

Good Local Government Management and Rural Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The local government system in both the developed and developing world aims at developing the remote areas of their nations. For examples, the English committee system of local government management emphasizes the importance of elected representatives as a way of increasing efficiency, and promoting grassroots democratic governance, while the 1976 local government reforms in Nigeria encourage the abolition of *kantoma* or sole administratorship as a measure of promoting good local government management system. Notwithstanding the merits of these argumentations, Nigeria is still struggling to refocus attention towards completely discarding with the romance of transition local government management committees with the pitfalls of local government joint account system that suffocate rural development. In addressing the problem, 216 respondents participated in the study conducted through the exploratory research design, and the result showed positive relationship between the variables of the study. On the basis of the result, the study recommends that local government management in Nigeria should be guided by the provisions of the 1976 local government reforms and the provisions of the 1999 Constitution. The study was not exhaustive due to some limitations; therefore, further study could examine the relationship between local government management and the local government joint account system in Nigeria, to determine whether it is the best at this point of the nation's development.

Keywords

Kantoma, Elected Executive, Committee System, Local Government Joint Account System, Ikwuano Local Government, Prefect System, Zero Percent Poverty, Lugard

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1. Introduction

The Northern and Southern Nigeria became British Protectorates in 1900, and when it effectively took over the administration of the country, one of its first actions was the introduction of a unique system of local government administration. The system was critically, based on the Dual Mandate Policy of the British Colonial Administration. As the concept suggests, the *Dual Mandate* had two major elements. The first one was to develop the colonial area economically, politically, socially, and culturally. The second component of the *Dual Mandate* was that while in the

process of developing the colonial territory, the British would simultaneously exploit the resources of the occupied territory. Therefore, *development* and *economic exploitation* were the two central aspects of the principle of *Dual Mandate*. Another perspective of the Dual Mandate concept was to *Rule* and to *Trade*. Since the British colonial administration was not keen in occupying the Nigerian territory forever, it designed a system of local government management that would properly serve its purpose during the colonial period. The system of local administration was known as *Indirect Rule*. According to Oladosu [1] the principle of indirect rule was developed and introduced in Nigeria by Sir Fredrick Lugard in Northern Nigeria between 1900 – 1906. He

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extended it to the Southern part of the country between 1912 – 1914. At this time, the country was divided into regions, provinces and divisions. While the Governor-General as the representative of the British government was the head of the colonial administration in Nigeria, each region was headed by a governor, each province, was headed by a resident, and each division was headed by a district officer (the D.O). Local administration starts at the divisional level. The D.O was charged with the responsibility of ensuring that British colonial laws were properly implemented. On the other hand, local chiefs or emirs were made the executive heads of local administrations. Among other things, the chief or emir in his locality was to ensure that law and order were maintained; taxes were properly levied and collected. The beauty of the indirect rule was that it was the administration of the local people by their own chiefs, or emirs, subject to the supervision and approval of the British colonial administration. It is recognized today that Northern Nigeria was the home of the indirect rule system as the system was first introduced there. The system was smooth in the area because the political and administrative systems in parts of Northern Nigeria during the pre-colonial period favoured the indirect rule approach. This was particularly so in those parts that made up the Sokoto Caliphate. The system was partially successful in the Western Region and a complete failure in the Eastern Region. As a result of this challenge, new systems of local government which were more relevant were introduced in those regions. Therefore, the framework of local government administration designed during the colonial period was put into practice during the first-republic, but problems were encountered. Also, local government reforms introduced by the subsequent military governments suffered serious setback due to the politicization of issues of local government administration in Nigeria. A landmark in local government administration in Nigeria remains the 1976 reform which introduced a unified system of local government administration. This was modified in the 1985 Dasuki Committee's Report [2]. The Babangida administration introduced Decree 23 of 1991 which introduced the presidential system into local government administration. The reform gave constitutional recognition to local government as the third-tier of government. The reform also made local government a single-tier and multi-purpose level of government in Nigeria. These executive reforms became imperative not because no system of local government exists in Nigeria from the early times, but because conspicuously, there was no iota of good local government management in the country. Because of lack of good local government administration, most rural communities in the 774 local government areas in Nigeria today lack basic infrastructural and social amenities. For example, according to Ogbette, et al [3] over 380 rural

communities in Enugu State, Nigeria, lack access to feeder roads, portable water/borehole, as well as cottage industries. On this note, they emphasize that the need for good local government administration cannot be divorced from the matter of rural development.

1.1. Research Problem

All the 774 local government areas in Nigeria continue to suffer the pains of poor management due to several problems. These problems are directly associated with non-compliance with the recommendations of the 1976 local government reforms, the challenges of lack of financial autonomy, confusion with regard to the interpretation or application of Section 7 (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [4], as amended, concerning the operations of local governments in Nigeria. Other major problems include undue state governments' interference in the affairs of local governments, and the *almighty* issue of the obnoxious joint account model. It can be stated without any fear of contradiction that to the greatest extent, the misuse of the local government joint account and the apparent misapplication and/or misunderstanding of the relevant portions of the Nigerian Constitution with regard to the operations of a local government lie behind the underdevelopment status of local governments in Nigeria. No one can seriously disagree that all the local government areas lack the minimum measure of development. This is true because no matter the ruling political party at the centre, the governors come together as *one* party to argue against local government autonomy or for them to use *caretaker committees* to run the councils against the ideal of good local government management that would normally require elected chairmen and councillors as required by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [4], as amended. This *uniform caretakership* by the state governments has brought about *uniform underdevelopment* in all the local government areas. It is the same storey in Enugu State, Ondo State, Kwara State, Borno State, Kano State, and Akwa Ibom State, among the six geopolitical zones. They lack daily markets, good drinking water, rural electricity, cottage industries, basic health and educational facilities, feeder roads, transportation, among others. For a *standalone* example, a recent study of Ikwuano local government area in Abia State, Nigeria, showed that it has over thirty dilapidated roads and bridges, fifteen gully erosion sites, seven schools in a serious state of disrepair, eighteen health facilities with gross deficiencies, and twelve rural communities without portable water supply facilities. In this particular local government which is home for the National Roots Crops Research Institute since the 1950s, the Federal College of Agriculture, before it was relocated to Ishiagu, in Ebonyi State, and the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUAW),

among others, there is no daily market. In this type of situation, rural development will remain slow due to minimal lack of medium of exchange [5]. All over the country, sole administrators or transition committee chairpersons are no more than *glorified*, errand agents of the governors, and who give them very little to cover what they call *security votes*, certain percentage for *salary maintenance*, the better part of the local government money is then *free cash*, which the state and the *boss* can freely use for lavish burial ceremonies, or even now *sowing seed*, without any positive effect on rural development and the people. This country cannot achieve *zero percent poverty*, as China now claims, because about 94 million Nigerians live below the poverty line. It cannot boast of any type of rural development where local government cash is squandered on frivolities, where people lack food on their tables, lack shelter over their heads lack clothing over their bodies, lack water to quench their thirsts, lack basic healthcare facilities for their healing, lack feeder and access roads to move their agricultural products, lack bridges to cross the streams and rivers, lack security for themselves and families, and lack education for themselves and children to reduce the levels of ignorance in society [6]. Rural development in Nigeria requires hard work and commitment from the top political class and not to be left to the whims and caprices of people who are only keen in *empire building* and self-enrichment. It requires attempting to develop many rural communities through good management of resources. This is a huge responsibility but requires the focus of more local researchers to draw the attention of government, development partners and intervention agencies in attempts to make Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2030 realizable [7].

1.2. Research Objective

This study was designed to explore the relationship between good local government management and rural development in Nigeria.

1.3. Research Rationale

Most poor people in Nigeria live in rural communities, but most reports merely *torch* upon *local government administration and rural development* without proper focus on good local government management. While this report may not fill the research gap, it never-the-less stresses on the importance of good local government management and rural development as a better approach towards meeting SDGs 2030, 1-4, and 16 targets among others. Good local government management is a prerequisite for reducing at the minimum, half of the number of people living in absolute poverty in Nigeria by 2030, and also to promote the rule of law, safety of the people, as well as equality in the

distribution of wealth.

1.4. Research Questions

1. Is the election of local government chair necessary for good local government management in Nigeria?
2. Can elected councillors serve their people better?
3. Can a duly elected local government chair enhance transparency?
4. Is it true that elected local government executives are not answerable to the people?
5. Does the local government joint account model enhance accountability of the local government management system in Nigeria?
6. Is it true that the 1976 local government reforms in Nigeria does not encourage the presidential approach in the local government system?

1.5. Hypothesis

To achieve the objective of the study, the following hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho: There is no relationship between good local government management (GLGM) and rural development (RUDE) in Nigeria.

Hi: There is a relationship between GLGM and RUDE in Nigeria.

1.6. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the structure of the study which relates the major variables with the research questions and the problem. It is almost always expressed as a diagrammatic model. A model is a representative of reality; it eliminates irrelevant details and focuses on the pertinent areas to enhance the richness of the study. The model for this study is shown in figure 1.

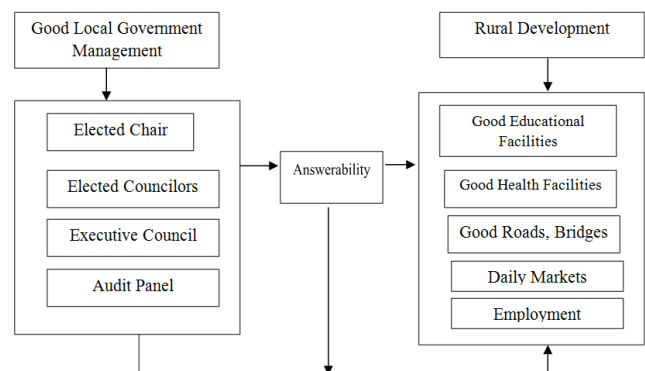


Figure 1. Good Local Government Management and Rural Development Model.

Source: Author Designed (2021)

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [4], as amended, envisages that good local government management in Nigeria should conform to the recommendations of the 1976 local government reforms. It is the expectation that where the local government executive council is composed of duly elected citizens they will be answerable to the people, and to a great extent, try to enhance rural development by providing social amenities and infrastructures. The English committee system of local government management is characterized by elected representatives and for increasing efficiency. In addition, the approach enables elected officials to achieve a greater measure of constructive control over members than would otherwise be possible. Where elected members manage local government affairs they are most likely to ensure compliance with the provisions of the constitution and other relevant rules, regulations as well as financial instructions guiding the proper functioning of the local government system than in the case of *caretaker committees*. The framework of this study suggests that the public administrator or manager must conceptually substitute management for administration in order to understand the governance dynamics that require more than the state, but also nongovernment, and non-state actors to configure what *good governance*, means. The architecture of good local government management must also recognize the need for more flexibility, efficiency, performance effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness which will translate into achieving a more democratic answerability and service delivery. This also implies not only the attributes of accountability and transparency but also emotional intelligence, with regard to leadership skills and sensibility to the perspective needs of the people. Contrary to what many people think, good local government management requires critical managerial leadership to enhance performance and rural development. This is imperative to catch up with the complexities of the 21st century and beyond. According to Olaopa [8] the public manager of the 21st century needs to bring multiple perspectives to policy challenges so as to succeed. An elected committee management of local government is important for prudent local government expenditure and professional performance that impacts positively on the entire populace and to a reasonable extent, fostering the imperatives of good governance at the grassroots level [9-10]. A functional audit panel is necessary to enhance a good local government management system. Such a panel will have the capacity to exercise compliance functions. The purpose of the compliance function will be to ensure that all financial transactions comply with the necessary financial regulations or instructions, policies, and ethical standards, as the cornerstone of sound public financial management. This cannot be overemphasized, because the goal of financial management either in the private or public sector, involves

the application of available resources in the most efficient way.

2. Literature Review

A local government is the third tier of government deliberately created to bring government closer to the local population, as well as giving the people a sense of involvement in the political process. The essence of good local government management is therefore, to ensure that the welfare of the local people is always protected and also that they enjoy fair treatment all the time, as far as they remain obedient and law abiding to constituted authorities. Local governments are designed so that the local people can be in charge of their own destiny. In a complex nation like Nigeria with many ethnic groups with divergent and diverse cultures, languages, customs, religions, interests, and aspirations, a good way of decentralizing political power and enhancing rural development is through good management of local governments, [11-13]. The Federal Republic of Nigeria with a large land mass, thirty six states, and a federal capital territory, (FCT) and a population of over 170 million people has a total of 774 local government areas to enhance efficient political leadership and public management with the aim of promoting rural development across the country [14-15]. In the local government context, rural areas, also known as local communities are those parts of a country that are not as developed as the capital cities or towns where most social amenities are often concentrated. On the other hand, rural development involves developing the remote parts of a country. Rural development can also mean the qualitative or quantitative improvement of the peoples' standard of living in the rural areas. At the most general level, rural development objectives include increasing employment, maximization of the personal incomes of the rural people as part of the upliftment of the quality of rural life, upliftment of the general health of the rural people, and providing the rural population with quality social services, similar to those in the urban centres [16-17].

2.1. Local Government Reforms

Good local government management recognizes the definition that it means the breaking down of a country into small units or localities for the purpose of administration, in which the inhabitants of different units or localities play a direct and full role through their elected representatives who exercise powers or undertake functions under the general authority of the central government. As a result, The Local Government Reforms [18] recognizes a local government as a government at local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. The Reforms

explain that such powers should give the council 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 the federal governments in their areas. And to ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils, and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, and local initiatives to meet local needs of the people. Despite the reasonableness of all other definitions of what constitutes a local government, the 1976 Reforms make it clear that a local council should be characterized by elected representatives who will exercise delegated powers for the benefit of the people.

2.2. Concept of Rural Development

Many scholars in the field of local government and rural development suggest that rural development involves all the means of developing the remote parts of a country. According to Njoku [19] local government administration has been adopted in many countries of the world as a measure to improve and sustain economic development. To the extent of sustaining economic development therefore, rural development is not only just the building of roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, markets, and other infrastructures, but also includes human capital transformation that would help the rural people in harnessing such basic social amenities provided for their own enjoyment [20-21]. Although rural development implies improvement in productivity and attitudes and not only the building of roads and the associated infrastructure, however, rural road projects can help in developing long-term communities capabilities for self-directed and self-sustained economic growth. For example, according to Cook [22] road projects produce profound social economic effects in rural areas. Roads help to structure population growth and settlement in rural areas. For example, new households cluster in the vicinity of roads and crossroads and may place excessive pressure on local resources, such as water and wood. She emphasizes that if a road opens access to good agricultural land, there may be significant in-migration of new farm families. Rural roads also provide local residents, with access to opportunities outside the project area and may cause significant temporary or permanent out-migration. Also, it is noted that rural road improvements provide a powerful framework for service providers to extend into rural areas to enhance community development [23].

2.3. Concept of Delegated Legislation

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [4], as amended, section 7 (4th schedule) stipulates for certain

functions which the local governments are required to perform for the people in the rural areas, with the aim of developing them, and thereby bringing the idea of national development to actualization. By developing the rural communities the people are empowered to participate in deciding matters affecting them. Delegated legislation is crucial in good local government management because to a large extent, the objective of local government is to administer rather than to make laws. This argument is based on the fact that all functions of local governments are given to them by the federal and state governments and in some cases they act as agents of the federal or state government. However, it is noted that local governments implement policies and it is also true that they make policies within their sphere of jurisdiction, and obviously perform critical political and administrative functions. It therefore, stands to argue that the organizational capacity and leadership effectiveness of a local government depend on the quality and institutionalization of delegated legislation. There are persuasive arguments advanced in good local government management literature that delegated legislation is necessary in enhancing grassroots participation and democratic governance. Delegated legislation is necessary so as to bring government nearer to the people. In recent local government literature, delegated legislation is recognized as a formal way to make adjustments to meet unforeseen and contingent matters affecting a country. Major types of delegated legislation include byelaws, provisional orders, statutory instruments, and special procedure orders. For example, bye-laws are rules and regulations made by the local government councils, public corporations and other similar statutory bodies for the smooth management of their respective responsibilities. However, powers delegated to local government councils have specific conditions attached to them that shape the exercise of such powers. For example, a local government bye-law must pass through certain processes before it could be legally regarded as a bye-law. But, a delegated power can be taken back since he who has authority to give can also take it back; but in practice, it is often not easy to take back powers which have already been given out. A third challenge in this process is that of pseudo-delegation of powers. In real life, not all forms of delegation are real. In some cases, certain administrative measures are taken to ease workload within the national or federal government administration. Such action may involve the creation of development areas or centres. But these are not genuine forms of decentralization or delegation of powers as they do not enjoy separate legal force from the federal government administration. This category is common in Nigeria in states like Lagos, Imo, Ebonyi, and others.

Another important area relevant to delegation of powers is the fact that even in the best form of decentralization, the federal government in a country must have contact with the people throughout the polity. This perspective could involve the collection of taxes, raising of armies, as well as the maintenance of law and order [24-28].

2.4. Comparative Local Government Management Models

There are different models in good local government management adopted by different countries to suit their own unique purpose. Some of them are summarized below. However, according to Berber [29] the methods of management are related to the stage of development and the philosophy of the state.

i. The Committee System: Committee management of local government is the English system. This is necessitated by the fact that the business to be handled by local government councils is so large that they can hardly cope. Therefore, a way out is to set up committees which are responsible for the detailed work of the local government council. This system permits a division of functions into the making of policy by the council and the management of it by individual committees or subcommittees.

ii. The Mayoral System: This is one of the management models used in the local government management in the United States of America. In the Mayoral system in general, counties and rural units of government do not have a chief executive officer (CEO) with great powers, and often they do not have a single executive of any kind. This decentralized pattern of decision making stems from the early days of American history. This perspective influenced the management of local authorities for the most part of the nineteenth century in the USA. However, new management techniques of local government administration were introduced in the twentieth century. One of such system was the commission system, under this system, a number of people, usually between five and seven are elected from the city. They are made heads of the various units of local government management and they collectively constitute the city council. The second innovation in the management of local government in the USA in the twentieth century is the city manager or country manager system. Under this system, local government administration is run on business lines. The city manager system is aimed at promoting democratic principles and expertise.

iii. The Prefect System: The philosophy of the French system of local government is related to the philosophy of the French state which can be traced to the era of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821). Bonaparte's design for the French nation was

based on certain considerations, including the preoccupation with efficiency. The French system of administration is designed to promote efficiency. To this extent, every level of government, including local governments is expected to implement its policies in the most efficient manner. The structure of local government administration in France involves departments, cantons, communes, and others. For example, the political head of the department is the Prefect. A sub-prefect is the political head of the arrondissement. Both the Prefect and sub-prefect are government appointees. The Prefect has enormous powers. Among others, he is the representative of the department and he is also the representative of the whole government as well as the chief executive officer of the local government at the level of the department.

iv. The Swedish System: The Swedish system of managing local government administration is similar to that of France. The Prefect who is in charge of the county is appointed by the central government. He is the central government's representative at the county and also the chief executive officer of the county. The county council is responsible for making bye-laws and taxation policy. It also serves as an electoral college for elections into senate. The county meets once in a year. Also, there is a standing administrative committee which carries out the functions of the council when it is not in session [30-36].

3. Research Methodology

The exploratory research design was adopted for the study. According to Asika [37] the objective of exploratory research is to define a problem more succinctly and develop means of action that will lead to its solution. He opines that the nature of exploratory research requires the use of a flexible research process. Exploratory research is historical in nature and it rarely involves the employment of large samples or use of structured questionnaire. The population comprised of the people in Nigeria and the sample was selected from local government employees through the judgmental method. The sample size of 216 was determined using the sample ratio technique. Data were collected through both primary and secondary sources, which include personal interviews, observations, books, journals, newspapers, and others. This method of data collection was used so as to complement, supplement, and validate data through each other. According to Osuala [38] triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection to improve validity, often when combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a study. Data were analyzed through descriptive and regression techniques, using the SPSS.

4. Presentation of Result

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (n=109).

S/N	Description	Category	Total	Percentage
i	Gender	a) Female	75	34.72
		b) Male	141	65.28
ii	Education	a) Certificates	30	13.90
		b) Diplomas	80	37.03
		c) Degrees	106	49.07
iii	Age	a) 18 – 35 years	40	18.52
		b) 36 – 55 years	90	41.67
		c) 56 – 75 years	86	39.81
iv	Experience	a) Below 10 years	43	20.83
		b) 11 – 25 years	87	40.28
		c) 26 – 35 years	84	38.89
v	Status	a) Low	25	11.58
		b) Middle	95	43.98
		c) High	96	44.44

Table 2. Analysis of Frequency and Mean for Responses to Research Questions.

S/ N	Restatement of Research Questions	Scores					Row scores	Sample size	Mean score	Decision –@ 3 points	Grand mean
		SA	A	N	D	SD					
i	Election of local government chair is necessary for good local government management	95	80	1	5	35	843	216	3.90	True	
ii	Elected councillors cannot serve their people better	10	20	3	13	170	335	216	1.55	False	
iii	Elected local government chair can enhance transparency	75	90	2	9	40	799	216	3.70	True	
iv	Elected local government executive is not answerable to the people.	30	10	4	12	160	386	216	1.79	False	3.06
v	Local government joint account does not enhance accountability in the local government system.	85	70	2	9	50	779	216	3.61	True	
vi	1976 local government reform in Nigeria encourages the presidential approach in the local government system	101	65	1	9	40	826	216	3.82	True	

Table 3. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.830 ^a	.689	.655	882.03275	1.645

a. Predictors: (Constant), GLGM

b. Dependent Variable: RUDE

Table 4. ANOVA.

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	31068016.980	2	15534008.490		
1 Residual	14003672.038	18	777981.780	19.967	.000 ^b
Total	45071689.018	20			

a. Predictors: (Constant), GLGM

b. Dependent Variable: RUDE

Table 5. Coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	-147.015	272.561			-.539	.596
1 GLGM	-.729.393	869.759	-.249		-.839	.413
	.857	.243	1.046		3.527	.002

a. Predictors: (Constant), GLGM

b. Dependent Variable: RUDE

Source: SPSS (20) Output, 2020

4.1. Discussion

Despite structural differences the major objective of a local government system in most parts of the world is to promote grassroots democracy by creating a local government council that is mainly elective. Through this process the council is expected to be answerable to the people and to this extent be in a position to meet the basic needs of the rural people in terms of social amenities among others. The English system recognizes the county councils, the French, the Prefects, and the Americans the Mayoral system as the means of grassroots representation and for the important need of developing the rural areas. Notwithstanding the relevance of previous local government reforms in Nigeria, the 1976 reforms represent a critical milestone due to its revolutionary nature. The 1976 reforms thoroughly altered the nature, the process, the structure, the basic philosophy, and especially the practice of local government management in Nigeria. The reforms recognize a local government in Nigeria as a single-tier and multi-purpose level of government that must be elected to promote a democratic atmosphere in public governance. To promote rural development, the two major recommendations of the Dasuki Committee in relation to the structure of local government management system in Nigeria were the retention of the basic structure of local government as introduced in the 1976 reforms and also decentralization by locating development areas which entails territorial division based on population size. For effective local government management in Nigeria, the 1976 reforms sought for the abolition of *sole administrator*, *kantoma*, or *caretakership* in the local government system and the establishment of local government executive councils. It stressed the need for general purpose committee, improved conditions of service for local government employees, and the establishment of management audit panels, among others. In addressing the problems of this study therefore, the psychometric model in figure 1 draws attention to the major variables of good local government management vis-à-vis rural development with reference to Nigeria. Governance at the grassroots level is very important for rural development because majority of the poor people in a country live in such areas. To enhance the academic potency of the study, and as shown in table 1, only qualified participants were selected for the study. Their responses as in table 2 revealed some vital information necessary for good local government management and rural development in Nigeria. For example, the respondents agreed that the election of local government chair is necessary for good local government management, but disagreed that elected councillors cannot serve their people better. They also asserted that elected local government chair can enhance transparency in local government management, while

refusing to agree that elected local government executive is not answerable to the people. It was proved as obvious that the local government joint account approach does not enhance accountability in the local government management system, and also that the 1976 local government reforms in Nigeria support the presidential approach in the local government management system. With a grand mean of 3.06 over the decision mean of 3.00, the respondents agreed that good local government management is required for rural development efforts in Nigeria. To strengthen this preliminary result, a regression test was conducted to determine the level of the effect of good local government management on rural development. Regression analysis aims at building a model that predicts the dependent variable using the independent variable(s). In regression analysis R is the coefficient of correlation of the model, R^2 is the coefficient of determination while the adjusted R^2 , relates to the goodness-of-fit test of the model. In this study, the $R = .830$, means that there is strong positive relationship between dependent and independent variables of interest. The $R^2 = .689$, means that about 70 percent change in the dependent variable is accounted for by the independent variable(s). The goodness-of-fit test of the model is also very good with the adjusted $R^2 = .655$. The Durbin Watson value is 1.645 that lies within the range between 1.5 and 2.5, therefore, it can be safely stated that there is no auto-correlation among the independent variables of interest. The overall result showed strong positive relationship between good local government management and rural development. This is the objective of this investigation. This result supports the finding of Golding [39] that local government control by elected representatives in addition to increasing efficiency enables elected members to achieve a greater degree of constructive control over issues than would otherwise be possible. Also, participation by elected members increases the realization of democratic spirit by enabling the individual members to make a greater contribution, for more practical aspect of local government management and rural development rather than with ordinary oratory or rhetoric show [40]. Nigerians are aware of the abuses by states of the local government allocations which is a major reason for the underdevelopment at the grassroots level and the thorough emasculation of the rural people [41].

4.2. Scope for Further Study

Local government areas in Nigeria continue to suffer lack of development because of lack of good management. To address this issue better, further research should investigate the effect of joint local government account system on local government management effectiveness in Nigeria.

4.3. Recommendations

- i. Good local government management in Nigeria should be guided by the recommendation of the 1976 local government reforms as well as the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended.
- ii. Elected local government chair as the CEO of the councils should always ensure to effectively carry out functions to the extent of grassroots development. This is critical because genuine national development has its roots from rural development.
- iii. Elected local government executive must be prudent in generating and managing internally generated revenue (IGR). They should avoid the temptation of squandering monies generated from markets and motor parks on a daily basis as if they were their personal property.
- iv. Local government areas are subordinate to the federal and state governments despite their single-tier status. Thus, they should function in collaboration with them to enhance the development of their respective areas.
- v. Most people in the rural areas are engaged in agriculture. Therefore, since most parts of Nigeria have good climatic conditions, local governments should try to encourage agriculture so as to create wealth, reduce rural-urban migration as well as rural poverty
- vi. Local government should encourage early and lifelong learning among their people as a means of socio-economic development towards the achievement of the UN, 2030 SDGs

5. Conclusion

There may not be real national development without rural development and this can be achieved through good local government management. Governments from the early stages of modern democratic governance recognize the importance of elected representatives as a system of encouraging grassroots participation and rural development. There is almost a chorus of consensus in the modern local government literature that elected local government executive can enhance efficiency and promote the principles of democratic governance in the rural areas. The study involving 216 participants was conducted through the exploratory research design and the result showed positive relationship between good local government management and rural development.

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John Nkeobunna Nnah Ugoani, collected, analyzed and interpreted data in respect of this paper. The paper is the intellectual property of the sole author who is therefore, solely, responsible for any omissions or liabilities arising there from.

Originality

Good local government management is very crucial in rural development programme and the development of any nation. Despite huge literature in this area this is one of the few new scholarly works in recent history attempting to promote the efficacy of good local government management and rural development in Nigeria.

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Biography



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