

**JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (JPIR)**  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN**  
**NIGERIA: A STUDY ON OYO EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the role of Local Government in the Socio-Economic development in Oyo East Local Government, Oyo state, Nigeria. It examines the relationship performed by the Local Government in socio-economic in rural community. It also examines the constraints hindering the effective and efficient performance of Local Government administration in Nigeria. It adopts a survey research design technique. The main instrument for data collection is questionnaire. Primary data collected and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while relevant hypothesis were tested using Chi-Square analyses of Hypothesis testing. The sample size used in this study was simple random sampling method. 100 questionnaires were respondents. The research instrument for this study, was self-constructed questionnaire. For the purpose of this study the data collection instrument data collection was piloted with Oyo East Local Government staff. The findings of the study show that Local government does not enjoy total autonomy like the state and federal. The study reveals how effective workings of Local government is essential to aiding socio-economic development and also to ensure effective delivery of service at grass root level. The study thus recommends therefore recommend that to financial autonomy should be granted to Local Government, so that they can finance their programmes and project without unnecessary interference from the state government.*

**Keywords:** Administration, Autonomy, Development, Federalism and Local Government

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1950's, local government in Nigeria have undergone so many transitions. Between 1950 and 1976, the country's system of local government moved from colonial inheritance of indirect rule through native authorities to elected councils. A fundamental feature of this period was that each region or state carried out or operated system of local government that suits their socio-economic and political ideology. Under the Nigeria Federal system, local government is a state subject. Thus, several system of local government existed (Ademola 2013). However, the 1976 local government reform put the local government on a sounding footing in Nigeria federal conglomerate. The reform introduced a uniform system of local government of the whole country. Different local government areas were created that paid no respect to history, traditions, culture and community solidarity (Adedeji 1997).

Gboyega (1987) sees local government as a political subdivision of a nation or state which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affair including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. In the same vein, local government can be regarded as the management of services and regulatory functions by locally elected councils and officials responsible to them under statutory and inspectorial supervision of central legislature and executive, but with enough financial and other independence to admit of a fair degree of local initiative and policy making (Hickey, 1966)

Also, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1952) referred to the local government as a system of government where local councils make, accept responsibility for, and implement their own decisions subject only to such control as may be exercised by the people through their own regional government. Therefore, of the three tiers of government, the local government is the one that provides the greatest scope of service that will enhance grassroots development. This is because local government touches the lives of the people at the grassroots intimately and psychologically. In short, the importance of local government knows the socio- economic development of rural communities cannot be overemphasized. Why? Local government knows the socio-economic and political needs of the local people. Hence, they are at the best place to provide service to address or satisfy the need of the rural communities.

Also, without iota of doubt, local government is established majorly to provide essential services that will improve the living standard and the economic conditions of the rural populace. Therefore, scholars have argued that local government is a vehicle for development of any nations in sum. Unless the system of governance at the local level is in time with the socio-economic and political system of the particular locality, there will be no tangible development (Yakubu, 2003).

The research questions for the study will be based on the following: To what extent has local government administration played its constitutional roles in rural area? Does lack of total autonomy affect local government in discharge of its duties? What are the factors

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that constraint the success of development process of local government?

### Conceptual review

The concept local government has legion of definitions by different scholars. It is a statutory body created by the law by the law to manage public resources at local level with prescribed power and functions. Hickney (1966) referred to local government as the management of service and regulatory functions by locally elected councils and official responsible to them under statutory and inspectorial supervision of central legislature and executive, but with enough financial and other independence to admit of a fair degree of local initiatives and policy making.

Montanue (1968) sees local government as the government by local bodies, freely elected which while subject to the supremacy of the national (or state) governments are endowed in some respect with power, discretion and responsibility which they can exercise without control over their decisions by the higher authority. Okunade (198) defined local government “as government at local level, exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within a defined area”. In the same vein, Nnoli (1980) sees local government as a system of government at the local level exercised through locally elected representative council, enjoying “substantial autonomy in the exercise of specific power over a given locality in performance of a

range of functions and responsibilities allotted to it by law”.

Agbo (1995) opines that local government as government by popularly elected bodies charged with administration and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place. To Agu (2006) local government is that form of government at the grass root that is charged with the responsibility of mobilizing the human and material resource at the grass root level for effective rural development. Eme Awa (1978) defines local government as a political authority set up by nation or state as subordinate authority for purpose of dispersing or decentralizing political power. To Clarke (2000) local government is the part of the government of the nation or state which deals mainly with such matters that concern the inhabitants of particular district or place together with those matters which parliament has deemed it necessary by local authorities subordinate to the central government.

Whallen (1976) opined the following as the characteristics of what local government entails:

1. A given territory and population;
2. An institutional structure for legislature, executive and administrative purpose;
3. A separate legal entity or identity;
4. A range of power and functions authorized by delegation from the appropriate central or intermediate (government) legislature and within ambit of such delegation; and

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5. Autonomy including fiscal autonomy.

Therefore, local government from all the perspectives above can be seen in sum as the government at the local level charge with the responsibility of managing public resources at the local level for the purpose of improving the living standard of local inhabitants as well as to accelerate national development from below.

### Reason for establishing local government

Local government is established as a vital tier of governance to bring administration closer to the people at the grassroots level. Its creation is driven by the need to ensure effective participation of citizens in governance, promote efficient service delivery, and address local needs that may not receive adequate attention from central or state governments. By decentralizing power and authority, local government enhances democratic practices, fosters accountability, and encourages community development. It also serves as an instrument for political education, economic development, and social integration, making governance more responsive and inclusive at the local level.

Anikeze et al. (2010) write the following as the reasons which necessitate the establishment of the third tier of government.

i. To enhance citizen participation in the management of scarce resources at the management of scarce resources at local level. Hence, management of local government affairs by local inhabitants themselves is one of the basic reasons for creating local government in Nigeria Federal conglomerate.

ii. To promote effective equitable provision and distribution of essential services at the local level. This is because the government that is at the best position to provide the needs of their proximity to them in the scheme of things

iii. To bring government plane and programme close to the people due to physical distance between officials of the other tier of government. It enables the rural inhabitants to be fully identified with governmental programmes.

iv. To internalize the democratic norms and culture in the people through participation in election and electioneering process. Local government helps in strengthen the democratic norm and culture of the state.

v. Local government serves as a breeding ground for future political leaders. It enables a country to breed leaders that are rurally based who's his/her antecedents cut across diverse ethnic group.

vi. To accelerate grass root development through effective and efficient performance of her duties and roles in

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the polity. Local government provides the greatest scope of grass roots development.

- vii. To assist the central and state government in the maintenance of law and order at the grass root level.

### Source of finance for local government

Ezeani (2004) cited Adedeji (1969) noted that “the success or failure, even effectiveness or ineffectiveness of local government depends on the financial resource available to the individual local authorities and the way these resources are utilized”.

Generally, for local government in Nigeria to adequately perform their constitutional assigned responsibilities that will accelerate development from below, availability of enough revenue and sound financial management is required.

### Control of local government council in Nigeria

Babalola (2000) identifies the following as the method employed in controlling local government of Nigeria.

- 1. Parliamentary Control:** Local Government as a body corporate is a creation of the law. So as a legal entity, the laws setting up local government has substantial level of control over local government. The parliament is responsible for establishing the instrument listing the power, functions sources of revenue of local government.

Local government as a creation of the constitution must act within the powers and functions given or conferred on her by the constitution. Any of her deeds and actions that contravene the constitution and power given to her can be declared null and void. The parliament has power to control the local government.

- 2. Administrative Control:** There are lots of administrative controls over the management activities. For example, the estimates of local government should have to be approved by the appropriate commissioner of the state, especially commissioner for local government and chieftaincy, title; even the so approved estimate must attune to the guide line prescribed by the office of budget and planning department of the Governor office. Also, Local Government Inspectors carry out projects and programmes to ensure they are in accordance to the required standard approved by the state. Local government are controlled administratively, through compliance of various guidelines release from time to time, especially the local government financial memoranda(FM) that guides the operation ability of the council administrators.

- 3. Auditors:** The auditors either internal or external exercise certain level of control over local government activities financially. The auditors is empowered to review, examine and investigate all books of account of the council on regular basis so as to prevent or detect fraud, error, misappropriation and embezzlement of

public resources at the local government level. The auditor has power to visit contract sites, audit the work done, work in progress and issues certificates as appropriate to the contractor. Also, the auditor especially the external auditor has the power to sanction and surcharge any officer as stipulated in the guideline governing offences and sanction.

The auditors have the power to ensure that the local government administrators strictly comply with all the provisions of the Financial Memoranda, Accounting codes and procedure, Guidelines and Circular released from time to time.

**4. Judicial Control:** Activities of the local government can be subjected to the control of the court of law. The court have the power to declare any bye-law made local government council concerned cannot operate the bye-law declare ultra vires by the court of law.

The court exercise control over the activities of the local government if their actions and activities go beyond their statutory roles and responsibilities.

**5. Public Control:** The public through constructive criticisms exercise substantial control over the local government bye-law can be rescinded through public criticisms. The public being the recipient of the actions of the local government in term of provisions of essential services and developmental programmes and project can assess the actions and performance of the local government, by doing so they can judged the local government council either being effective and efficient or

ineffective and inefficient in the performance of their statutory roles. Hence, the public exercise control over the local government council through constitutive criticisms.

### **Problem facing local government in promoting national development**

Adedeji (1967) opined that local government in Nigeria is confronted with the following problems in the discharge of their responsibilities. These are some of the problem:

- 1. Party Politics:** The introduction of party politics at the local government level has negatively affected the smooth running of local government in Nigeria. Councilors from opposition political party often engaged in power struggle and unnecessary rivalry among councilors from the rulings party. Hence, this made council activity to become ineffective.
- 2. Interference from Higher Government:** One of the major problems facing local government in Nigeria is political interference into the activities of the local government by higher governmental bodies, especially the state government. Often time, the state governments do delay in giving approval to the estimates or the projects of the local government. Recently, failure of state to conduct election at the local government level affects the activities of local government in Nigeria.
- 3. Lack of enough funds:** Local governments are usually unable to generate sufficient funds to execute all

their plan programmes and project that will accelerate development from the local level. Lack of enough funds to carry out their programmes affect the performance of the local governments in Nigeria.

#### **4. Bribery and Corruption:**

Local government officials are corrupt, often times the money voted for developmental projects and programmes are diverted into private purse then leave the council with little or no funds to implement their projects.

#### **5. Favoritism and Nepotism:**

Appointment into the local government council are not often based on merit and credibility rather; it is based patronage and god-fatherism. Appointments made by the council administrators and functionaries are often inflated by the practice of favoritism and nepotism. Also, in some case, contracts are also awarded to friends and relatives of top bureaucrats of the council.

#### **6. Lack of effective communication:**

There is often lack of effective communication channel between councilors and the people of the community, they represented. The people of the community in some case do not even know plan and programmes of their local government and this resulted into poor participation of the people in developmental activities of the council.

### **Theoretical framework**

Theoretical explanation for the existence of local government can be viewed from three perspectives, these are;

**i.** Democratic Participation Theory;

**ii.** Efficient Service Theory; and

**iii.** Resources mobilization Theory

**i.** Democratic Participatory Theory: Scholars like Laski, mass and Hills contributed to the development of democratic participatory theory. The fundamental normative fact this theory preaches is that decentralization of power to the local government is to give the people at the local level the right to determine their own aims in terms of governance. The theory believes that the existence of the local government in the polity will allows the local populace to democratically participate in the administrative of their local needs and conditions. This school of thought is of the fact that local government facilities exercise of democratic self-governance close to the grassroots.

**ii.** Efficient Service Theory: The fundamental claims of scholars with regard to efficient service theory is that local government is not established only to promote democratic norms and participation at the local level but in existence to provide efficient service to the local people in accordance to the local condition of the people. Hence, to this school of thought, local government is created to transform and improve the living standard of the rural people.

**iii.** Resource Mobilization Theory: The argument of this school of

thought is that local government exists because it has the manpower and resource to back the central government in policy formulation and implementation. Hence, local government according to this theory serves as micro-power development and utilization institution. For instance, local government promotes the acquisition of political skills (political framing group), which lead to emergency of elective national leaders.

### **Relationship between local government and rural social and economic development**

Anikeze et al. (2010), identify and discuss the relationship between local government

and rural socio-economic development.

- i. Local government provides services that help to improve agricultural and livestock development in the rural area. They establish poultry, fish ponds, cattle ranch etc, and control minor erosion.
- ii. Local government can also encourage rural community development through rural industrialization. They do this by encouraging small scale industries like Garri processing Industry, Livestock, palm oil processing industry, bag making.
- iii. The local government authority provides health service to the local inhabitant through provision of maternity homes. The local health section of local government sees to periodical vaccines and emergency immunization.
- iv. Local government together with other levels of government should provide good drinkable water to the local or rural community. The provision of good drinkable water will curb certain infectious diseases.
- v. Local government is also responsible for the construction of feeder road network in the rural are. This will enhance development of physical space and physical access of producer to vital resources.
- vi. Local government in partnership with the state government is empowered to provide and maintain primary and empowered education at the rural community. This will help in curbing ignorance as well as providing self-employed job opportunities to the rural inhabitants.
- vii. Local government participates with the government in the provision of rural electricity. Rural electrification is indispensable in the development of rural communities.
- viii. Local government should embark on provision and construction of decent housing estate for their staffs and other citizen living in the local government. Availability of decent houses will accelerate development of the rural community.
- ix. Local government should promote recreation facilities within the rural communities. Identification and development of tourist attraction and holiday resorts will promote development of local government.

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### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Oyo east local government is situated close to western axis of Oyo state. The local government council is in charge of the public administration in Oyo east. The legislative council of the local government makes governing Oyo east local government area. Oyo east local government is subdivided into Ten (10) wards' which are; Ajagba, Apaara, Alaodi/Modeke, Agboye/Molete, Balogun, Apinni, Oke Apo, Jabata, Owode/Araromi and Oluaajo.

The study population for this research work is the staff of Oyo east Local Government Council of Oyo State who serves as respondents for this research work. In all, since Oyo east Local Government staff strength stood at the least of One hundred (100), then 100 questionnaires will be used to determine the sample size for this study. The method adopted for collection of data is through primary and secondary sources. Data are primarily sourced for this study through administration of structured questionnaires, while data are secondarily sourced through the reviewing of textbooks, journals, Newspaper, Magazines used for this study.

### Data presentation

*Would you agree that the closeness of Local government is an advantage to its social-economic development?*

agree		
Agree	40	40%
Uncertain	5	5%
Strongly disagree	10	10%
Disagree	5	5%
Total	100	100%

This table shows 45% strongly agreed to the question, 40% agreed with question, 5% answered uncertain, 10% strongly disagreed with the question, and 5 % disagreed with the question. Hence, majority of the respondents agreed that closeness of Local government will accelerates socio-economic development.

*Does Oyo East Local government has significant impact on the living standard of its inhabitant of the council area?*

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	30	30%
Agree	26	26%
Uncertain	20	20%
Strongly disagree	15	15%
Disagree	9	9%
Total	100	100%

This table depict that 30% strongly agreed with the question, 26% agreed with the question, 20% answered uncertain, 15% strongly disagreed with the question, 9%

RESPONS E	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTAG E
Strongly	45	45%

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disagreed with it. Therefore, Oyo East local government has significant impact on the standard of living of the inhabitant.

*Is lack of basic amenities like portable water, rural electrification, good road network etc. the problem rural communities are faced with?*

agree		
Agree	30	30%
Uncertain	11	11%
Strongly disagree	8	8%
Disagree	6	6%
Total	100	100%

This table indicates that 40% strongly agreed with the question, 30% agreed with the question, 11% answered uncertain, 8% strongly disagreed and 6% disagreed over dependency from subvention from other tiers of government incapacitate the financial viability of Local government.

*Do you consider Local government autonomy as challenge to the performance of Local government statutory authority?*

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	40	40%
Agree	32	32%
Uncertain	11	11%
Strongly disagree	10	10%
Disagree	7	7%
Total	100	100%

This table indicates that 40% strongly agreed with the question, 32% agreed with the question, 11% answered uncertain, 10%

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	48	48%
Agree	36	36%
Uncertain	8	8%
Strongly disagree	6	6%
Disagree	2	2%
Total	100	100%

This table reveals that 48% strongly agreed with the question, 36% agreed with the question, 8% answered uncertain, 6% strongly disagreed and 2% disagreed that portable water, rural electrification, good road network are some of the problem of rural communities.

*Does over dependency on subvention from the federal and state government incapacitate the financial visibility of Local government?*

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly	45	45%

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strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed. Hence, majority do not consider Local government autonomy as a challenge to its performance.

*Do you consider lack of funds as hindrance to the effective performance of Local government?*

Agree	36	36%
Uncertain	10	10%
Strongly disagree	7	7%
Disagree	2	2%
Total	100	100%

This table shows that 45% strongly agreed with the question, 36% agreed with the question, 10% answered uncertain, 7% strongly disagreed and none 2% disagreed that corruption is a major factor that impedes the success of Local government.

### Conclusion

Generally speaking, it is argued by scholars like Belo Imam, Enkizee, Adewale Yakubu that how effective and efficient a local government is in promoting socio-economic development lays on how committed the council is in promoting of is statutory responsibilities. The local government is statutorily charged with the responsibility of formulating economic planning and development schemes that will accelerate socio-economic development of rural communities as contain in the fourth schedule point “a” of the constitution enjoined the local government to build and maintain markets, motor parks, slaughter houses and slabs and public conveniences as well as construction of road street lightings, portable water and other function with the state government so as

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT AGE
Strongly agree	45	45%
Agree	35	35%
Uncertain	10	10%
Strongly disagree	7	7%
Disagree	3	3%
Total	100	100%

This table indicates that 45% strongly agreed with the question, 35% agreed with the question, 10% answered uncertain, 7% strongly disagreed and 3% disagreed that lack of funds is a hindrance to the effective performance of Local government.

*Would you agree that corruption is a major factor that impedes the success of Local government?*

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	45	45%

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to improve social-economic conditions of rural communities positively.

Therefore, it can be concluded that if local government is adequately funded and granted financial autonomy to operate free from any interference from state government, it will not only accelerate socio-economic development of rural communities, it will as well as improve living standard and condition of the rural populace.

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