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IMPLICATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AD-AMAWA STATE: A CASE STUDY OF GANYE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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Abstract

This work titled “Implication of Local Government Autonomy on Rural Development in Adamawa State A case study of Ganye Local Government Area” was aimed at ascertaining the extent to which state interference in the management of Local Government revenue constituted the bane of rural development in Adamawa State and examining the extent to which poor financial management practice in the Local Government hinders rural development in Ganye Local Government Area. Data for this study were gathered from both Primary and Secondary sources. Structured Questionnaire and survey design was used to collect data while frequency distribution tables and simple percentage techniques were applied in data analyses. This study revealed that state interference in the management of Local Government Revenue constituted the problem of rural developments in Adamawa State; The financial autonomy of the Local Governments is being severely interfered by the state governments principally through the instrumentality of the state joint Local Government Account. State Government make Local Government appendages of the state through state joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) mechanism, among others. The implication being that if the menace persists in the Local Government system rural development in Ganye Local Government Area will be jeopardized; hence, this study recommends that state interference in the management of Local Government Revenue should be tackled to enhance effectiveness and efficiency service delivery in the rural setting, Local Government Council Management should orient its staff for proper financial management among others.

Keywords: Local Government, Autonomy, Rural Development, Local Government Autonomy

1. Introduction

Since time immemorial, Local Government autonomy has been a discussing issue among academic scholars and researchers. Local Government in Nigeria is a product of decentralization and is established by law as Federal and State, Nigeria has three tiers of Government (Federal, State and Local whose inter government relations include political, financial, Judicial and administrative) are mainly established by the constitution, each tier is required to operate within its area of jurisdiction, and any action to the contrary is null and void to the extent of its inconsistency with the law. This is meant to guarantee the autonomy of tier. The role of the Local Governments as vital tool for rapid socio-economic de-

velopment of rural, and urban centers have taken a Central Stage albeit without a corresponding access to prerequisite financial resources to meet this expectation.

Socio-economic development means pure and adequate provision of basic infrastructure such as Roads, Clinics, School, potable water and other communal initiative that benefit the people. Local Government is the focus of government efforts at promoting development through purposeful combination of the local (peoples) effort/energies with that of government with the objectives of improving socio-economic conditions and encouraging political participation is a key factor in rural development.

Over decades today, various strategies and methods have been adopted by the successful government of

both developed and developing countries for the purpose of good government and effort at distributing the state resources and implement them at the local level. The Federal structure of Nigeria inhibits Local Government's ability to mobilize and use revenue to meet their obligation in sustainable manner (Ade yeme 2005). He further acknowledge that, one of the recurrent obstacle of the third tiers system the country is the dwindling revenue generation as characterized by annual deficits and insufficient funds for meaningful growth and viable project development. The level of these relationships between and within the nation federating units (i.e. federal, state and local government) particularly as it relate to revenue sharing has continually remained issue in the front burner of the nation's polity. The encroachment of local finance by the state government has negatively affected the performance of Local Government in terms of its constitutional responsibilities. The setting up of state and Local Government joint account committee, Local Government Service Commission, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy affairs and other allied agencies at the state level have made Local Government financial autonomy a mirage in Nigeria (Wada and Aminu, 2021). Meanwhile, finance and prudent management are the bedrock of effective functioning of Local Government Administration. Awotokun and Adeyemo (1999), however, expresses some reservations that; in recent time, lack of funds has often been attributed as the major handicap which had hindered effective and successful execution and completion of many projects at the Local Government level. However, experience has shown the contrary that low finance and allocation by the Federal and delay release for Local Government funds by the State Government is the bane of Local Government inability to achieve substantial development in their jurisdiction (Okoli,2013).

The quest for Local Government Financial Autonomy is aimed at reversing State Government encroachment into Local Government Administration to enable Local Government carry out their saddled responsibility effectively and efficiently. The level at which State Government controls local council's financial allocation through appointed committees who are loyalist to the State Government is a challenge to Local Government Administration towards

rural development. The Local Government reforms have been articulated in a bid to correct excessive State encroachment, abuse of powers and the use of undemocratic leaders and care-taker committee to run the Local Government by the State Government in Nigeria's political system. It has for fairly some time, become an important issue for considerations at the National Assembly as recently done; it has been subjected to various critical discourses. The foregoing never the less, not much intellectual efforts have been deployed in examining the Local Government financial autonomy as a vehicle for redressing inordinate usurpation of power and adequate finance on Local Government by State Government at grassroots politics in the country. Local Government autonomy has to do with the area of finance the issue of State Local Government joint account has a thorny issue in Local Government State relationship in the fourth Republic.

The main objective of the study is to examine the implication of Local Government autonomy on rural development in Adamawa State particularly in Ganye Local Government Area. The specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To ascertain the extent to which state interference in the management of Local Government revenue constituted the bane of rural development in Adamawa State, Ganye Local Government Area;
- ii. To examine the extent to which poor financial management practice in the Local Government hinders rural development in Adamawa state, Ganye Local Government Area.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Issues

Concept of Local Government: The concept of Local Government involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the governing process at the grassroots levels. This implies legal and administrative decentralization of autonomy, power and personnel by a higher level of government to a community with a will of its own, performing specific functions as within the wider national framework. A local government is a government at the grassroots levels of administration meant

for meeting peculiar grassroots need of the people (Agagu, 2007). (Lawal, 2016): Akpan (2018). Defined Local Government as "the breaking down of a country into smaller units or localities for the purpose of administration in which the inhabitants of the different units or localities concerned lay a direct and full role through their elected representative who exercise power and undertake functions under the general authority of the national or state government".

Concept of Autonomy: Autonomy is generic term implies freedom, independent, free from external and remote control. In the context of Local Government in Nigeria, there is a great deal of confusion and misinterpretation as to what the term autonomy, connotes. This is because, government reforms that is intended to preserve or extend Local Government autonomy ends up short of their objectives because the full meaning of the term autonomy, has not been fully explained (Odunfa, 1991).

Concept of Rural Development: Rural development is a concept that is used to describe a strategy that is designed to improve the economic and social life of the people in the rural areas. The idea and concern for rural development stems from the fact that majority of the people in the developed countries reside in rural areas. And the fact that development of the nation cannot be achieved without the development of the rural areas. Even the developing countries have recently come to realize that unless the rural areas are well-developed, hardly would any meaningful development occur in these countries. The above assertion implies that rural development is part of national development, because when rural communities are not fully developed, the objectives of national development cannot be achieved. No countries can boast of development when its rural communities have not been positively affected. This perhaps explains why Moemoka (1985, P.9) explains that rural community education entails all activities like social, economic, educational, political and culture, which touch on the lives of rural communities.

Concept of Local Government Autonomy: In the view of polemical interpretations, the term Local Government autonomy is perceived as local self-government or grassroots democracy. This grass-

roots democracy is primarily aimed at giving the vast majority of the people the fullest opportunity to participate in determining their own destiny. But it is obvious that we cannot have complete autonomy or complete local self-government within sovereign states. If Local Governments were completely autonomous they would be sovereign as states within a federal system of government. Nwabueze (2017) defines autonomy to mean that "each government enjoys a separate existence and independence from the control of the other government". It is an autonomy which requires not just the legal and physical existence of an apparatus of government like a legislative assembly, Governor, Local Government Departments, etc. But that each government must exist not as an appendage of another government but as an autonomous entity in the sense of being able to exercise its power and will in the conduct of its affairs, free from direction of another government. Nwabueze, therefore, concluded that autonomy would only be meaningful in a situation whereby each level of government is not constitutionally bound to accept dictation or directive from another.

2.2 Empirical Review

The Roles of Local Government in Rural Development Area

Education: - Local Government through their Local Education districts has been responsible for the construction, maintenance and staffing of primary schools in their respective areas. Also, it is responsible for the payment of salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff in primary schools.

Transportation: - The provision of transportation has gone a long way to enhance the status of Nigeria Local Governments. These Local Governments have set up diverse mass urban transit scheme to help to transport their staff and also act as a source of revenue generation for Local Government.

Public Toilet: - Local Government are not left out in the maintenance of good hygienic culture. They embark on the construction of public toilet for their people.

Water Supply: - Local Government embark on digging of boreholes in the rural areas, this has greatly

improved the hygiene nature of the people in these rural communities.

Medical and Health: - These include the provision, maintenance and administration of dispensaries, maternity and health centers. The increase in the revenue allocation to Local Governments has been helping in the maintenance of these medical and health services.

Law enforcement: - Customary courts of Grades A, B and C are setup in different Local Government Areas. These courts deal with civil cases such as divorce, defaulters and issuing of certificates of marriage.

State Government Interference in Local Government Administration

The degree of interference on the activities of Local Government remains alarming. The governors are fond of taking over their financial allocation, taxes, counterpart funding and refuse to conduct Local Government elections, instead ruling Local Government with appointed administrators, most of whom are partly loyalist, friends and relations, thereby turning the entire process of Local Government into ineffective institution (Ukonga, 2012). There have been instances where state governors unconstitutionally dissolve the entire elected council officers without proper recourse and due process (Eboh & Diejomai, 2010).

The inherent consequence of this problem is that Local Government has to wait for the next directives from State Government before embarking on any developmental project. This has made Local Government an object of control and directives of a higher level of government.

The Implications of the Joint Account System on Local Government Fiscal Autonomy and Service Delivery

- i. The key officers of the joint Account committee set up by the State Governor are State Government representatives who function on the directive of the state chief Executives with little or no control from the council chairmen who are the statutory owners of

the fund and the chief accounting officers of their Local Government.

- ii. The council who are the chief accounting officers of their respective Local Government were never briefed as to how much accrued to their councils monthly from the federation Account before sharing.
- iii. Substantial amounts of the allocations from FAAC to each of the Local Government Councils were deducted at source in the name of joint projects.
- iv. The council chairman who picked up the courage to protest over the unwarranted deductions from their councils statutory allocation were threatened and some were even sacked from their positions for daring to query the activities of the joint Account Allocation Committee (JAAC) by the State Governors.
- v. State Government that are constitutionally required to fund Local Government council have instead used them.

3. Methodology

Method of Data Collection and Sampling Procedures

This study relies essentially on both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary method of data collection includes: relevant published journals, articles, books, newspapers, magazines, reports and internet materials, which provides useful information for the study. The primary source of data was structured questionnaire. Stratified random sampling or probability sampling procedure has been adopted so that each item in the population will have equal and independent chance of inclusion in the sample without bias. A total of Two Hundred and Twenty Eight (228) questionnaire was distributed, due to irregular, incomplete and inappropriate responses to some questionnaire for the study a total of 200 were validated and used.

The target population was Employees and Political appointees' of Ganye Local Government secretariat.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
GENDER		
Male	119	59. 5%
Female	81	40. 5%
latoT	200	100%
AGE		
20 – 25	87	43. 5%
26 – 30	54	27%
31 – 35	33	16. 5%
36 +	26	13%
latoT	200	100%
MATERIAL STATUS		
Single	85	42. 5%
Married	110	55%
Separated / Divorced / Widowed	05	2. 5%
latoT	200	100%
QUALIFICATION		
SSCE	85	42. 5%
NCE	78	39%
OND	75	37. 5%
BSE/HND	103	51. 5%
MSC/ PGDE	12	6%
latoT	200	100%

Source: field survey December, 2023.

Question 1: To what extent has state interference in the management of local government revenue consti-

tuted the bane to rural development in Adamawa State?

Table 2: Respondent to question 1

Options	A frequency	Percentage
High	93	46. 5%
Average	86	34. 5%
Low extent	39	19. 5%
Total	200	100%

Source: field survey December, 2023

From the responses derived as described in the table 2, Majority of the respondent 93 which is 46.5% Respond to the high extent that the state interference in the management of local government revenue constituted the bane to rural development in Adamawa State Ganye local government while 86 which is 34.5% of the respondent said extent of has state in-

terference in the management of local government revenue is average and finally 39 which is 19.5% of the respondent said low extend.

Question: 2 to what extent has poor financial management practice in the Local Government hinder Rural Development in Ganye Local Government Area?

Table 3: Respondent of question 2

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High extent	103	51. 5%
Average	85	42. 5%
Low extent	12	6. 5%
Total	200	100%

Source: Field survey December, 2023

From the response derived as described in the table 3, Majority of the respondent 103 which is 51.5% said to the high extent that poor financial management practice in the Local Government hinders Rural Development in Ganye Local Government Area while 85 respondents which is 42. 5% said to the average extent that poor financial management prac-

tice in the Local Government hinders Rural Development in Ganye Local Government Area and finally 12 which is 6% of the respondent said to the low extend.

Question 3: To what extend will corruption free and local government authority enhance rural development in Ganye Local Government Area?

Table 4 Respondent to question 3

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High extent	100	50%
Average	90	45%
Low extent	10	5%
Total	200	100%

Source: Field survey December, 2023

From the responses derived as described in the table4 100 which is 50% of the respondent said to the high extent corruption free and local government authority enhance rural development in Ganye Local Government Area while 90 which is 45% of the respondent said to the average extent corruption free

and local government authority enhance rural development in Ganye Local Government Area and Finally 10 which is 5% of the respondent said low extent.

Question: 4 To what extent has degree of interference on the activities of Local Government remain in Adamawa State?

Table 5 Respondent to question 4

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High extent	110	55%
Average	68	34%
Low extent	22	11%
Total	200	100%

Source: Field survey December, 2023

From the responses derived as described in the table 5 110 which is 55% of the respondents said to the high extent that the degree of interference on the activities of Local Government remain in Adamawa State while 68 which is 34% of the respondents said to the average extent that degree of interference on the activities of Local Government remain in Adamawa State and finally 22 which is 11% of the respondent said low extent.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The creation of Local Government anywhere in the world starts from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots. A purposeful combination of local people's efforts and energies with that of government with the objective of improving socio-economic conditions and encouraging political participation are key factors in rural development. However, local government are faced with such

challenges like inadequate finance, corruption, poor implementation of projects, lack of competent manpower, high level of illiteracy, lack of due consultation and non-involvement of local dwellers in policy decisions and hijack of local government allocation by the state government, whereby fiscal power is not decentralized but centralized and there is no fiscal autonomy enjoyed by local government. The pattern of inter-governmental relation in Nigeria is not in tune with federalism, the lack of administration independence and fiscal autonomy of local government have made them handicapped in effective services delivery hence it has hindered rural development.

Base on the result of the study, it can be concluded that, state interference in the management of local government revenue has constituted the problem of rural development in Adamawa State. Poor financial management practice in the local government hinders rural development in Ganye Local Government Area

From the finding of the study the following recommendations are made:

- i. The quest for autonomy therefore, should be related to financial viability. However, local government financial autonomy should not be seen as making local government comparing a sovereign entity, or the Chairman of Local Government financial autonomy

should be enjoyed by the citizens of the grass roots.

- ii. The constitutional status of local government as contained in section 7 must be clearly spelt out. This will allow local government to perform the function for which it was set up by laws and can be used to regulate the affairs of the local government.
- iii. The issue of joint state local government account should be modified in order to properly monitors the activities of local government.
- iv. The concept of true federalism should be revisited and practicalized not just in papers, the state should also remit 10% of internally generated revenue to the local government purse and relationship between the state and local government should not that of superior and subordinate but that of cooperative government.
- v. Credible elections should be conducted at the local government level whereby the government body should be account to the rural citizen. Elections should be conducted on the same date and the specified tenure as stated by the constitution.
- vi. The judiciary should be made to be independent, so that interference in the local government affairs by the state or federal government should be properly addressed.

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