



GOVERNANCE AT THE GRASSROOTS: EXAMINING LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN COMMUNITY

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Abstract: Although the rationale behind the establishment of local governments globally is developmental in nature, it is sardonic and appalling to note that development is far from these local areas, especially in developing nations with Nigeria inclusive. In Nigeria, provisions of basic needs like local roads, drainages, healthcare and education in these local areas are questionable despite the number of local governments created nationwide; it is on this basis this paper is undertaken to assess the role of local government in community transformation, with a specific focus on Abeokuta South Local Government. The paper adopted a descriptive research method and data was gotten through the use of questionnaire and interview from residents and local government staff of Abeokuta South Area L.G.A. The paper adopted simple percentage with a mean score of 2.5 or higher as benchmark, while efficient service-delivery was adopted as a theoretical framework. The paper discovered that Abeokuta South Local Government is equally created constitutionally and funded internally and externally, however, it was found underperforming, as most of the local developmental jobs are performed by the state government. This was due to several factors such as adoption of caretaker committee which led to lack of political autonomy, inadequate funding, lack of visionary local leaders, corruption etc. Therefore, the paper recommends that for Abeokuta South Local Government Area to be transformed the Nigeria Constitution should be amended to give full autonomy both in administration and fund to local governments, a democratically elected government should replace the transitional or caretaker committee.

Keywords: Community Transformation, Grassroots Development, Local Government, Rural Development and Service Delivery.

Introduction

Globally, a symbiotic relationship between governance and development has been established; the rationale for the establishment of any government at all levels is to provide for the needs and welfare of its citizenry, maintain peace and security within its jurisdiction and in turn facilitate development within its nation. Thus, it becomes an imperative task and responsibility for government at all levels to deploy all measures to ensure the betterment and growth of the people within its reach. However, Ode and Akpanke (2020) observed that due to the wanton increase in population and locality settlers, coupled with modern factors confronting every nation, the central and state government have been choked with bulk of developmental burdens in their pursuit to stretch the hands of development evenly to the various localities, thus, this necessitated for the establishment of local government

globally, to assist the central/state government in relieving these burden, to bring government closer to the people and to facilitate communal development at the grassroots (Abdullahi&Chikaji, 2017).

Local government as an apparatus of government, and also as a government entity is established by the grand norm of every country to serve as the third tier of government alongside the central and state government, and saddled with the developmental responsibilities to provide primary education, primary health-care centre, encourage political education and mobilization etc. to people of its locality, and in order to carry out these roles, various source of funding was also provided (Hangoma&Kabwe, 2022; Akinrinde&Ololade, 2021; Murana, 2016). However, in so many federations with Nigeria inclusive, the role of local government is still questionable, despite the numbers of local governments created in the country and the various reforms established, development still seems vague in the various localities, while poverty, hunger, unemployment and underdevelopment is the order of the day.

Statement of the Problem

The *raison d'être* for the establishment of 774 local governments in Nigeria is to facilitate communal transformation in their various localities. This is borne out of the fact that, the council members share same background and experiences with the people in their locality, thus, enlightened on the loopholes and area of development the respective areas need in terms of physical development such as creation of roads, establishment of primary schools and health care centres, among others, and with this same familiarity, they would be able to collaboratively and cooperatively work with the local people in achieving these objectives, consequently, ensuring community transformation (Akinrinde&Ololade, 2021).

However, reverse is the case in Nigeria, as many local communities are still yet to taste transformation over the years. Despite been under a designated local government, poverty, bad roads, lack of social infrastructures, poor education and health-care centres, low political participation and mobilisation, poor environmental sanitation, low grant initiatives for farmers, inadequate employment opportunities and empowerment for youths and residents etc. have become the norms at the grassroots (Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto, &Nkah, 2014). Therefore, it is on this basis, this paper is established to assess the role of local government in community transformation, with specific focus on Abeokuta South Local Government.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to assess the role of local government in community transformation, with specific focus on Abeokuta South Local Government. The specific objectives include:

- i. To determine the constitutional role of Abeokuta South Local Government;
- ii. To investigate the source of funding of Abeokuta South Local Government;
- iii. To evaluate the level of community transformation of Abeokuta South Local Government Area; and
- iv. To identify and describe the challenges facing Abeokuta South Local Government council in performing their role of communal transformation.

Research Questions

- i. What are the constitutional roles of Abeokuta South Local Government?
- ii. What are the sources of funding of Abeokuta South Local Government Council?
- iii. What is the level of community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area?
- iv. What are the challenges confronting Abeokuta South Local Government in community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area?

Conceptual Elucidation

Local Government

Although the term "local government" is often used, there is still no universally accepted definition. Nonetheless, it is regarded as the third tier of government, sharing developmental tasks with both the central and state governments. By implication, local government creation is purpose-oriented. In relation to this, Ishwor (2020) perceives local government as an entity mostly concerned with the well-being of their own communities. That is, the fundamental goals of the local government are economic development, social harmony, raising the socioeconomic status of the local population, infrastructure development, involvement in development activities, and so on. As a result, whether economic or not, the local government is ultimately accountable for the entire development of their own community. More so, a local government, according to the United Nations, is "a political subdivision of a nation or countries that is created by law and has extensive influence over local affairs, including the capacity to impose taxes or extract labour for proscribed purposes." The governing body of such an institution is elected or otherwise selected at the local level (Obisanya & Hassan, 2022). This definition infers a legal status on local government as a creation of the law, which makes them a legal entity, thus, they are mostly regarded as the third tier of government, existing and cooperatively working with both the central and state government in a federal state.

Thus, local government, being recognized as the third tier of government alongside the central and state government, operates through delegated power from the central government in order to discharge its duties. In consonance, the World Bank (2008) sees local government as a level of government delegated with both administrative and financial decision-making authority by the central government, having a distinct, legally recognized jurisdictions within which to deliver public services to the constituents they are accountable to (Sedar, Yakub & Rodrigo, 2008). Also, Sidgwick (2014) considers local government as government of some sub organs that have special powers to issue regulations or rules within the area which they manage. This implies that, local government being a separate government performs executive, legislative and judicial functions. That is, they implement or execute laws within their jurisdiction; they formulate law which is binding on residents within their jurisdiction, and serves as case settler for their locales via the customary court.

Furthermore, since the creation of local governments is borne out of facilitating development at the grassroots, therefore, financial capacity and source of funding are mostly entrenched in the laws which created them. In societies especially in Nigeria, the Fourth Schedule Section 7(5 & 6) of the 1999 Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria outlined the various responsibilities and source of funding respectively. To recognize a local government council in Nigeria, they are those who collect local taxes, collect fines and rates, television and radio licenses, bikes, canoes, wheel barrows and carts licensing, shop and kiosk registration, marriage registry and among others. Therefore, in general, Mbah 2012 (cited in Agba, Ocheni & Nnamani, 2014) asserts that local government, as the closest government to the people, occupies a unique position as a promoter of grassroots mobilization and participation in governance, as well as a catalyst for rural transformation and development.

Community Transformation

The concept community transformation has been interchangeably used in literature as community development, local development and rural transformation. Literally, the word 'transformation' connotes a process of changing from a particular state or condition to a better one. Sabri (2019) defines transformation as a process of changing the course of an organization to achieve a completely new degree of performance. It involves a change to the culture, systems, procedures, and organization. Gupta, Govindarajan and Wang (2008) also see transformation as the broad transition from one social paradigm to the next that takes place in every culture. It is referred to as widespread forms of development. Michalec (2021) perceives transformation as accepting that old techniques are no longer productive and conceiving new ways of being existing. By implication, transformation frequently

necessitates elements of the unexpected, introspection, and moving into unfamiliar intellectual and emotional places. On the other hand, Berdegué, Rosada, and Bebbington (2014) see community transformation as a process of extensive social change in which rural societies move from scattered villages to towns and small and medium cities and culturally resemble large urban agglomerations. This reflects that community transformation is processual. It involves a transition from an undeveloped situation in a community to a developing or developed condition. The transition doesn't insinuate a movement of a community from a particular location to another, but a transformation from a condition of uncleanness, poor living condition, low societal mentality etc. to a sanitized, high and comfortable living condition and progressive societal mentality. In corroboration, Gupta, Govindarajan and Wang (2008) assert that all transformations have a beginning, middle, and an end. That is, there are conditions that support changes, processes that initiate them, and ones that complete the changes. Furthermore, rural transformation involves diversifying rural societies' economies and decreasing their reliance on agriculture, increasing their reliance on distant locations for trade and the acquisition of goods, services, and ideas.

Although community change is characteristically thought to be unalterable, there are several circumstances under which things might revert to how they were. Such circumstances in a community include a situation of existence of inconsistency in policies, incessant change in change-creator or maker, lack of discipline and sanctions to defaulters, interference by a third-party etc (Birabil, Tete, Ogeh& Matthew, 2020). Thus, to foster sustainable community transformation, the partnership between change creator and the people in the community is essential. In consonance with this, Kenny (2011) asserts that community development encourages active citizenship by bringing people together to improve human conditions for the well-being of their communities. By and large, community transformation entails the process of setting up structures that will promote development among residents of a specific community financially, physically, and politically.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the efficient service-delivery theory as a framework to explain the subject comprehensively and to evaluate the local government of Abeokuta South's involvement in community transformation. Efficient-service delivery theory is one of the major theories of local government adopted to justify the essence of local government in any political system. The leading proponents of the efficient service-delivery theory are Sharpe and Mackenzie William. The basic assumption of the efficient service-delivery theory stipulates that any organization, body or agency established has functions to perform or deliver, and these functions must be performed efficiently and effectively. According to their opinion, efficiency is the cornerstone of every successful service-delivery model because it guarantees that resources are used as effectively as possible to get the intended results while minimizing waste.

Secondly, the theorists assume that the beneficiaries or the governed must adequately enjoy the outputs of the functions performed by these organisations, bodies or agencies (Sharpe,1954; Mackenzie William, 1961). Efficient-delivery is often linked to recipient experiences that are more seamless in general, with shorter waiting times and more responsiveness and accountability. By providing prompt and effective service, organisations may increase customer satisfaction, which will boost public support for organization's initiatives and foster loyalty and legitimacy.

By implication, the central justification for the establishment of local governments at the grassroots level is to facilitate community transformation or development. Thus, roles or functions such as the provision of basic services such as primary education, good roads, security, health care, job empowerment etc. to its localities to (Chukwuemeka, et al., 2014) are the essence for establishing local government, thus, the efficient service-delivery theory argues that, these roles or functions of local government must be done in an efficient manner. That is, the services to be delivered by the local government must be seen and felt by the residents within which it oversees

efficiently. They also claimed that local government is responsible for maintaining local laws and regulations (Ajulor&Ibikunle, 2016). The efficient service delivery model presumes that, every local government in Nigeria including Abeokuta South local government is anticipated that to improve the realization of democratic values, political involvement, protective services, and infrastructure services, such as the provision and upkeep of health facilities and institutions (Achimugu, Stephen & Agboni, 2013).

Evaluatively, Nigeria local government system has been subjected to questioning in relation to realizing the purpose of their establishment, that is, if they are really achieving the purpose of their existence. Despite that Nigeria has witnessed more of appointment of officials rather than election at the grassroots level (Abdullahi&Chikaji, 2017), the efficient service delivery theory proposes that, irrespective of the mode of being in office, they are expected to create and organise programmes and projects that will engender community development at the grassroots since they are the closest to the people.

The role of interest aggregation and solution finding should be the priorities of local government councils, since they are indigenes of the same locality, thus, they have more understanding of the problems confronting their areas. The theory also professes that to achieve efficient service delivery, collaboration between residents or community dwellers and local government official is key. Therefore, Juraj (2017) in his advice for efficiency in local service delivery, advances that local public-private sector partnership approach should be employed in order to facilitate community transformation in the local government areas.

Although, the theory is relevant in encouraging local governance that promotes accountability and transparency, it is however criticised for being too theoretical, as there are inherent factors across every society that stifles the efficient delivery of services in local governments.

Historical Overview of Local Government Administration in Nigeria

Notably, local government is not a new term in the political trajectory of Nigeria; its existence permeates through the pre-colonial till the post-colonial period. Local government administration in the country has gone through convoluted stages of growth, including precolonial settlements, colonial control, independence local council administration, military rule, the 1976 local government reform, and the fourth republic (Monday & Wijaya, 2022). The beginning of Nigeria's current local government structure was through the 1976 local government reform, prior to this time, any form of organisation at the grassroots in the precolonial and colonial was merely local administration. The goal of this reform was to modernize and restructure local government administration in order to make it among the best in Africa. The 1976 reform had laudable goals, including extending the concept of federation by bringing governance to the local level, achieving uniformity in local government administration throughout the federation and promotion of local community transformation in Nigeria (Abdulhamid&Chima, 2015; Olanipekun, 1988). Thus, the first attempt after independence to achieve community development or transformation at the grassroots level was the adoption of the 1976 local government reform, by which it created a concrete uniform structure, and the provision of a democratically elected council in order to reduce the influence of native authority in governance. On October 1, 1979, Nigeria had a transition to civil rule, three years after the introduction of the 1976 reform and 13 years after the military had the dominant position. The constitution declares local government to be the third tier of government for the first time in Nigeria's history (Adeyemi, 2019).

During the Second Republic, state governments dominated local government operations and activities. Several state governments were compelled by political pressure to establish new local government councils; nevertheless, these councils were incapable and ineffective at producing and delivering services (Adeyemi, 2019). The numerous local councils were dissolved and replaced with political appointees not long after the Premier assumed office on October 1, 1979. The individuals chosen as these governors' nominees, according to Agagu (2004), were

members of their political parties. Because of concerns that the parties in each state might lose council elections to competing political parties, elections were replaced with nominations. Thus, this event led to series of establishment of local government in different regions of Nigeria. To address the challenges confronting local government administration during this period, particularly the issue of political nomination, the Federal Government redressed the anti-democratic position by legislating on the time elections must be held in all councils through the 1982 Electoral Act. However, these were cut short the following year, when the military deposed Alhaji Shehu Shagari's civilian government on December 31, 1983 (Adeyemi, 2019). Prior to 1983, there were 301 local governments; however, 149 additional local government councils were established in 1991 under the Babangida regime, bringing the total to 453. The Executive Presidential System was nevertheless put in place at the level of local government by the administration through the 1991 Local Government Constitutional and Transitional Amendment Decree, despite the complete separation of powers between an independent legislative made up of elected council members and the executive arms of local governments. The same decree increased local government autonomy with reference to the state government by transferring a number of oversight functions to the local government legislative council. One of these obligations was to manage the local government's budget.

Prior to the fourth republic, local government could be described as pseudo democratic; nonetheless, the Abubakar Administration marked the beginning of the local government's caretaker committee or transitional committee. As soon as it took office following the death of the head of state, his administration dismissed the elected officials and disbanded the five political parties that were part of the Abacha regime's transition plan. Abubakar first chose a sole administrator from among the civil officials, and then he established Caretaker Committees, which were made up of chosen members drawn from the local governments' native populations. The Chairmen of these Caretaker Committees were mandated to be Sole Administrators. Therefore, in the pursuit to return power to the civilians, elections for the National, State, and Local Governments to inaugurate the Fourth Republic were held. A three-year term was the length of the municipal elections that took place countrywide in 1999 (Adeyemi, 2019). Sardonicly, it was expected that elections would take place straight away after the tenure in 2002 expired. Unfortunately, this was not the case. By taking advantage of the federal government's disinterest and the postponement of local government elections, the state governments acquired complete control over the local government administration in their separate states. As a result of state governments across the country's lack of interest in holding local council elections up until this point, the fourth republic has seen a great deal of undermining of the standing of local government as defined by the 1999 Constitution.

Methodology

The paper adopted descriptive research design. A descriptive research design studies the entire population or a representative sample by collecting and analyzing data from a group using research instrument. The paper adopted a survey method in order to get firsthand information from the location of study. Thus, questionnaire and interview method were the instrument employed.

Area of Study, Population and Sample Size

The research study is limited to Abeokuta South Local Government Area. The location has an estimated population of 425,700 according to City Population (2023), covering 15 wards namely, Ake I, Ake II, Ake III, Adatan/Lantoro, Emere, ijemo, Itoko, Ijaiye/Idi-Aba, Erunibe/Ijoko/Ilogbo/Oke-Ejigbo, OkeIjeun, Ago Ijesha/IjeunTitun/Ago-Egun, Sodeke/IsaleIjeun II, Oke-yeye/Imo/Isabo, Igbore/Itori/Ago-Oba and Ibara. The study is limited to residents of each ward and staff of the secretariats of Abeokuta South Local Government.

A purposive random sampling method was used to select the respondents from the total population because of the magnitude of the study's population. 150 was the sample size. Given how challenging it would be to gather data from the entire research population, 10 copies of questionnaire were assigned to each of the 15 wards to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.

Instruments, Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Structured questionnaires and interviews were utilized as the study's research instruments to obtain information directly from the respondents. The questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms, the responses were downloaded and exported to Excel, and the data was analysed using the SPSS software. While, a council staff and some individuals in the areas were randomly selected to be interviewed using the questionnaire items as a guide. A four-point Likert Scale was used as the method of analysis. The "Agree-Disagree" answer pattern was used. Weights were allocated to the responses, as stated in the tables, and mean scores were computed. The decision rule was that items with a mean score of 2.5 or higher were approved, while anything low signifies rejection.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The following tables are presented and analysed based on the data gathered from the responses to the questionnaire distributed for the survey. While the responses of the 4 interviewees were used to validate these data gathered via the questionnaire.

Table 1: Analysis of Questionnaire Retrieved

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Valid	150	100%
Non-valid	0	0%
Total Retrieved	150	100%

The table above reveals that 150 copies were retrieved representing 100% of copies distributed, 150 (100%) copies were valid for use, while 0 (0%) copies were invalid. Thus, 150 data were used to analyse the result.

Analysis and Summary of Responses

The table below reflects the mean and standard deviation responses of the respondents gathered through a structured questionnaire. Also, the items in the questionnaire also served as interview guide when getting firsthand information from those who are party to the research in order to abreast to the focus of the study and to validate the responses of the respondents.

S/N	Items	No.	Mean	Std. Deviation
	What are the Constitutional roles of Abeokuta So Local Government?			
1.	Abeokuta South Local Government Council is responsible for the building of social facilities such as roads, street lighting, gardens, and drainage systems, among other things.	150	3.35	0.696
2.	One of the roles of Abeokuta South Local Government Council is to ensure proper environmental sanitation throughout its Local Government Area.	150	3.59	0.519
3.	The registration of birth, death and marriages are one of the constitutional roles of Abeokuta South Local Government Council.	150	3.46	0.575

4.	The responsibilities of local government council include the provision and management of healthcare services for the inhabitants of Abeokuta South Local Government.	150	3.44	0.640
	What are the sources of funding of Abeokuta South Local Government Council?			
5.	The revenue generated in the primary internally remains one of sources off South Local Government funding for Abeokuta nt Council.	150	3.29	0.708
6.	The collection of marriage registration fee is another source of funds for Abeokuta South Local Government Council.	150	3.17	0.746
7.	Market and trading fees source of are another important funding for Abeokuta South Local Government Council.	150	3.19	0.652
8.	Allocation from the federal government for every local government also goes to Abeokuta South Local Government Council.	150	3.37	0.710
9.	Local taxes, fines and rates are also part of the source of funding for Abeokuta South Local Government Council.	150	3.48	0.610
	What is the level of community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area?			
10.	Abeokuta South Local Government is poor in providing social amenities such as good roads, street lighting, and drainage for their localities.	150	2.88	0.882
11.	The environments in the communities of Abeokuta South Local Government are sanitary,	150	2.70	0.801
	but there is no adequate waste disposal because no proper mechanisms are in place to ensure this.			
12.	The public primary schools in Abeokuta South Local Government are well-furnished and equipped with basic learning amenities.	150	2.43	0.806
13.	The health-care centres in Abeokuta South Local Government are well-maintained and well-equipped, having both qualified staff and facilities.	150	2.69	0.867
14.	Abeokuta South's people are strongly mobilised and motivated to participate in local and state politics.	150	2.92	0.671
15.	There are less projects and empowerment programmes implemented by the respective Abeokuta South Local Government Chairmen for the residents of the various localities.	150	2.55	0.790
	What are the challenges confronting Abeokuta South Local Government in community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area?			
16.	The Abeokuta local government council has found it difficult to fulfil their expected responsibilities because of the state government's increasing interference in their operations.	150	2.99	0.755

17.	Finance deficiency and inadequate revenue allocation make it difficult for Abeokuta South Local Government Council to carry out feasible programs and projects.	150	3.31	0.615
18.	One of the causes for Abeokuta South Local Government Council's poor performance is a lack of visionary leaders and democratically elected local members.	150	3.42	0.678
19.	Corruption and misappropriation of public funds are among the issues that Abeokuta South Local Government Council faces in carrying out their responsibilities.	150	3.42	0.648
20.	Abeokuta South Local Government Council's lack of political autonomy is another cause for the council's poor performance.	150	3.25	0.779

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Research Question 1: What are the constitutional roles of Abeokuta South Local Government?

In the table above, item 1-4 interrogates the constitutional functions of Abeokuta Local Government. The average mean responses of the respondents were not less than 3.00 which signify that majority of the respondents strongly agree that Abeokuta South Local Government Council is responsible for the building of social facilities such as roads, street lighting, gardens, and drainage systems, maintaining proper environmental sanitation, registration of birth, death and marriages and provision and management of health-care services for the inhabitants its Local Government Area (LGA). Therefore, the level of closeness of the standard deviation of the four items implies that the above-mentioned functions are the statutory or constitutional functions expected of Abeokuta Local Government Council to carryout in their L.G.As.

Complementarily, it was also ascertained through the interview of one of the staff of the council that Abeokuta South Local Government was created to make the common man feel the importance of government. Thus, he explained that through the 9 departments in Abeokuta South Local Government Council, various functions such as registering of marriages, maintenance of public markets and public spaces, ensuring environmental sanitation, maintenance of health care and among others are carried out. He acknowledged that these functions are neither strange to Abeokuta South Local Government nor are they excluded from them; rather, they are also the expected functions of the local government (Abati, personal communication, December 16, 2022).

Research Question 2: What are the sources of funding of Abeokuta South Local Government Council?

In the above table, items 5-9 above investigated the sources of funding of Abeokuta Local Government. The average mean responses of the respondents were not less than 3.00 which signify that majority of the respondents firmly agree that revenue generated internally remains one of the primary sources of funding for Abeokuta South Local Government Council, which include the collection of marriage registration fee, market, kiosks, shops and trading fees and fines, local taxes, fines and rates etc. Also, majority agreed that, allocation from the federal government for every local government also gets to Abeokuta South Local Government Council. Therefore, the level of closeness of the standard deviation of the five items implies that the above-mentioned sources of funding are ways at which Abeokuta South Local Government generates funds or revenue in carrying out its roles and responsibilities. This finding is in tandem with the work of Abdulkarim and Adeiza (2019), they identified that internally generated funds is a germane source of funds for the running of local government activities, however, most local governments have difficulties in the effective generation of this revenue. Also, they gave cognizance to the allocation from the federal government which is disbursed to the state-local government joint-account.

However, most governors due to their excessive interference hold onto these funds and mostly carry out local projects in the disguise of assisting the local government council in order not to release these funds.

In corroboration with the interview findings, the interviewee maintained that Abeokuta South Local Government major source of funding is from the federal government. He explained that Nigeria runs governance majorly through the proceeds from the sale of crude oil and petroleum, and other source, thus, the Federal Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) the money is divided into 3, and shared in percentage to the federal, state and local government according to the revenue sharing formula. He identified that the funds of local government drop in the account of the State-Local government joint account, which then are shared by the Joint Account Allocation Committee (JAAC) at the state level, to the respective local governments within the state. He confirms that internally generated revenue remains significant as a source of income for Abeokuta South Local Government. Maintaining that, all the 20 local government chairmen in Ogun state go to the state government to have a meeting with the Accountant General for the state, where the manner at which the funds will be shared are discussed, but more often the funds allocated to the local governments are held, while the state government in disguise use those funds to carryout programmes that are local in outlook. He identified that revenues are majorly generated from markets, these include Kuto market, Adatan market, Omida market etc., explaining that on every market day, some staffs in the Department of Finance and Supplies and other departments are always sent to collect funds from these markets. He also identified that through marriage registration funds are generated, and this is done by the Department of General Service and Administrative in Abeokuta South Local Government. He also identified that funds are generated on anything relating to trading, which includes kiosks, restaurants, shops etc. He maintained that in the process where the Department of Water Supplies and Environmental Sanitation is carrying out their roles, goods are confiscated and fines are levied on shops and owners who are found not complying with the rules of the local government. Summarily, he asserted that the funds for local government are used to pay salaries, and to carryout developmental projects (Abati, personal communication, December 16, 2022).

Research Question 3: What is the level of community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area?

In the above table, items 10-15 above x-rayed the level of community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area. The average mean responses of the respondents were more than 2.50 which signify that majority of the respondents maintained that Abeokuta South Local Government is poor in providing social amenities such as good roads, street lighting, and drainage for their localities. The environments in the communities of Abeokuta South Local Government are sanitary, but there is no adequate waste disposal because no proper mechanisms are in place to ensure this. The public primary schools in Abeokuta South Local Government are not well-furnished and equipped with basic learning amenities. The health-care centres in Abeokuta South Local Government are well-maintained and well-equipped, having both qualified staff and facilities. Participation in local politics is high as there is high political education and mobilisation. Also, there are less projects and empowerment programmes implemented by the respective Abeokuta South Local Government chairmen for the residents of the various localities. Therefore, the level of closeness in the standard deviation of the six items implies that the Abeokuta South Local Government Council have been underperforming in some aspect of community transformation at the L.G.A.

In evaluating the role of local government in community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government, a resident, Mrs. Olorunshogo was interviewed, she stressed that local government impact on community development is not felt because the majority of their tasks are carried out by the state government. She emphasized that the community see no value or the crucial role the local government plays for them, and that all the local

government does for them is make sure that environmental cleanliness is carried out. More specifically, it was learned through the interview that Abeokuta South Local Government has little to no part in the area's education system; instead, the state government provides the majority of the funding for the area's meagre development. The local governments did not provide any textbooks, and the public elementary schools lack essential furnishings like desks, seats, and good whiteboards (Olorunshogo, personal communication, December 16, 2022).

Research Question 4: What are the challenges confronting Abeokuta South Local Government in community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area?

In the above table, items 16-20 identified the challenges confronting Abeokuta South Local Government in community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area. The average mean responses of the respondents were more than 3.00 which signify that majority of the respondents strongly agree that the Abeokuta local government council has found it difficult to fulfil their expected responsibilities because of the state government's increasing interference in their operations, finance deficiency and inadequate revenue allocation make it difficult to carry out feasible programs and projects, the poor performance in administration is due to lack of visionary leaders and democratically elected local members, corruption and misappropriation of public funds are among the issues that Abeokuta South Local Government Council faces in carrying out their responsibilities and lack of political autonomy is another cause for the council's poor performance. Therefore, the level of closeness of the standard deviation of the five items implies that the above-mentioned challenges are confronting local government in community transformation in Abeokuta South Local Government Area. This finding is in tandem with the works of Akinrinde and Ololade

(2021), Abdullahi and Chikaji (2017), Murana (2016), Boris (2015), Agbodike, IgbokweIbeto and Nkiah (2014), Abugu (2014) Nigeria's local governments have a number of difficulties, but the biggest one is that the local governments lack political and financial autonomy under the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. Thus, due to this, along with other institutional and structural issues, they are now functionally incapable of generating revenue and providing effective services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This work is centred on assessing the role of local government in community transformation with a specific focus on Abeokuta South Local Government. The paper was able to conceptualize the concept of local government and community transformation. It also traced the evolution of local administration in Nigeria and their role of community transformation since colonial era. Thus, in order to achieve a valid data on the operations of the case study, a structured questionnaire and interview was adopted as a research instrument, and simple random sampling method was used to divide the population into a smaller group and total of 150 questionnaires were distributed through Google forms and were analysed through SPSS package and a principal staff of the local government council, some market women in Kuto market were selected to be interviewed.

In the course of this paper, it was discovered that local governments were creation of the law to be catalysts for communal transformation, which was the same reason or purpose Abeokuta South Local Government was created. They are regarded as the third tier of government that are the nearest to the people. However, despite the rationale for their establishment and the funds accrue to them to promote communal transformation, development is far from these communities. Most of the local roads are bad and not tarred, drainages are not properly constructed and those constructed are not maintained, poverty and unemployment are pervasive, educational facilities and infrastructures are inadequate etc. These issues are also discovered to be the order in Abeokuta South Local Government. The local council are seen insignificant and underperforming by the residents of the L.G.A, thus the role of the local government in community transformation is subjected to questioning. It was also discovered that Abeokuta South Local Government is facing some peculiar challenges facing most local

government in Nigeria, these challenges include unending state government interference, lack of political autonomy, inadequate finance to carryout projects and programmes, lack of qualified staff, lack of effective measures to generate internal revenue, corruption and misappropriation of public funds, joint account of local and state government, and among others. Conclusively, as long as these challenges are not curbed or arrested, especially the aspect of lack of political autonomy of the Abeokuta South Local Government which led to incessant interference of state government, the irregular or refusal of state government to release funds allocated to local government, and the transitional committee or caretaker committee to be replaced with a democratically elected local council, the local council will remain insignificant and ineffective in performing its expected role of communal transformation or development.

Therefore, for Abeokuta South Local Government to ensure community transformation at the grassroots level, the paper recommends

- i. that the Nigeria Constitution should provide for the true political autonomy of local government in Nigeria, thus, there will be little interference of state government in their affairs.
- ii. The constitution should provide a separate financial account for local government in Nigeria; this will limit the influence of state governments in the funds meant for local governments. By so doing, the various local governments will be able to use the allocated funds in carrying out meaningful and people-oriented projects that will facilitate communal development.
- iii. To reduce the rate of corruption and misappropriation of funds by the council, the state government should do annual audit of accounts of local governments.
- iv. A democratically elected government should replace the transitional committee or caretaker committee who dance to the tunes of the state government; and
- v. The Nigeria constitution should stipulate the tenure in office of council members and immediate process of election as it is for both federal and state governments.

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