

## **Role of Local Governments in Rural Development of Nigeria, A Case Study of Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study analyzed the role of Local Governments in rural development of Nigeria, a case study of Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State. The objective of the study were to Evaluate the contribution of local government to agricultural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State. Examine the role of local government on infrastructural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State. Assess the contributions of local government on employment creation in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State. Three research hypothesis and three research questions are formulated in line with the above objectives of the study. Descriptive survey design method was used; the sample techniques employed was simple random sampling. The study selected Ekwusigo Local Government Area, the population are 99242 where the sample size is 398 using Taro Yamane formula. The researcher distributes Three hundred and ninety-eight (398) questionnaires but only three hundred and forty-seven (347) copies of questionnaire were retrieved. Structured questionnaire was use to gather information from the population. Percentage tables and ANOVA method of data analysis was used to test the questionnaire. The finding of the study shows that; Local government has made significant contributions to agricultural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State. Local government has contributed to infrastructural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State. Local government has made significant contributions to employment creation in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State. The study recommended that more concerted efforts should be made toward development of rural areas. These should include increase in budget allocation, effective policy implementation and completion. Corruption and mismanagement of resources should also be discouraged by punishing officials engaged in associated corrupt cats and blocking channels of diverting resources through effective budget planning and monitoring.*

**KEYWORDS:** local governments, rural development, agricultural development, infrastructural development

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## INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, the goal of the third-tier government system currently in place across the nation is to force local governments to reform the communities under their control. According to Chukwuemeka, Okoye, and Eneh (2018), the Local Government has clearly defined duties to carry out and services to provide for the general populace. In Nigeria, local government, which is the third level of government, was set up to ensure rural development. Making ensuring that local government is felt at the grassroots is the main goal of local government.

Leading academics have held a number of conferences on local government and rural development, all of which have as their goal determining the degree to which local government has been able to offer basic facilities to the rural populace. Undoubtedly, the goal of the third-tier government system currently in place across the nation is to force local governments to reform the communities under their control. The duties and obligations of the Local Government are spelled out in detail for the benefit of the populace. In order for non-industrialized countries like Nigeria to have any measurable growth, initiatives for rural areas must be developed. It has been assumed that a three-tier system, consisting of the federal, state, and local levels, will help remove barriers impeding grassroots developmental activities and transform that marginalized sector of rural areas into our national life by giving them access to social and economic amenities enjoyed by city dwellers. Additionally, it will assist build closer ties between the government and the grass roots (Chidiebere & Ndaguba, 2018).

Nigeria has a federal form of governance in which the three levels of government—federal, state, and local—are each constitutionally granted a certain amount of authority. Local government councils are the third-tier level of government and the one that is closest to the populace among the three branches of government. In terms of vision and methodology, local government management and rural transformation have the same objectives. A functioning local government system is necessary for local government councils to fulfill their obligation to deliver very high quality critical services to the rural areas under their authority (Sutopo, Wulandari, & Adiati, 2017).

According to Chidiebere and Ndaguba (2018), the local government administration serves as a means of delivering essential services (amenities) to rural communities. This demonstrates the importance of local government management to local and international development. The term "local government" refers to the level of government that is closest to the people and given some authority to exercise control over the affairs or activities of the people in that area. It is also expected to carry out the responsibility of promoting democratic ideas of the localities and coordinating transformation programs as well as acting as the foundation for the economic development of the rural areas (Imhanlahimi, 2011). According to Egwu and Obiorah (2017), the

purpose of local government administration in Nigeria is to encourage grassroots development and bring the government closer to the people. The local government councils in Nigeria have received significant funding, but they continue to face a number of obstacles that have stopped them from developing the rural areas as planned (Nwogwugwu, 2015). The paper, which uses the Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State as a case study, investigates the role of local governments in rural development in Nigeria against this backdrop.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria has a federal system of government with a legally enshrined separation of authority between the national, state, and local levels of government. The third level of governance in the nation is local government, which is also frequently referred to as local government. In order to provide effective and efficient service delivery to the populace at the local level, local government was established because development would be meaningless if it did not affect rural residents. Local government councils are developed all over the world because of the relationship that exists between local government at the grassroots level and rural development or transformation. In Anambra state of Nigeria, local government councils were established for the same reason in order to alter the rural areas and, as a result, improve the living conditions of the state's rural residents. However, throughout time, this objective has not truly been attained, and the rural populations in the state are now living in poverty and underdevelopment.

According to Tadele (2020), rural residents continue to experience underservice compared to urban city people and face a variety of issues. The main issue most local governments face is a lack of sufficient funding to carry out various development programs. It should be remembered that the total amount of funding available to local governments in Nigeria has greatly increased since the early 1990s. The reasons for the lack of adequate funding can be attributed to the fact that local government allocations are being taken advantage of by state governors, used for electioneering campaigns, and shared among political godfathers and members of state assemblies. This issue of corruption, state interference, loss of autonomy, caretakership, and low commitment on the part of local government officials is also a problem. All these corruptive activities has added in no small measure to the problem of inadequate finance, which has made effective services delivery at the rural areas to be impossible. This paper therefore tends to address these problems by examining the role of local governments in rural development of Nigeria, a case study of Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of local governments in rural development of Nigeria, a case study of Ekwusigo Local Government Area of Anambra State. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Evaluate the contribution of local government to agricultural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.
2. Examine the role of local government on infrastructural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.
3. Assess the contributions of local government on employment creation Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were posed to guide the study:

1. Local government has made no significant contributions to agricultural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant contribution of Local government to infrastructural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.
3. Local government has made no significant contributions to employment creation in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Conceptual Literature**

#### **Concept of Local Government**

Every nation in the world has a municipal government of some kind. Although there may be variations in local government's core characteristics, such as its constitutional status, historical structure, degree of autonomy, etc., local government is typically seen as a genuine agent of growth and involvement at the grassroots level in a democratic process. According to Izueke (2010), local government can be broadly defined as a system of local administration within local communities that is organized to uphold law and order, offer a small number of social services, and promote cooperation and participation among the populace in an effort to improve living conditions. It provides the community with formal organizational framework which enables them to conduct their affairs effectively for the general good. The concept of local government involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the governing process at the grassroots level.

This indicates that a higher level of government will legally and administratively delegate authority, power, and personnel to a community that has its own will and performs particular tasks as part of the larger national framework. A local government is a level of administration at the local level designed to address unique needs of the populace (Agagu, 1997). Local government is defined by the United Nations Office for Public Administration (quoted in Makinde et al., 2016) as a political division of a country that is formed by law, has significant

control over local affairs, including the authority to impose levies and organize labor for certain objectives. According to its well-known characteristics, local governance can be adequately characterized. A local government has a council made up of elected members, operates at the local or grassroots level, operates within a specific geographic area, has a degree of autonomy or independence, and has a number of constitutionally defined responsibilities to carry out.

Local government is the third level of administration in the Nigerian federation and is closest to the people. The local level of government serves as a bridge between central government and the populace. The well-known characteristics of local governance can be used to characterize it. A local government is one that performs at the local or grassroots level, operates within a certain geographic area, has a degree of autonomy or independence, has a number of constitutionally defined duties to carry out, and has an elected council (Ugwuanyi et al., 2016).

Local government is the third level of government and the level that is closest to the people in the Nigerian federation. Between the central government and the populace, local government serves as a bridge.

### **Rural Development**

Rural development, like development, has been viewed from various angles and theoretical models, including the bottom-up method, the mobilization approach, the modernization approach, and the dependency perspective. According to the viewpoint being debated, the word "development" has a variety of ideological, political, and historical overtones that can significantly alter its meaning (Haug, 2017). Three definitions of development are most helpful and suitable in relation to this paper. Korten (2017) offers the initial definition. According to this definition, development is the process through which a society's members build their institutional and individual capacity to mobilize and distribute resources in order to achieve long-lasting and fairly distributed gains in their quality of life that are consistent with their own ambitions. The process of development and its major emphasis on institutional and personal capacity are both highlighted in Korten's definition. Justice, equity, quality of life, and participation are also mentioned.

Idris (2011) sees rural development as a continuous series of actions by government organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the rural population in improving the rural conditions of the rural people and a process which leads to series of changes within a given rural setting which ultimately result in the improvement in the general living conditions of the rural dwellers. The terms "rural development" and "increased agricultural input and productivity" have frequently been used interchangeably. According to the aforementioned definitions and theoretical stances, rural development aims to raise the living conditions and satisfy the fundamental requirements of rural residents. Therefore, all rural development efforts must be

derived from the needs and aspirations of the rural population and not essentially in response to the needs of the urban political economy.

A rural area is an expanse of open ground with few houses or other structures and few inhabitants. The population density in rural areas is quite low. Numerous individuals reside in urban or suburban areas. Their residences and places of business are situated close together. There are fewer people in a rural location, and they live and work at great distances from one another. Most rural communities' main industry is agriculture. On farms or ranches, the majority of people reside or work. Small towns, villages, hamlets, and other localities are found inside or close to rural areas.

### **Local Government and Rural Development**

The fundamental infrastructure and services required for rural communities and rural development fall under the wide category of local government development (FAO, 2006). According to the African Development Bank (1999) and Geet (2007), it is created as the entirety of the fundamental physical infrastructure on which all other economic activity in a system are predicated. The assets required to give people access to economic and social amenities and services, such as roads, water, drainage, bridges, electricity, etc., are included in rural development. According to Agagu (1997), local government is a form of governance designed to cater to the special demands of rural residents. According to his study, local government is the level of government that should have the biggest impact on residents of rural areas. It is a level of government that is situated physically closest to the populace and is tasked with ensuring the political, social, and economic advancement of the locality and its residents (Enero, Dadoyin, and Elumilade, 2004). According to Appadorai (1975), some issues are local in character, and local government is better suited to tackle them since local residents are more familiar with them. According to the 1976 recommendations for local government reform, local governments should provide rural infrastructure to foster development and good governance at the local level. But regrettably, local government continues to lag behind in the development of infrastructure; this dreadful trend is especially pronounced in the areas of power, access to rural roads, and water and sanitation. According to World Bank (2004), Nigeria's infrastructure is woefully deficient and inferior to that found in other regions of the world in terms of both quality and quantity. Nigeria's infrastructure quality was placed third-to-last out of 102 nations in the 2004 Global Competitiveness Report, which is consistent with the findings of a World Bank poll in which manufacturing enterprises identified infrastructure as their biggest business challenge. Only 31% of the roads in Nigeria are paved, compared to 50% in middle-income nations; even where roads are supplied, only 40% of these roads can be deemed to be in good condition (Alabi and Ocholi, 2010). This makes Nigeria's roadways the least dense in Africa. Only 20% of Nigeria's rural residents currently have access to electricity. In Nigeria, it has been noted that travellers pay three times as much per mile on unpaved rural roads than they do on paved ones in the Amuro

district of Kogi State. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) conducted a nationwide survey on the condition of the nation's roads, which revealed that as of December 2002, the country's road network was estimated to be 194,000 kilometers long, with the federal government responsible for 17% of that length, states for 16%, and local governments for 67%. Additionally, it was demonstrated that most roads, particularly those in rural regions, were in poor condition (CBN, 2002). Despite the fact that water is essential to human survival, human health, and economic development continue to face major challenges. Acute water stress is a problem for millions of people in underdeveloped nations due to insufficient resources. According to a survey by Hall (2006), there is an inadequate supply of piped or portable drinking water, and 50% of city dwellers and 90% of rural residents lack access to it. As a result, a significant number of households have turned to taking water from unsanitary sources. In Nigeria, the majority of the rural local government areas and even some metropolitan local government areas have appallingly poor infrastructure delivery. Where these facilities are there, some are neglected. This has the implication that local governments in Nigeria have consistently failed to improve their ability to mobilize the populace, respond to their needs, and effectively and responsibly manage the various local services required for grassroots development. Local roads are not fixed, rural electricity is in a precarious situation, rural health centers are run-down and devoid of drugs and essential medical professionals, rural boreholes and water pumps are dry, and rural water schemes and projects are abandoned. The sign posts that indicate the location, orientation, and physical condition of these rural infrastructures are the only items that can be seen in rural areas. Due to their lengthy life, poor maintenance, unfinished nature, vandalism, lack of quality work, and lack of community ownership of such projects, a large number of them are inoperable (Tolu, 2014).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The democratic-participatory school of thought is the theoretical framework chosen for this essay because it is crucial to a democratic system or for actual administrative goals like responsiveness, accountability, and control. The democratic-participatory school of thought is fundamentally based on the idea of democracy. Democracy, according to this school of thinking, "demands that one another's point of view and one another's interests be mutually appreciated." 1970's Panter-Brick. Fair play, tolerance, and respect for others' rights are the foundations of this idea, which considers them as being inherently valid principles (Ola: 1984). Real democratic government is anticipated to be a good government. The establishment of due process, constitutionalism, the rule of law, transparency, and accountability in the conduct of public affairs are just a few examples of what constitutes good governance. The absence of good governance and its byproducts automatically results in two negative outcomes, such as widespread corruption and political instability. Development is not facilitated by any of these results (Muo: 2007).

Real democratic governance is supposed to be excellent governance. Among other things, good governance entails the establishment of due process, constitutionalism, the rule of law, transparency, and accountability in the management of public affairs. The absence of good governance and its results invariably results in two unfavorable outcomes, such as widespread corruption and political instability. None of these results promote development (Muo: 2007). The first was that it is convenient and wise for only those who share this community of interests to administer specific concerns or interests that only a portion of the community has in common. According to Mill (1975), the whole purpose of having local representation is to enable people who have a shared interest—one that they do not share with the majority of their countrymen—to manage it independently.

The local government is one of the "free institutions" that offers political education, which was the second justification. According to Mill: I have dwelt on the importance of that aspect of the operation of free institutions which may be called the public education of the citizens in strong language - hardly any language is strong enough to indicate the gravity of my belief. The local administrative institutions are now the main tool in this effort. The third reason, as stated by Mill, was accountability. Not only were distinct executive officials necessary for strictly local functions, but there was also no other effective way for the general public to exert effective supervision over those officers. The local populace should be responsible for their initial appointment, for monitoring and inspecting them, and for giving or refusing to provide the supplies required for their operation.

The elaboration of Mill's ideas has improved them. Keith, a supporter of the mill modern movement, advocated the pedagogic usefulness of local government in 1954. He claimed that taking part in local administration gives the participant the skill of evaluating and selecting among conflicting claims and defending the selection as a just one, or being accountable. He went on to say that involvement in local government helps people develop and strengthen their capacity to make reasonable decisions and master the "art of winning consent," which are skills that are just as important in local government as they are in central government. Another adherent is Wilson (1984) who argued that the higher ultimate purposes that local government serves are political. One of these is political education which participation in local government affords. That political education is „in the first place, an education in the possible and the expedient; in the second place, it is an education in the use of power and authority and in the risks of power, in the third place, it is education in practical ingenuity and versatility.

According to Mackenzie (1961), local government serves as a platform for aspiring national leaders. Additionally, local government has the advantage that local and central authorities can more quickly and possibly more affordably access local expertise, interests and personal, first-hand knowledge that makes administration concrete and relevant to a locality. Given the



adoption of the federal form of government and the desire for grassroots development, there is little doubt that the fundamental components of local government fall within this framework. Without sufficient input from the local population, local government cannot adequately serve the demands of the populace. In conclusion, local government is said to enable only locally administered services of local importance, provide civic education, train political leaders, provide information about localities to the central government that is necessary for effectively meeting their needs, and diffuse political power so as to reduce concentrations of power.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study's descriptive survey design will elicit information about skill development as a tool for reducing poverty from the respondents. Data for this research project were gathered from two distinct sources: primary sources and secondary sources. The data gathering method used in this study relied on questionnaires and oral interviews. The questionnaire that will be given to the respondents was created by the researcher. 99242 young people in the Ekwusigo local government area of Anambra State make up the study's population. Information for this study will be gathered from Ozubulu, Orafite, and Ihembosi, the three towns that make up the local government. The research must use the Taro Yamane method to minimize the size of the population to a manageable quantity for the analysis because it will be impossible to deal with all the respondents of the chosen town in the Ekwusigo local government area of Anambra State. Taro Yamane's formula produced a sample size of 398. A structured questionnaire is the main research tool used in the study to elicit responses from the sample group. In this study, analysis of variance was utilized to test the hypothesis while frequency counts and simple percentages were used to analyze the respondents' biographical information.

## **PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

The information gathered from the respondents using the administered questionnaire is presented in this chapter. Three hundred and ninety-eight (398) questionnaires were given to the staff of the chosen responders. The questionnaire was only retrieved in three hundred and forty-seven (347) copies. As a result, the returned questionnaire served as the foundation for the data analysis and interpretation. Despite the amount of questionnaires that were not returned, the validity and reliability of this study are strongly assured. The percentage table methodology and t-test were the methods employed to test the hypothesis.

## 4.1 Questionnaire Response Rate

Copies Distributed	of	Copies Returned	of	Percentage Returned
398		347		99.14

Source: Field Survey 2023

**Table 4.1: Respondents' Demographic Variables**

### 4.1.1 Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	172	49.4	49.6	49.6
	Female	175	50.3	50.4	100.0
	Total	347	99.7	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

The above table reveals that the one hundred and seventy-two (172) of the respondents which represents 49.4 persons were male respondents, while one hundred and seventy-five (175) respondents which represent 50.4% were female respondents. By implication, female respondents were more than male respondents by 3 respondents in our selected sample for this study. The implication of this is to enable us to know the number of female and male that successfully returned their questionnaire

### 4.1.2 Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	252	72.4	72.6	72.6
	Single	95	27.3	27.4	100.0
	Total	347	99.7	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

In the table above, out of the three hundred and forty-seven (347) respondents, two hundred and fifty-two (252) of the respondents were married, while ninety-five (95) respondents which represent 27.4 percent are single. It is therefore glaring that the majority of the respondents are married as at the time of this study. Thus, marital status table help us to know the number of single, and married, respondents that answered the distributed questionnaire.

**Table 4.1.3 level of Education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	WAEC/NECO	29	4.4	4.7	8.6
	BSC/HND	157	22.6	45.2	41.7
	MSC/MBA	174	50.6	50.1	93.2
	Total	347	98.3	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

The table above indicates that twenty-nine (29) respondents which representing 4.7% percent maintain to acquired WAEC OR NECO while 45.2% percent of the respondents which represents one hundred and fifty-seven (157) have BSC/HND. However, one hundred and seventy-four respondents which represent 50.1 percent either have MSC or MBA. This as the one of demographic item helps us to identify the education qualification of the respondents.

#### 4.1.4 Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-25	29	9.1	9.6	9.6
26-33	118	22.9	34.2	33.8
34-40	104	32.6	29.9	68.2
41-50	28	8.8	9.3	77.5
51-above	68	21.3	19.5	100.0
Total	347	94.7	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 4.3 above depicted the age bracket of the respondents. The distribution shows that 9.6% of the respondents are between the age brackets of 18 to 25 years while 34.2% respondents are within the age bracket of 26-33 years. On the same note, 29.9% of the respondents are within the age bracket of 34 - 40 years. On the same note, 9.3% of the respondents are within the age bracket of 41 - 50 years, while the remaining respondents representing 19.5% are within the age bracket of 51 years and above.

### Hypotheses Testing

#### Hypothesis One

HO<sub>1</sub>: Local government has made no significant contributions to agricultural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.

Table 4.4.1 ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	6.911	5	1.382	7.613	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	80.589	342	3.358		
Total	87.500	347			

Source: SPSS, Version, 20 2023

However, from the Anova table above, it was observed that the probability value of hypothesis one is less than 0.05% level of significance (0.000), as a result null hypothesis will be rejected and alternative is accepted, meanwhile Local government has made significant contributions to agricultural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State

### Hypothesis Two

Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no significant contribution of Local government to infrastructural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.

**Table 4.4.2 ANOVA**

Model	Sum Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	22.507	3	4.501	6.952	.002 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	64.993	344	2.708		
Total	87.500	347			

Source: SPSS, Version, 20 2023

However, from the Anova table above, it was observed that the probability value of hypothesis two is less than 0.05% level of significance (0.02), as a result null hypothesis will be rejected and alternative accepted, meanwhile there is significant contribution of Local government to infrastructural development in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.

### Hypothesis Three

Ho<sub>3</sub>: Local government has made no significant contributions to employment creation in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.

**Table 4.4.3 ANOVA**

Model	Sum Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	20.154	3	4.031	15.236	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	67.346	344	2.806		
Total	87.500	347			

Source: SPSS, Version, 20 2023

However, from the Anova table above, it was observed that the probability value of hypothesis three is less than 0.05% level of significance (0.000), as a result null hypothesis will be rejected

and alternative accepted, meanwhile Local government has made significant contributions to employment creation in Ekwusigo Local Government in Anambra State.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Scholars have observed that since the colonial era, local government administration in Nigeria has been problematic. And all attempts to reform, restructure and reengineer local government administration in Nigeria have failed to yield the required results. One critical area where local government administration has failed woefully in Nigeria is in rural development. The local government administration in Nigeria today is the up-shoot of colonial administration. And within that period, efforts were geared towards the institutionalization of local government administration in rural communities as a means of fast tracking development.

However, government intervention in local government administration has resulted to more alienation of the people from self-governance. To further alienate the people, was the introduction of the unification Decree by the then military junta in the 1970s. This system further altered the developmental pattern of the people by failing to recognizing the cultural diversity in Nigeria. This unification created more problems such as unequal revenue allocation to the local government council, fiscal indiscipline and corruption. The retrogressive effects of local government administration are evident in the rate of rural-urban migration.

### **Recommendation**

The study recommends that:

1. More concerted efforts should be made toward development of rural areas. These should include increase in budget allocation, effective policy implementation and completion.
2. Corruption and mismanagement of resources should also be discouraged by punishing officials engaged in associated corrupt acts and blocking channels of diverting resources through effective budget planning and monitoring.
3. The researchers strongly advocate autonomy for local governments in such a way and manner that enhances its performance of constitutional and ancillary roles

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