



THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF LAFIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE

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ABSTRACT: *Despite the huge revenue that accrues to the local government areas in Nigeria, rural areas are still faced with challenges of development. This study examined the role of Local Government in Rural Development in Lafia Local Government Area over a period of 2015 to 2019. The study utilized both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The structured questionnaire was designed and distributed to ten (10) selected communities within Lafia Local Government Area. A four points likerts scale was used to determine the responses of the respondents and the chi-square was also used to test the hypothesis. The findings of the study reveal that Lafia local government enhances rural development through provision of social amenities to the locality. The study further revealed that past policies and programmes of the government have improved the quality of lives of rural dwellers in the local government. The study therefore recommended that autonomy should be granted to local government in order to enhance its performance, revenue base of the local government should be diversified and the revenue allocation formula to local governments be reviewed upward.*

KEYWORDS: Local Government, Rural Development, Lafia L.G.A, Rural Areas

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of local government in Nigeria arises from the need to facilitate rural development through infrastructural development and service delivery (Sehinde, 2008). Section 7 (i) of 1999 constitution empowered local government to construct and maintain rural roads, street lights, water and drains and other public highways or such public facilities (FGN, 1999). Despite this provision, lack of adequate, affordable and reliable infrastructural facilities still eludes the rural Nigerian families every day. In addition, water supply is neither safe nor adequate for their needs and local roads are not pliable. Local government contributions to rural development have been minimal when compared to the amount of resources which accrue to it (Sehinde, 2008 in Tolu, 2014). Local people have become disillusioned as a result of unfulfilled expectation. In Nigeria today, the overriding impression today is that local governments are weak in responding to the challenges posed by rural development. Given this submission, this research therefore assessed the role of local government administration in rural development in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.



Objectives of the Study

The study will basically have two objectives. The general objective and the specific objective. The general objective of this study is to investigate the roles of Local government administration in rural development. While the specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To examine the roles of Local Government Administration in Rural Development in Nigeria.
- ii. To determine whether there is significant impact of the past policies and programmes of government on improvement of quality of lives of rural dwellers;
- iii. To identify the factors that enhance better lives of rural dwellers.

Statement of the Hypotheses

- i. **Ho:** Local Governments have not contributed significantly to development of rural areas.
- ii. **Ho:** Past policies and programmes of Government have no significant impact on rural development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Local Government

Akpan in Effiom (2001:87) describes local government “as the breaking down of the country into smaller units or localities for the purpose of administration in which the inhabitants of the different units or localities concerned play a direct and full part through their elected representatives who exercise powers and undertake under the general authority of the state or National Government”.

The National Guidelines for Reform of Local Government (1976:1) defines local government as:

Government at (the) level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the councils substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal governments in their areas and to ensure through active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiatives and responses to local needs and conditions are maximized.

Rural Development

Maboguje (1980:30) Opines that *rural development is concerned with the improvement of the living standards of the low-income people living in the rural areas on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-spatial structures of their productive activities. It implies a broad-based reorganization and mobilization of the rural populace to cope effectively with the daily tasks of their lives and with the change’s consequent upon this.*



Review of Empirical Literature

In this section, some empirical studies carried out on Local Government and rural development is presented.

Jide (2010) conducted a research on the role of local government in Rural Development, using simple content analysis. The result shows that the organizational environment for enhancing rural development remains the local government. The core issues in rural development include self-help; attention to need (felt and latent), integrated community for development; mobilization of human and material resources which could facilitate the provision of social amenities and infrastructure.

Tolu, (2014) carried a research on Local Government and rural infrastructural delivery in Nigeria using simple contact analysis. The study yielded a clear result that the rural infrastructure network is unavailable in the local area and where it is available, it is severely degraded and inadequate for any meaningful development. The study suggested that local government funding should be increased to enhance its delivery capacity and enable the rural people enjoy the presence of basic rural infrastructure.

Ademola, (2007) conducted a study on the role of local government areas in rural transport financing. The result shows that adequate provision of credit by the local government area will ease transportation problems in the rural areas both for human movement and for the transportation of goods from the farms to the market.

Ugwuanyi and Emma, (2013) conducted a research on enhancing Rural development in Nigeria: Periscoping the impediments and exploring imperative measures. They observed that the rural areas of Nigeria are so far largely characterized by lack of basic infrastructural facilities and general underdevelopment. This is in spite of their immense contributions to the national development. They argued that enhancing the rural development status is therefore a pre-requisite for sustainable national growth and development.

Anger, (2012) explored local government and rural development in Benue State and the result shows the performance of local government in Benue state. Thus, the rural areas in Benue state are characterized by inefficient means of agricultural production, there is general lack of basic infrastructure and social amenities such as safe portable water, road, medical facilities, educational facilities, electricity and general decline in human development. A critical observation reveals that local government in Benue state have failed to provide the expected level of development at the grass roots level.

Stephen and Moses, (2012) conducted a research on local government and appropriate capacity building for accelerated and sustainable rural development in Nigeria using simple content Analysis. The result depicted that capacity building to accelerate sustainable rural development at the local government level is missing. They suggested that for capacity building to improve at the local government to ensure accelerated and sustainable development, the following measures must be adopted as a way forward, capacity assessment/profit, analysis of the existing capacity problems, strengthening the existing system and technology transfer.



Theoretical Framework: Elite Theory

The elite theory was originally developed by Pareto in his “book” *The Mind and society*, in 1916 and Mosca ‘*The Ruling Class*’ at the beginning of the 20th century, Both Mosca and Pareto saw rule by elite groups as inevitable even in supposedly democratic societies and as such considered this state of affairs to be desirable. According to them, it was effectively “right and proper” that elite groups should dominate the political-decision making process.

Whilst Pareto saw political power in terms of a continuous circulation of elite groups’ who rule because of their members superior intelligence, education, cunning and so forth, that is their superior qualities, Mosca argued that elite groups ruled politically because of their superior organizational ability. According to Mosca, elite came to power because of their superior internal organization. Both Pareto and Mosca saw the general politically disorganized mass of the population as being controlled through manipulation, propaganda and the like to serve the interest of powerful elites.

Pareto distinguished two main type of elite group.

- a) “Lion elites” who were able to rule by force (for example, Military regimes)
- b) “False elites” who were able to rule by manipulation (for example liberal democratic regimes).

Given that, Pareto’s view of political power was pretty-much all encompassing, he attempted to resolve the problem of political change (how, if an elite was effectively all powerful, could it be replaced by another elite?) by reference to the idea that elites after they achieve power, have a relatively limited life-span. That is, they grow decadent, decay, lose their vigor and so forth and in turn, come to be replaced by other more vigorous, elite groups. Thus, the theory of “circulative elites” powerful groups arise in society, take power, lose their political vitality overtime and are replaced.

However, there are numerous problems with this form of analysis, Pareto simply assumes that elite groups are somehow superior to all other groups in society. He gives little reality about how and why they are supposedly superior. The distinction between types of elite is simplistic and does not recognizes the fact that, in democratic societies, the politically powerful may rule through a combination of economic, military, political and ideological power. Pareto’s explanation for the replacement of elite is over simplistic in so far, he provides no real explanations as to why elites should necessarily become decadent or decay. For Pareto, there appears to be little basic difference between democratic societies and totalitarian societies.

Although Mosca shared with Pareto the idea that elites had superior qualities to “the masses” who were effectively born to be led and controlled, he emphasized the social background of elites rather than their “personal qualities”. In this respect, elites ruled because of their superior internal organizational abilities and some elites were better equipped than others to take power. Mosca recognized that the organizational qualities needed to assume power varied from society to society.



Unlike Pareto, Mosca did attempt to distinguish between democratic and totalitarian societies. In the former the masses could have some input into the political process. However, his basic position was that democracy could never be anything more than a manipulative, legitimating process whereby elites consolidated their power by co-opting the masses to support the interest of the powerful rather than by truly representing the interest of the masses.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed both secondary and primary method of data collection. The secondary method will depend largely on data gathered from journals, conference papers, books, government publications and reports. The primary data was collected using questionnaires. This study is designed to select ten (10) rural communities in Lafia Local Government area of Nasarawa State and avail them with the questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed using frequency and tables and interpreted through the use of a 4 points Liker questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

Table 1: Summary of the Distributed Questionnaires

S/no	Locality	Numbers of Questionnaires Administered	Number of Questionnaire Returned	%
1.	Fadama bauna	17	15	88%
2.	BAD	30	25	83%
3.	Kayarda	14	14	100%
4.	Adogi	84	72	86%
5.	Bakin Rijiya	47	46	98%
6.	Akurba	129	106	82%
7.	Bukin Fadama	19	18	95%
8.	Kurikyo	18	17	94%
9.	Bukan Kwato	22	20	91%
10.	Wakwa	13	12	92%
	Total	392	345	88%

Source: Field Survey, July 2019.

From the above table, out of the 393 questionnaire administered to the respondents of all the 10 selected rural communities in Lafia Local Government Area, 345 representing 88% were returned while 48 representing 12% were not returned. A total of 345 questionnaires were returned and analyzed.

**Table 2: Bio Data of the Respondents**

S/no	Bio data	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex of the respondents	Male	285	83
		Female	60	17
		Total	345	100
2.	Age	19-33	30	9
		34-49	260	75
		50-64	35	10
		65 and above	20	6
		Total	345	100
3.	Educational Level	No formal Edu.	105	30
		Primary	150	43
		Secondary	78	23
		Tertiary	12	4
		Total	345	100

Source: Field survey July, 2019

Data presented in table 2 shows the bio data of the respondents in ten (10) selected rural communities of Lafia Local Government Area. The findings reveal that overwhelming respondents are male (83%) while female constitutes only (17%).

The highest participants are those in age category of 34-49 (75%), the age category from 50-64 (10%) and the next is 18-33 (9%) and 65 and above (6%). The result indicates that the majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 34-49 years. Similarly, the greater number of respondents are those with primary school education (43%) followed by those with no formal education (30%) and those with secondary education (23%). A negligible proportion is from the tertiary education (4%) level.

Table 3: Roles of Local Government Administration in Rural Development

S/N	Questionnaire items	SD	D	A	SA	X	Remark
1.	Local Government provided pipe born water to rural communities	173	113	39	20	1.72	Disagreed
2.	Modern market was constructed by Local Government	171	120	32	22	1.72	Disagreed
3.	Local Government provided and maintained public sewage and refuse disposal	24	23	143	155	3.2	Agreed
4.	Local Government provided electricity to each electoral ward	157	140	38	10	1.71	Disagreed
5.	PHC was constructed and maintained by the Local Government	8	27	s156	154	3.3	Agreed
6.	Local roads were constructed across the communities	18	26	147	156	3.2	Agreed



7.	New Primary Schools were established and old ones were renovated	10	36	126	173	3.3	Agreed
8.	Bridges were constructed across the rural communities	30	35	177	103	3.0	Agreed

Source: Field survey July, 2019

The data in table 3 shows the roles of local government in rural development of selected rural areas in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Out of eight roles of Local Government in rural development identified, the respondents agreed with five (5) These include construction of PHC (3.3), establishment of schools (3.3) public sewage and refusal disposal (3.2), local roads (3.2) and construction of bridges (3.0). The rest three (3) were not affirmed to be provided by the Local Government in the rural communities. These include construction of modern market (1.72), pipe borne water (1.72) and electricity (1.71). These findings indicate that Lafia Local government council enhances rural development in the selected communities. This is because five out of eight development indicators identified were agreed to be provided to the rural areas by the council. The result is in conformity with the work of Jide (2010).

Table 4: Impact of Past Policies and Programmes of Government on Rural Development

S/N	Questionnaire items	SD	D	A	SA	X	Remark
1	DFRRI provided Roads and rural infrastructure in your communities	25	30	145	145	3.1	Agreed
2	ADP engaged the services of agric extension officers and agents to farmers	24	23	143	155	3.2	Agreed
3	SEEDS promoted rural development	167	109	42	27	1.7	Disagreed
4	LEEDS empowered rural populace and reduced poverty	15	42	120	168	3.2	Agreed

Source: Field survey, July, 2019

The data in table 4 shows the impact of past policies and programmes of government on rural development. Out of the four policies identified, only one was disagreed by the respondents which is SEEDS (1.7). This is probably due to the fact that most of the state government projects were concentrated in urban centers. The rest three (3) policies were affirmed by the respondents to have impacted positively on the quality of lives of these rural dwellers. These include ADP (3.2), LEEDS (3.2) and DFRRI (3.1).

**Table 5: Factors to Enhance the Lives of Rural Dwellers.**

S/N	Questionnaire items	SD	D	A	SA	X	Remark
1	Granting autonomy to Local Government will improve rural development	16	24	150	155	3.2	Agreed
2	Local Government should be more people centred through collaboration with communities to facilitate the process of rural development	60	80	110	95	2.6	Agreed
3	Revenue allocation formula should be reviewed upward to enhance revenue generation to Local Government	7	13	102	223	3.5	Agreed
4	Institutions and groups can facilitate the attainment of the objectives of rural development	88	117	69	71	2.3	Disagreed
5	Credible election will ensure rural development	8	11	106	220	3.5	Agreed
6	Diversification of revenue generation will facilitate rural development	24	23	143	155	3.2	Agreed

Source: Field survey, July, 2019

Table 5 reveals that out of six factors identified as solution to enhancement of the lives of rural dwellers, only one item was disagreed with, which is that institutions and groups can facilitate the attainment of the objectives of rural development (2.3). The rest of the five were affirmed to be solution to better up the bettered and shattered situation in local government as regard to rural development. These include review of revenue allocation (3.5), credible election (3.5), granting of autonomy to local government (3.2), diversification of revenue (3.2) and people centered collaboration with communities (2.6).

Hypotheses Testing

The statistical tool used in the analysis of the data collected to test the hypothesis is the chi-square with a 5% level of significance.

The chi-square test used to test the formulated hypothesis of this study was represented by the following formula.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where

F_o: Observed Frequency

F_e: Expected frequency



Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant contribution of Local Government to the Development of Rural Areas.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe} = 1375$$

Decision

Based on the result of analysis at 5% level of significance, with 3 degree of freedom, the critical value is 7.815 and x^2 computed value is 1375. From the composed above result, we discovered that the x^2 calculated is greater than x^2 tabulated. We therefore reject the null hypothesis (Ho) which states that there is no significant contribution of Local Government to the development of rural areas, and accept the alternative hypothesis (Hi) which states that there is significant contribution of local government to the development of rural areas.

Hypothesis Two

Ho: Past policies and programmes of government have no significant impact on rural development

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe} = 523$$

Decision

$X^2_{df_3} X 5\% = 7.815$ and x^2 computed value is 523. The result revealed that X^2 calculated is greater than x^2 tabulated. We therefore reject the null hypothesis (Ho) which states that past policies and programmes of government have no significant impact to rural development and accept the alternative hypothesis (Hi) which states past policies and programmes of government have significant impact to rural development.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main aim of this study is to investigate the roles of local government in rural development in Nasarawa State. This section analyzes the extent to which finding of this study confirm to or deviate from those of other researchers of similar interest. The discussions were analyzed according to the research objectives and hypothesis for easy reading and comprehension.

The first finding of this study revealed that Lafia Local Government Council provided PHC centers, schools, Local roads, public sewage and refuse disposal, and bridges across the rural communities selected within the local government area. Majority of the respondents agreed



that local government council enhances rural development. The result is also in conformity with the work of Jide (2010) which found out that integrated community and mobilization of human and material resources are the core issues of local government in enhancing rural development.

The findings further revealed that past policies and programmes of the government have positively improved quality of lives of rural dwellers. The results show that majority of the respondents agreed that DFRRI, ADP and LEEDS enhance rural development through provision of road, infrastructure, poverty reduction and extension agents to the farmers.

The findings also identified solutions to better up the battered and shattered situation in Local governments as regards to rural development, these include: granting autonomy to local government, collaboration with communities, review of revenue allocation formula, credible election and diversification of sources of revenue generation

The results of the first hypothesis show that there is significant contribution of local government to the development of rural area since the computed X^2 value (1375) is greater than the x^2 tabulated value (7.815) as such, null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The second hypothesis also rejected the null hypothesis that states that past policies and programmes of government have no significant impact on rural development and accepted the alternative hypothesis that state that past policies and programme of government have significant impact on rural development.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is glaring that Local Governments have contributed significantly to the improvement of the lives of the rural dwellers in Nasarawa state. This is based on the fact that majority of the respondents disagreed with assertion that there is no significant relationship between Local Government and rural development in Nasarawa state. We may also draw conclusion that past government policies and programmes have improved the lives of the rural people in Nasarawa state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon the major conclusions of this study a number of recommendations have been identified below:

- i. This paper strongly advocates autonomy for local governments in such a way and manner that enhances its performance of constitutional and ancillary roles.
- ii. Local governments should strive to raise and maintain revenue that would enable her deliver projects and services that guarantee quality living to the grass roots. This has the potency of reducing the incidence of rural-urban drift.
- iii. As a corollary, local governments should be more people-centred in approach, such that necessary collaboration/partnership with communities in its domain can facilitate the process of rural development.



- iv. The paper recommends a further review of the revenue allocation formula with improved revenues to local governments as the closest tier of government to the people (rural and urban).

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