of health institutions is a common feature in Nigerian rural areas. Likewise, the result of this study also authenticate the findings of Onah and Okoli (2002)

who described the absence of health institutions in majority of the rural areas in Nigeria, and where they are present, rural dwellers travel very long distance to access the service.

The result ( $\beta = -.056$ ,  $t = -.983$ ,  $p > .05$ ) revealed that involvement of local government administration in provision of credit facilities for agriculture to rural dwellers is negative and statistically not significant. Majority of the rural farmers interviewed at Amamba village (Bende LGA in Abia State), Zolgo village (Bassa LGA in Plateau State) and Orin- Ekiti village (Ido/Osi LGA in Ekiti State) were of the view that they have not benefitted from government's credit facilities, even when they approach the relevant organs of government for possibility of accessing the credit facilities, which still yields no positive outcome. This result gives credence to the findings of Nwakubo & Maritun (2004) that due to inability of rural farmers to access credit facilities and poor state of infrastructure, especially road, the farmers are faced with the challenge of transporting their produce from farm to the market. It also affect the type and quantities of input used in agricultural production and the returns obtained. This is responsible for why some crops are left to perish in the soil, since they cannot transport them to the market. While other farmers in need of capital are forced to sell their crops while still in the soil unharvested at a very low price.

The result also shows that local government administration effectiveness in mobilising resources through the provision of avenues for rural dwellers to acquire needed skills is statistically not significant ( $\beta = .041$ ,  $t = .743$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This reveals that local government administration have not been actively involved in providing opportunities for rural dwellers to acquire skills that will empower them economically. This result affirms Ibietan (2010) study that concluded that empowerment requires participation of rural dwellers development programmes geared towards skill acquisition needed for trasforming their lives. This can only be achieved through skills acquisition, capacity building and development, and functional institutions at the local, state and federal levels that will utilise the human resources for the development of rural areas. This result is in consonance with the assertion of Adedire (2014) who inferred that lack of due consultation and non-involvement of local dwellers by the local government administration before embarking on developmental programmes that will empower them economically can be eliminated if the local government can operate a transparent administration that will inspire local communities to express their views on issues that affect them. This will allow local government to execute people based programmes that will prevent misplacement of priorities and wastage of resources.

**Table 1.** Linear Regression analysis showing Extent of Local Government Administration involvement in Rural Development in Nigeria

S/N		$\beta$	Std. error	t	sig. (p)
1	Involvement of local citizenry in political participation	0.14	0.43	.325	.745
2	Provision of access earth and tarred roads	0.15	0.60	.250	.803
3	Effective in rural domestic waste management	.125	0.43	-2.879	.005
4	Involved in electrification of rural communities	0.49	0.76	.638	.525
5	Provision of agricultural extension services to rural farmers	0.19	-.062	-1.500	.136
6	Provision of potable water for rural communities	.007	.060	-1.10	-.912
7	Effective management of Primary education	-.001	.060	-.018	.985
8	Effective management of Primary health facilities	-.076	.060	-1.271	.206
9	Provision of credit facilities For agriculture to rural dwellers	-.056	-.057	-.983	-.327
10	Effective mobilisation of resources through the provision of avenues for rural dwellers to acquire needed skills.	.041	.056	.743	.459

Source: Author's Field Report

### Constraints Of Local Government Administration Affecting Rural Development In Nigeria

One significant reason for the creation of local government is to promote grassroots development because they are better and strategically positioned than the federal and state government to engender rural development as a result of their nearness to the people at the local level. However, local governments in Nigeria are confronted with constraints that tend to hinder them from executing programmes and projects that foster rural development. Table 2 shows the result of chi-square analysis for Constraints of Local Government Administration affecting Rural Development in Nigeria.

The result ( $\chi^2 = 14.600$ ,  $p < .05$ ) revealed that local government councils are inadequately funded. This implies that inadequately funding of local government councils significantly affect rural development. This result was reiterated during interviews by the Directors of Finance of local governments in Osun, Imo, Plateau, Cross River, Katsina and Kebbi states, who admitted that funds released by state governments to their respective local governments fell short of the actual funds released from the federation account. This result substantiate the findings of Ammani (2012) who recounted how state governments diverted revenue meant for local governments from federal allocations to the state-joint local governments account. The result also supports the findings of Doho et al. (2018) who inferred that the joint state-local government account provides state governors privilege to allot local governments whatever amount they chose to thereby denying them what is due to them.

Also, the result ( $\chi^2 = 87.917$ ,  $p < .05$ ) showed that the corruption by public officials and other stakeholders through mismanagement, embezzlement and misappropriation of local government funds is positive and statistically significant. This indicates that local government council officials engage in corrupt practices such as mismanagement, embezzlement and misappropriation of local government funds. This result was affirmed by internal auditors in some local government councils in Ekiti, Katsina, Imo, Taraba and Niger states who disclosed that one of the greatest challenges of the local government councils is lack of prudence in their financial management. They admitted that local governments are not prudent even in the inadequate funds allocated to them, rather, the funds are embezzled. This result confirmed the findings of Imhanlahimi & Ikeanyibe (2009) who asserted that the large scale embezzlement by officials of local government councils have hindered the needed development at the rural communities. The result also establishes the outcome of Doho, Ahmed and Umar (2018) work, where they assert that excessive control by the state governments on local governments result in extensive corruption supervised at the state level through its superintending ministry such as the Ministry for Local Government and the Joint Account meetings. Funds designated for the development of rural areas are being diverted and dispensed or apportioned for political activities of the ruling party controlling the state. The result of the study was in agreement with the contribution of Obasanjo (2003) who averred that despite the enormous resources apportioned to rural development in Nigeria, rural development continues to linger in underdevelopment because the local government authorities saddled with the responsibilities have not been able to accomplish its obligation. The

expectation was that the local government would act as a catalyst to rapid and sustained development at the grassroots level, however, the op for rapid and sustained development has been a delusion as subsequent local government council administration have abysmally fallen short of expectations in most areas of their functions. Aside from the obvious mismanagement and misapplication of funds presently going on in most local governments in the country, the resources available which is meant for development programmes at the grassroots are being used for bloated elected officials and unproductive bureaucracies.

In the same vein, the result ( $\chi^2 = 1.800$ ,  $p > .05$ ) revealed that delay in payment of federal and state grants to local governments is not statistically significant, which implies that the delay in payment of grants do not necessarily affect rural development. This view was also attested to by some heads of department in local governments that despite release from federation account through the joint state-local government account do not have any meaningful project to show for such allocation. They indicted the local government authorities of misappropriation and embezzlement, hence they declared that even if the grants from the higher levels of government is released promptly, it will still not make any impact. This result substantiated the works of Bird (2010); Boadway & Shah (2009); Boex & Martinez-Vazquez (2006); & Bird & Smart (2002) who acknowledged that all governments globally assigned more expenditure functions to local governments that their revenue sources can hardly finance. The inability of the local government to finance its functions is referred to as vertical imbalances, and this accounts for why local governments in Nigeria relies on transfers from higher levels of government to bridge the gap created by vertical imbalances. This act of underpayment disbursement of funds to local government contributed to the problem of inadequate finance which has made effective services delivery at the rural areas to be impossible. Furthermore, Bird (2010) averred that the gap created as a result of the differences between local revenue bases and administrative capacities gave rise to problems of equalization (horizontal imbalance) between urban and rural local government authorities. Bird (2010) concluded that the presence of such imbalances implies that it is impossible to design an appropriate system of local government taxation without simultaneously designing an appropriate system of intergovernmental transfers.

Furthermore, the result ( $\chi^2 = 74.750$ ,  $p < .05$ ) affirmed that poor revenue base of the local government is positive and statistically significant, signifying that the poor revenue base of the local government is affecting this tier of government from achieving its rural development goal. This result is in agreement with the findings of Odo (2014) who stated that one of the criteria in the 1976 local government reforms guidelines

was the need of local government to be viable. Odo reported that most of the local governments in the country today cannot survive outside the statutory allocations from the federation account despite the various revenue (taxing) powers assigned to them. Though, local governments are assigned poor yielding revenue sources. Contrasting this view, some heads of internal revenue units were of the view that local government officials assigned with the purpose of revenue collection, either do not remit collections or only remit a fraction, hence they recommend that fines, levies etc. should be paid directly to banks instead of individuals in order to reduce losses.

Also, the result ( $\chi^2 = 52.667$ ,  $p < .05$ ) showed that state government by the instrumentality of Joint State-Local Government Account encroach into local government funds is statistically significant. This indicates that state governments have been encroaching into and spending local governments funds illegally. Many of the supervising councillors confirmed this action of state government, which is responsible for why many state governors prefers to appoint Caretaker Committees to run the affairs of local governments instead of democratically elected officials, was to ensure that their actions are not challenged. This result buttress the findings of Odo (2014), who averred that funds allocated to local governments for development of rural areas are being diverted for other purposes by the state governments at the detriment of the local governments.

Similarly, the result ( $\chi^2 = 58.000$ ,  $p < .05$ ) discovered that inadequate skilled human resources in the local government is statistically significant, which connotes that the local government do not have skilled human resources. This result endorse the findings of Odo (2014) that there is dearth of highly skilled human resources at the local government council. Some of the executive officers interviewed alleged that the available staff at the local government councils are the non-specialised staff such as administrative/executive officers; clerks; artisans; office assistants (messengers); typists etc., who do not possess the requisite skill in order to be competent to provide professional and expertise services that can lead rural development. The findings of this study was in agreement with the study conducted by Bello-Imam & Roberts (2001), who attributed poor service delivery among local governments to key factors such as inadequate skilled and technical human resources. Likewise, Eboh & Diejomaoh (2010); Adeyemi (2013); Agba et al. (2013); Ibok (2014); Bolatito & Ibrahim (2014); & Chukwuemeka et al. (2014) identified lack of qualified professional staff and unskilled workers. Fajonyomi & Olu-Owolabi (2013) further traced the problems of rural development as well as efficient and effective social service delivery to poor staffing who find it difficult to plan and execute government programmes. Onuigbo (2021) went deeper to the root cause of the inability of

local government to initiate and prosecute rural development to the questionable manner of recruitment as it is based on biasness and sentiments which eventually institute mediocrity and subvert meritocracy. Onuigbo further surmised that a junior cadre staff on grade level 01-06, whose salary is as low as N30,000.00 (\$50) would definitely not attract any skilled worker. Also, discrimination on the grounds of sex, ethnicity and religion instead of merit, has resulted in disregarding the right attitude in the process of staffing, extreme undue interference by the politicians and top functionaries in the staffing process, biasness in the staffing method by the employers affect the credibility and quality of employee, replacement of retired personnel with their relatives and backdoor recruitment disorganize staffing process.

In the local governments. These outcomes corroborated the findings of Abonyi (2004) that admitted that no local government will be able to accomplish rural development, without its human resources (staffing, development, compensation, safety and health, and labour relations). Hence, the abysmal failure of the local government system could be traced to its untrained, ill equipped and unskilled workforce. Most of its incompetent staff were politically recruited by the various ruling party. The local government has been converted to a dumping ground for unqualified people to be recruited into positions they do not have the requisite qualification.

In similar fashion, the result ( $\chi^2 = 62.750$ ,  $p > .05$ ) showed that overdependence on statutory allocation from the federation account is statistically significant. This adduces that overdependence on statutory allocation from the federation account has deprived the local government from generating revenue that will assist them in carrying out projects for rural development. Some of the supervisory counsellors in some local government councils during interviews argued that until Nigeria begin to practice true federalism, local government councils can not survive without their dependence on statutory allocation coming from the federation account. The findings of this study was in agreement with the work of Inyokwe (2018) that the allocation of primary tax heads to the federal government, secondary tax heads to state governments and residual tax heads to the local governments have brought about a master-servant relationship and the overreliance on the federal government for monthly allocation by the state and local governments. Also, the result also reiterated the findings of NEITI (2016) that affirmed the recurring over-dependence on monthly revenue allocation from the federation account by the federal, state and local governments as an indication imminent danger to national development.

Again, the result ( $\chi^2 = 56.917$ ,  $p < .05$ ) revealed that federal and state government interference in the administration of local governments is positive and

statistically significant, which means that the local is seen not as a tier of government but as an appendage. This result established the findings of Imhanlahimi & Ikeanyi (2009) who enunciated that local government in Nigeria do not have autonomous financial power. This is because they cannot embark on any expenditure without recourse to the state government. The result also gave credence to the findings of Akhakpe et al. (2012) who opined that local government administration has been facing constraints due to the incessant impinging on its functions over the years by the federal and state governments. The result was further authenticated by the outcome of Odo (2014) assertion that the overbearing control of state governments by dictating to the local governments and carrying out expenditure on their behalf has undermined their powers thereby inhibiting performance of local government administration in grassroots development.

Furthermore, the result ( $\chi^2 = 65.667$ ,  $p < .05$ ) affirmed that constitutional complexities on the functions of local governments is statistically significant. This implies that constitutional complexities on the functions of local governments hinders local government authorities from embarking on projects that will promote rural development. Directors of personnel in Osun, Abia, Cross River, Niger, Taraba and Katsina states were all in agreement that the vagueness of the constitution has created complexities, which is responsible for loop holes that allow states and federal government to interfere in the functions, which are traditionally that of the local government. This result reinforce the findings of Imhanlahimi & Ikeanyi (2009) who established that despite constitutional provisions, federal and state government continue to erode autonomy of the local government. The result was also in consonance with the findings of Doho, Ahmed and Umar (2018) who averred that the amendment of the Nigerian 1999 constitution poses hurdle for the local government to be able to operate as a tier of government. This, eventually became an obstacle for the local government to bring development to rural communities.

In the same way, the result ( $\chi^2 = 74.483$ ,  $p < .05$ ) showed that incessant dissolution of local government executive council is positive and statistically significant. The governors of the various states arbitrarily dissolve the entire elected executives of local government council without appropriate investigation on fictitious accusations on corruption is disastrous for result oriented local government administration in Nigeria. This result was validated by the response of some Directors of some local governments in Ekiti, Imo, Plateau, and Jigawa states where they argued that the recurring interference in the affairs of local government by state governments by dissolving elected executives of local governments have continually destabilise democratic process, and also weaken constitution powers of the local government.

The result of this study was in agreement with the findings of Agbodike et al. (2014) argued that state government's dissolves elected local government at will and appoint Caretaker Committees that they control and indirectly administer the governance of the local governments. As a result, the Caretaker Committees have been unable to disentangle themselves from the entrapment of state governments. Despite, appointing Caretaker Committees, these committees are dissolved at will.

In addition, the result ( $\chi^2 = 63.621$ ,  $p < .05$ ) enunciated that lack of accountability and transparency in local government administration is positive and statistically significant, suggesting that the local government councils have not operated a transparent and accountable system. This have resulted in many scholars dubbing the local government as the most corrupt of the three tiers of government. Some heads of department in some local governments in Osun, Katsina, Abia, Edo and Niger states stated that financial procedures are not effectively followed in disbursement of funds. They alleged that certain expenditure affecting their departments are embarked upon without their knowledge and involvement. This result was in consonance with the findings of Adedire (2014) who stated that a major obstacle to rural development is the menace of corruption due to lack of integrity, accountability and transparency among local government officials who are entrusted with the responsibility to execute development projects and programmes in the rural areas. This views were reiterated further by Nwakoby (2007) who express dissatisfaction about the misuse of public funds (meant for rural projects) being diverted to individuals personal account in Europe and America while subjecting rural populace to abject poverty.

Finally, the result ( $\chi^2 = 47.282$ ,  $p < .05$ ) established that poor and ineffective intergovernmental relations between state and local government is positive and statistically significant. Some Directors in some local governments in Imo, Ekiti, Plateau, Taraba, Kebbi and Cross River states inferred that there is no effective intergovernmental relations between the state and local governments. Rather, the relationship exist between them is that of superior and subordinate. This accounts for the reason state government dissolve elected local government officials at will without recourse to constitution. The result was in agreement with World Bank (2003) report that stated that the ineffectiveness of intergovernmental relations is identified in the weakness of current arrangements, especially in the educational sector, which lacks clarity in the accountability framework. There is no definite position as to which tier of government is responsible for achieving major educational outcomes. The result was in consonance with Freinkman (2007) assertion that Nigeria's model of fiscal federalism as depicted by the components of intergovernmental relations such as resource allocation, distribution of responsibilities for service delivery, and mechanisms for interaction between different tiers of government is defined by core rules. However, the current mechanisms and institutions for coordinating intergovernmental policy are weak and require improvement. Also, the poor coordination of various interventions as it affects shared responsibility in the provision of services in the environment among different tiers of government give rise to duplication of efforts and poor allocation of resources. Furthermore, the inadequate sharing of information among various tiers of government typify a basic weakness of the present intergovernmental arrangements in Nigeria.

**Table 2:** Chi square analysis on Constraints of Local Government Administration affecting Rural Development in Nigeria

S/N	Types of Performance Appraisal	$\chi^2$	df	sig. (p)
1	Inadequate funding of local government for rural development	14.600	3	.002
2	Corruption by public officials and other stakeholders through mismanagement, embezzlement and misappropriation of local government funds	87.917	4	.000
3	Delay in payment of federal and state grants to local governments	1.800	3	.615
4	Poor revenue base of the local government	74.750	4	.000
5	Exploitation of local government funds by state government by the instrumentality of State Joint Local Government Account	52.667	4	.000
6	Inadequate skilled human resources in the local government	58.500	4	.000
7	Overdependence on statutory allocation from the federation account	62.750	4	.000
8	Interference in the administration of local governments by state government	56.917	4	.000
9	Constitutional complexities on the functions of local governments	65.667	4	.000
10	Incessant dissolution of local government executive council	74.483	4	.000
11	Lack of accountability and transp[arency in local government Administration	63.621	4	.000
12	Poor intergovernmental relations between state and local government	47.282	4	.000

Source: Author's Field Report

## CONCLUSION

Essentially, local government administrations have in their possession the needed instrument and tools to achieve rural development in Nigeria. The paper identified waste management in rural areas as the only indicator of rural development where success was fairly achieved. However, the success was not as a result of the effort of local government administration, it was rather, attributed to the determination of the rural dwellers, who individually on their own, dispose and burn the waste. Furthermore, the paper showed that local government administration performed poorly in involving local citizens in political participation.

The paper also revealed that local government administration performed badly in the area of providing earth and tarred roads and electrification for rural communities. The state of affairs of the rural roads presents the true condition of rural communities in Nigeria, which is underdevelopment. Rural farmers transport their farm produce on their head by foot or bicycles, at the best by motorcycles due to the bad condition of rural roads. In the same vein, most rural communities are not enjoying electricity supply, and this accounts for why most industries are not sited in rural areas, the source of their raw materials, and rather site them in urban centres where they can access electricity to process their raw materials.

Likewise, most rural farmers are peasants and still rely on crude method of farming instead of mechanized. The local government administration has not been providing extension officers to these rural farmers to educate them on modern system of farming. In the same vein, local government administration has not been providing credit facilities for agricultural purposes to rural farmers. And due to insufficient funds, the rural farmers have not grown beyond their peasant farming level, hence they earn very low income from their efforts.

The paper further showed that the local government administration has performed badly in the areas of potable water. Most rural communities still depend on ponds streams, river and wells for their domestic water consumption in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This accounts for the increasing outbreak of water borne diseases in rural communities. The findings also revealed the dilapidated state of infrastructure in primary schools and primary health care facilities. This has been attributed to the continual interference of the higher levels of governments in the revenue of local government administration. The local government in Nigeria has not been able to achieve the purpose of its establishment of being the catalyst for rural development because on paper, it is a tier of government, whereas in practice, it is a unit in the ministry of local government and chieftaincy affairs of the state government.

Finally, certain constraints hinder local government administration from being able to execute projects and programmes that will achieve rural development. This include inadequate funding as a result of especially state government antics of starving local governments of funds through continual intruding into and spending local government funds. Also corruption among officials of local governments in form of mismanagement, embezzlement and misappropriation of funds meant rural development. Other constraints include poor revenue base of local governments, delay in payment of federal and state grants to local governments, overdependence on statutory allocation from the federation account, exploitation of local government funds by state government through the instrumentality of Joint State-Local Government Account, and constitutional complexities in the functions of local governments.

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