



THE EFFECTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT (A CASE STUDY ON KONDUGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF BORNO STATE)

Maryam Kyari Kanaami

Department of Languages and Liberal Studies, Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri

Abstract: *This research project, centered on the rural development for planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual Understanding between a rural area and its publics. However, many government Establishments like the local government council " do not make use of public relations effectively in the administration of public service. Many Nigerians have not felt the impact of local Government administration in their area. There is a distant relationship between promise and Performance in the local government setting this research examines public relations practice In local government administration in nine local governments which were randomly, Borno State In order to determine the practice of public relations in the Selected local government council, two instruments were used for data collection. They were Interview and administration of questionnaire. Senior members of staff from the nine local Government councils were interviewed. One thousand two hundred and eighty-three "(1,283) Copies of the questionnaire were administered both to local government council stop and the Public in these areas. However, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two FL, 222) copies were Returned. Percentages and average mean-point were used to analyze the data collected. Results showed that there were public relations departments in these local government councils although they are called public affairs department. The result also showed that the public perceived public Relations practice in local government as not responsive to the plight of the people and not active In crisis management. Invariably. Public relations have not been used in many local government Councils to influence the image the local government in South South Nigeria; However, the Study among other things recommends that public relations should be established and effectively used in local government councils in Nigeria since public relations is a strong instrument for Good governance.*

Keywords: *Local Government, Autonomy, Rural, Development, and Borno State.*

INTRODUCTION

The Federal system in Nigeria prescribes a division of powers among three levels of government—Federal, State, and Local—intended to enable each tier to fulfil its assigned roles effectively and promote balanced regional development. However, despite constitutional recognition, local governments often lack genuine autonomy, as state governments regularly interfere with their operations. Unlike the Federal and State levels, which possess executive, legislative, and judicial arms, local governments only maintain executive and legislative bodies, making them dependent on higher authorities, especially the state government. This partial autonomy limits their ability to act independently, as state governments control critical functions within local councils, including personnel management, policy execution, and financial decision-making. This interference undermines the core purpose of local governance, which is to foster development and bring government closer to the grassroots.

Historically, the quest for local government autonomy in Nigeria has spanned from colonial-era indirect rule to post-independence reforms aimed at empowering local councils. Reforms such as the 1976 Local Government Reforms sought to create independent and responsive local bodies to address rural development needs. Yet, excessive state influence persists, particularly in financial matters where local governments struggle with limited fiscal independence, as seen in the control of statutory allocations and restrictions on local revenue generation. Consequently, local governments like Konduga are often unable to implement meaningful development programs independently. This study therefore investigates whether the lack of local government autonomy contributes to the stagnation in rural development within Konduga Local Government Area, examining how political, administrative, and financial constraints impact its ability to serve its constituents effectively.

Despite the establishment of local governments as a constitutionally recognized tier within Nigeria's federal system, genuine autonomy remains elusive for many local councils, including those in Borno State. Local governments are often subject to significant state government control, which restricts their ability to function independently and address the needs of rural communities effectively. This lack of autonomy has implications for rural development, as local governments are ideally positioned to implement grassroots policies that respond directly to local needs. However, due to excessive interference in financial, administrative, and legislative matters, local councils frequently lack the resources, authority, and decision-making freedom required to drive meaningful rural development initiatives.

In Konduga Local Government, as in many other councils, the effects of restricted autonomy are evident in inadequate infrastructure, limited access to basic services, and minimal economic development in rural areas. Local councils struggle to generate and allocate resources independently, enact development-oriented policies, and manage personnel, as these functions are often tightly controlled by the state. This research seeks to investigate the extent to which limited autonomy impedes the Konduga Local Government's ability to fulfil its developmental mandate. By examining how constraints on political, financial, and administrative independence impact rural development outcomes in Konduga, this study aims to provide insights into the critical role of local government autonomy in fostering sustainable growth at the grassroots level.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To evaluate the effect of the state government's interference in law making and policy formulation process on the rural development of Konduga Local Government Area;
- ii. To ascertain if there is a significant relationship between the Personnel Administration of Konduga Local Government and her rural development;
- iii. To determine if the state government's interference in the financial affairs of the Konduga Local Government impedes her rural development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Concept of Local Government

As a result of differing socio-economic cum political environment, and intellectual dispositions of different scholars, there exist diverse views of what local government is, and these have more vividly reflected on its definition. The term Local Government did not arrive new in the field of academic discourse. The importance of the concept of local government in the socio-economic cum political development of every-nation cannot be over-emphasized.

This indeed justifies the reason why the many literatures have been written on the concept. Many authors have also defined the concept from their diverse views.

According to Oladosu (2014), Local Government refers to government by the communities. This further implies that in its area of jurisdiction, local government connotes an independent base for facilitating social, political and economic life of the community under it. Thus, it is not an extension of state government, but a government that operates independently on its own in the localities in order to address the needs of the rural dwellers. Therefore, from Oladosu's view, local government is seen as a separate tier of government.

On his own part, Adefelarin (1993) views local government as a Sub-division of a national government which does not poses sovereignty, but rather derives its powers from general laws or from other specific grants made by the state government and the national government. This View however appears contrary to that of the Oladosu (1990) in that while he (Oladosu) sees local government as a separate entity or separate tier of government which exists and operates not as an extension of any higher government; Adefelarin argues that it's a sub-division of a national government, and thus possesses no sovereignty.

According to Ikanyibe (2009), local government is a system of government at the local level which is exercised or operated through a locally and democratically elected representative council, and which enjoys substantial autonomy in the exercise of specific powers over its area of jurisdiction, as it performs a range of functions and responsibilities assigned or allotted to it by law. One of the most observable things in the above definition is the critical issue of the "autonomy" enjoyed by the elected council in the exercised of its powers and in discharging the functions allotted to it by law. Arguably, the implications of the varied definitions considered above are in four dimensions which include:

- i) Local government must be a legal entity distinct from the state and federal governments.
- ii) Local government must be administered by democratically elected officials.
- iii) Local government must have specific powers to perform a range of functions assigned to it by law.
- iv) Local government must enjoy substantial autonomy to perform her functions, plan, formulate and execute its own policies, programme and projects, and its own rules and regulations as deemed necessary for its local needs, this autonomy includes power to control its own finance, recruit and discipline its staff.

2.1.2 The Concept of Local Government Autonomy

Indeed, somewhat divergences exist in scholars' views of what autonomy connotes. As hinted by 'Odunfa (1991), the numerous scholars and government functionaries who use the term "autonomy" usually have different things in mind. local government reform that is also intended to extend the autonomy of the local government has woefully failed to achieve this goal because the concept of autonomy has not been fully explained. Local government a autonomy can be seen as the liberty or the freedom of local government to carry out its own affairs or operations without interference from the higher government or the federal government. These affairs include managing its own finances, making its policies and laws, initiating and executing developmental programs and projects within its area of jurisdiction, recruiting its own staff raising its own funds, providing. services all within the units of its financial resources.

Works of different scholars on the concept of local government shall be reviewed According to Awotokun (1979), the term "autonomy" in political sense refers to the ability of a self-governing unit to regulate its internal activities without intervention from external body. Going by this, local government is said to be autonomous if it can regulate its internal affairs without any interference from a higher government. To Nwabueze (1983), autonomy in a federal system implies a situation whereby each level of government enjoys a separate existence and independence from the control of the other government (s). By this, each tier of government must exist independently, not as an appendage of another tier, but as an autonomous entity, in the sense of being able to exercise its own will in the conduct of its affairs without being by another level of government. He further argued that autonomy is meaningful only if each level of government is not constitutionally bound to accept directive or dictation from another level of government. Looking at the view of local government autonomy by Ogunna (1996:2359), which refers to it as the freedom of the-local government to recruit and manage its own staff, raise and manage its own finances, and carry out its own' affairs and functions as provided -by. the law without any interference from the higher government; it could be seen that local government autonomy involves three important components. Namely:

- a. Administrative Autonomy
 - b. Political Autonomy
 - c. Financial Autonomy
- a. **Administrative Autonomy:** Can be seen as the freedom of the local government to recruit, promote, discipline and control its staff and manage her affairs within the spheres of the constitution.
 - b. **Political Autonomy:** This refers to the power and freedom of the local government to make and implement bye-laws, formulate and execute policies and programmes that would enable it achieve its goals and carry out its functions, as assigned to it by the constitution, all without external interference. **Financial Autonomy:** refers to the freedom of the local government impose taxes, raise or generate revenue within its assigned sources, allocate and utilize,
1. **Political Autonomy:** The ability of local government to elect chairmen and councilors in a free and fair election at regular intervals as stipulated by the law. This implies

allowing the grass root people to participate directly and be politically and actively involved in the affairs of their local government.

2. **Financial Autonomy:** This means having secured sources of finance, direct allocation from the federation account. It also includes the ability to generate revenue from the sources allotted to it by the constitution, determine, approve and execute its own budget or annual estimate Without interference by the state government.
3. **Administrative Autonomy:** This involves the ability of the local government to appoint its own managerial staff and manage its own affairs without interference from the state government. The management of local government appoints staff up to GL.0-6, Whereas the 1976 Reforms and the 1999 constitution charge the Local Government Service Commission with the responsibility for employment, posting, promotion, discipline and training of staff from GL.07 and above.
4. **Social Autonomy:** This refers to the freedom of the local government to provide certain
3. Social services to the local people such as primary health care, building of markets, motor parks, construction and maintenance of feeder roads, among others. Arugu and Eke (2016). Relating the local government autonomy to the 1976 local government reform, Adejo (1998) focused on the administrative and financial autonomy. He stated that creation of such institutions as ministry of local government has given the state a magnitude of control over the local governments, as it now appears like an agency in the hard of the state government.

2.1.3 The Pre-1976 Local Government Administration

The present day Nigeria in pre-colonial times witnessed a plethora of local administrative systems (particularly amongst the Hausa/Fulani; Yoruba, and the Benin kingdoms) that successfully attempted to employ the well-informed chiefs and the lesser Chiefs in the direct government of their people. In the Hausa/Fulani, the sultan ruled through Emirs and village heads; in the Yoruba Obas ruled through Baales, while in the Benin Obas ruled through several Energies who were repository of authority emanating from above. Abah et al (2011).

The period of 1900 to 1949 witnessed the introduction of indirect rule system in the Nigerian local government, by the British colonial masters as a reform or change in the status quo. To them, this was mainly out of expediency -the need to preserve peace, law and order, reduce administrative costs, and maintain a stronghold on the populace, to solve the problems of effective communication, to avoid incessant agitation of the populace against foreign rule, to strengthen people's voice and independence. Structurally, the indirect rule system, which is also known as the native Authority system comprised four main independent bodies (who are usually native Authority); the native treasury and the native court. The Chief (Chief-in-council or Chief and council) was usually the sole authority and he held formal authority for local government revenue collection as well as judicial administration.

- 1) The 1950s (Eastern Region 1950; west 1952; North 1954) occasioned by the British multi-tier local government system which implied "full grown local government that would be In efficient, participatory, and to a great measure, autonomous (Asaju 2010). The 1960 independence period somewhat believed this multi-structural experience in local government administration and its status, due to among other factors, the increasingly centralist philosophy and orientation of the post-independence regional government. Looking at the autonomous

aspect, during the first republic (1960-1966), local government administration was under the control of the regional government which misemployed the system, particularly the customary court and the native authority police.

2.1.6 Concept of Rural Development

There has been a plethora of views by different scholars on the concept of rural development. There is therefore no consensus on the definition of the concept. In his view, Lele (1979) refers to rural development as improvement in living standard of the masses of low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining. This implies that when there is an improvement in the standard of living of the rural dwellers, rural development is said to have taken place.

According to Ewuim (2010) rural development involves the process of improving the social, economic, political and infrastructural lives of the rural dweller. It is pertinent to mention the fact that most of these scholars place more emphasis on various aspects of development and indices for measuring development. Whereas some place more emphasis on the infrastructural facilities, some emphasize the improvement in the standard of living of the rural dwellers. In other words, some view it from the angle of physical facilities or amenities, while others see it from the angle of human component. This prompted Titola (2008) to view the concept as not only relating to a sustained increase in the level of production and productivity of all rural dwellers, including farmers, and sustained improvement in their well being, manifested by increased capita income and standard of living; but also relating to a sustained Physical, social, and economic improvement of the rural dwellers.

2.2 Empirical Review

From the researcher's investigation, it appears that the definition of local government by Adefelarin (1993) is quite far from what local government connotes or should be in the practical reality. He defined it as "a sub-division of a national government which does not possess sovereignty, but rather derives its powers from the general laws or from other specific grants made .by the state or the national government". This view of local government is not only subjective, (looking at what local government implies in the real sense), but also subdues the autonomy at the local government, and even goes against the definitions of local government as contained in the guidelines for the 1976 local government Reform and section "7" of the 1999 constitution both of which gave birth to the modern day system of local government. However, his definition may have been prompted by 'what is practically obtainable today in the Nigerian system of local government. In Borno state for instance, all the 25 local governments have no democratically elected Chairmen, but Transition Committee Chairmen who are humbly there at the mercy of Governor Zulum who appointed them:

showing that there is indeed and absolute in the Nigerian context of local movement, this autonomy as she defined is purely a pipedream, owing to the following facts: (1) there is the Local Government Service Commission which is controlled by the state and takes care of recruitment of staff of governments. Besides, the state governors have often been the one choosing the local government Chairmen by themselves.

Secondly, the local governments cannot make and implement bye-laws in Nigeria without the law being approved by the state's House of Assembly. Also, the creation of the State-Joint-Local-Government Account has made local government financially dependent on the state

government, while their budget must also be approved by the state government before its implementation. Based on the foregoing, it is little wonder that Awofeso (2004) says. “it appears that the military regimes are more committed to the task of enhancing the autonomous status of our experience of local government administration in Nigeria, and till date, it has not proved otherwise. These must have prompted Uketor (2009) when he opened cogently that local government autonomy refers to the degree of freedom accorded to the 3rd tier of government with respect to legal, administrative and financial independence within the constitutional limits.

Joseph Imhanlahimi *et al* (2009) in their study on “local Government Autonomy and Development of localities in Nigeria: Issues, problems and suggestions” pointed out in practical context, the topical issues of local government autonomy in Nigeria vis-a-Vis the development of the localities. In this they pound out that incessant interference in the affair of the local government has posed some challenges to her developmental efforts in the rural areas. Other challenges the' found out confronting the developmental efforts of the local government include inadequate finances, weak intergovernmental relations, fledging of democracy, personnel problem and ground corruption among government officials. By recommendation, they suggested that these problems must be adequately tackled and given regular attention for the governments. Besides, the state governors have often been the one choosing the local government Chairmen by themselves.

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They decried the undue interference of the state government in the financial affairs of the local government, and recommended that full financial autonomy be granted to the local governments so as to enable them handle the matters and functions statutorily assigned to them; They also recommended the abrogation of their state-joint-local government accounts; so as to promote financial autonomy of the local government councils in Nigeria. Dwelling more on the Philosophical and theoretical foundation of decentralization, Stefano Maxwell and Maxwell (2015) analyzed the impacts of power and functional decentralization on public service delivery, in relation to local government autonomy, after which they concluded that "local government is too tightly controlled by the state government, thereby making them lag behind in discharging their constitutionally assigned (developmental) functions effectively and efficiently.

METHODOGY

The area of study for this research is Konduga Local Government Area in Borno State, Nigeria, located about 25 km southeast of Maiduguri along the Ngadda River, with a population of approximately 13,400. Konduga is one of sixteen LGAs within the Borno Emirate, where languages such as Shuwa Arabic, Kanuri, Maffa, and Wandala are spoken. Data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources, with primary data obtained through interviews and questionnaires and secondary data sourced from journals, books, articles, and other library resources. The research targeted a population of 209 employees of Konduga LGA, and the sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error. A random sampling technique ensured fair representation, with data collected through structured questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and personal observations. Data were analyzed using tabular presentations and descriptive statistics, employing frequencies and percentages to compare responses.

Data Presentation

The researchers wish to present analysis and as well interpret the data collected in line with the responses from the respondents of the population sample. However, the data are tabulated and raw scores (responses) on frequencies are also converted to percentage (%) for easy anal. In addition, the data for analysis were acquired from the questionnaire administered to the workers and management of the Konduga Local Government Area. And also direct result of information obtained from personal interview conducted on individual bases concerning the impact of industrial conflict on performance in Konduga Local Government.

4.2 Data Analysis

As earlier said before in chapter three data analysis is simply the extraction of new informatics from the data that will enable make a description of the handing sample. It makes use of table with a short explanation of its contents for simple and perfect understand of the work. It involves only the analysis of relevant questionnaires on some of the purpose for the study.

At this juncture, the respondent classification and the data converted are presented below.

Table 4.2.1 (Question I): Sex Distribution of respondents

Sex	No of Respondent	Percentage
Male	180	33.33%
Female	29	66.67%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Interpretation: The table above indicates that in the study, we have more male respondent than the female.

Table 4.2.2 (Question II): Does Local Government employers pay adequate attention to total staff welfare matters?

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	180	77.78%
No	29	22.22%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Result: The table above indicates that majority of the population agreed that management pays adequate attention on local government rural staff welfare matters.

Table 4.2.3 (Question III): Is there any consequence of local government on rural development?

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	160	61.11%
No	49	38.89%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Result: From the table above, it is noticeable that there are consequences of local government in work place either negatively or positively. Hence, 55 (61.11% respondents agreed with the fact while 35.38% respondent disagree?

Table 4.2.4 (Question IV): What are the sources of local government in works place or organization?

Options (Variables	No of Respondent	Percentage
Goal difference	100	17.78%
Communication breakdown	50	4.44%
Different in perception	50	11.11%
A and C only	9	27.78%
All of the above	0	38.89%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Result: The data above clearly reveals that all the variables that were given are the source.

Table 4.2.5 (Question V): Does Local Government effect on rural development?

Options (Variables)	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	170	72.22%
No	39	27.78%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Result: This shows 72.22% of the respondent views are the same as other parastatals encounter in relation to finance (poor funding). However, 27.78% of the respondents was contrary.

Table 4.2.6 (Question VI): Is there any tremendous improvements on salaries and wages due rural development?

Sex	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	160	83.33%
No	49	16.67%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Result: From the, the data reveals that 83.33% of the respondents believe that there is tremendous improvements on salaries and wages of workers in the organization while 16.67% respondents disagreed.

Questions VII: DO you agree that industrial action strike are not really quite benefitted to any of the parties and even to the economy because of its negative consequences.

Table 4.2.7: Does rural areas has positive impact on local government?

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Agreed	190	88.89%
Disagreed	19	11.11%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

Result: the table shows that 88.89% of the respondents agreed that rural areas has an impact on local government while 11.11% of the respondents disagreed.

Table 4.2.8 (Question VI): Do you agree that Local Government has generated lots of fund to the rural area?

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	150	50%%
No	59	16.65%
Total	209	100%

Source: Field Survey 2024

The table above showcases that 50% of the respondents acknowledged the local government efforts in regards to fund generation to the rural area and 16.650 0 did not acknowledged.

4.3 Research Findings

Having critically analysed the questions and data collected from the respondents by the researcher, however has a keen interest to depict the findings of the study. Succinctly, the results are also discussed in relation to the previous finding documented in the literature review. However, similarities in findings stressed while disc repacks are explained. Again, it would be imperative to expatriate on the reaction of the respondent.

Generally, the research work has unveiled the impact of industrial conflict on performance in a government parastatal with reference to Konduga Local Government Area as inflexible and unaccommodating change, interpersonal and intergroup rivalries and jealousy, loss of important personnel destruction of work which Could also result loss of revenue and well disrupt the smooth running of the effectiveness of an enterprise/industry. In addition, a research reveal that over the year, Nigeria's industrial sector characterized by industrial strike (action) and this strike have had adverse effect in the economy, the industries and the individual worker. In order words, such action disrupts essential services and can bring the country's economic activities to a halt (see table 4.2.4).

Conclusion:

As the third tier of government in Nigeria, and as enshrined in the constitution; local government is apparently meant to serve as institutional framework for rural development, and broadly for the overall national development. However, to effectively actualize this mandate, they need to have substantial and significant level of political/administrative and financial autonomy. It is obvious that the 1999 constitution did not do much in enhancing or propagating.

5.3 Recommendations:

1. Local Government should be strengthened and democratized while its officials should be democratically elected, as provided for in section 7 of the 1999 constitution; and not appointed, as is currently obtainable in many states of the federation.
2. Elections into Local Government Council should be conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission, and not by State Independent Electoral Commission as is currently obtainable.
3. On the aspect of finance, serious constitutional reforms are needed to enhance the fiscal autonomy of the local government. The State Joint-Local Government Account though which state governments siphon the funds allocated to their local governments, should be abolished, and replaced with another, to be known as Local Government Chairmen Forum Account (for each state). Into that account, the share of revenue allocation for the local governments of each state should be directly paid, likewise (currently 10%) of every state's IGR which she is constitutionally required to pay ton her local governments. The account, as well as the manner of sharing the revenue therein (among the local governments) should be handled by the House of Assembly of each state, who should also take every necessary action against each state which fails to release 10% of her IGR for the benefits of her local government. Local governments should also take advantage of their internal revenue sources, and stop depending mainly on the revenue allocation.

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