

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS AS THE PATHWAY TO GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF IKPOBA OKHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE

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Abstract

In order to understand grassroots growth throughout Nigeria, this research looks at local government reforms; the main impetus for this research is the Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area in Edo State. This study indicates that implementing positive change in rural Nigeria is mostly the responsibility of local administrations, however, the rivals is the case. The localism thesis was used in this study to explain how strong central and state governments undermined smaller local ones. However, in this investigation, a qualitative content technique was used for data analysis. Among other things, it concluded that the power dynamics amongst various tiers of leadership in Nigeria have prevented local governments from promoting development at the local level, especially in the Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area in the Edo State region. Finally, it was suggested that in order to give local governments the autonomy they require to maintain grassroots governance and development, a study of the power dynamics between local governments and the other levels of government in Nigeria should be conducted.

Keywords: Local Government, Reforms, Autonomy, Grassroots Development, Constitution, Democracy, Ikpoba Okha, Tier.

Introduction

Only the state and municipal governments in Nigeria are tasked with providing for the populace. Local governments exist to offer essential, unique services, particularly to their rural constituents. People everywhere understand the value of local government in providing a range of essential services, which are better provided at the regional level due to a deeper understanding of the particulars involved. This is true regardless of the type of government in place. Additionally, it unites local residents under a single organization that primarily performs complementary duties to those of the federal government and attends to their needs. It is the process by which a community's issues

and demands are addressed by its government in an effective and economical way (Ahmed, Abdulkadir and Ado, 2018). This demonstrates how local governance is a community's main tool for meeting its needs and resolving its common issues. However, there were ongoing issues with these Nigerian municipal governments' effectiveness. These include issues with finances, independence, deteriorating infrastructure, political instability, and the constitution.

Local governments must understand the concept of autonomy because it is essential to their capacity to operate effectively. Administration by the local government demonstrated that, prior to 1976, these groups were merely outposts. Initiatives for effective regional growth were hampered by the state government's repeated mandates. The 1976 reforms were designed to lighten the burden on municipal administrations and were motivated by the constitution's guarantee of third tier status. Initiatives to democratize local administrations existed as early as the Second Republic, but nothing was accomplished as a result of state governments' pointless political involvement (Ahmed et al., 2018).

The analysis of intergovernmental interactions and its effects on the newly discovered authority for the local government system has been observed to be the most frequently discussed topic when discussing the functions of local government under the exclusive and concurrent lists in the constitution. Given that, at least from the standpoint of official legitimacy, the issue of local government's relative autonomy in Nigeria is a recent one. It used to be very easy for jurisdictional issues to prevent them from carrying out their official duties and/or obligations to the public and to national, regional, or state governments. Given that the majority of these municipal governments had their beginnings in regional and later state administrations, this stance made sense. As a result, they fulfilled the duties that their respective state or regional governments had given them. Each country's independence also differed in terms of its scope and form. They were automatically associated with the "apron string" because they were a form of government that developed from the states. Rephrased, they served only as an addition to the state governments that already existed. As a result, Nigeria at the time had two distinct levels of federalism. The federal government changed its policies on a national level in response to pressure from both Nigerians and foreigners, giving it a more prominent place within the Nigerian Federal Structure. A key component of this change that created the third tier of the federal government was the establishment of the legal foundation for local government autonomy and authority.

The local government, which was formally acknowledged as the third tier of government in 1976, quickly came to be the center of attention for local quirks and issues. Additional changes made in 1988 and 1991 strengthened the autonomy of local governments even more. The presidential system of government that was already in place at the national and state levels was institutionalized by these changes. At the meeting, the nation's democracy was put to the test. The topic of current requests is new municipal administrations. This study will focus on the issue of local government reforms as it

relates to the Ikpoba Okha LGA in the state of Edo because it is a potential means of fostering growth at the grassroots level in Nigeria. In light of the aforementioned information, the following questions are relevant;

- Can you tell me about the several Local Government reforms that have been implemented in Nigeria?
- Why haven't reforms made Local Governments in Edo State's Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area efficient tools for fostering grassroots development?
- How can Nigeria's municipal governments better serve as catalysts for grassroots improvement?

Objective of the study

The overarching goal of this research is to better understand how Ikpoba Okha Local Government's reforms has contributed to the growth at the grassroots. However, the specific goals are as follows:

- Examine the changes that has been made to the Local Government system in Nigeria.
- Investigate why Ikpoba Okha LGA in Edo State is not an example of how local governments have been transformed by these changes.
- Provide recommendations for how Nigeria's state and municipal governments might better serve as catalysts for grassroots governance and development.

Conceptualization of Terms

Local Government

The idea of "local government" defies a straightforward, universally applicable explanation. The literature has shed light on this definitional minefield. For instance, Aransi (2017) pushes the notion that, depending on who you ask, the word "local government" can refer to a variety of things. The 1976 Local Government Reform Guidelines provide one of the most helpful explanations of local government in Nigeria out of the many available explanations. The rules define "local government" as "government at the local level executed by representative councils constituted by law to exercise certain functions within the defined boundaries" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1976). Olukotun (2019) defines local government as "public sector institutions at the lowest sub-national level of government, legally and constitutionally recognized, and mandated to carry out certain responsibilities at the community level." According to Awa's definition of local government from 1976, this political entity aims to decentralize political power. Iyoha, Ubhehin, and Aiya (2005) define local government as the system by which citizens of a particular area make decisions regarding issues pertaining to that area. According to Adamolekun, local government is responsible for organizing, controlling, and directing how local affairs are conducted (1983).

Although not all political structures for the delivery of governmental services at the grassroots level can be regarded as local government, previous conceptions of local government generally defined local government as a political and administrative institution with suitable governance structures for managing the affairs of people at the grassroots level. Local governments must have the necessary political clout and power to rule over a given region. According to Asaju (2010), a local government must be run by people who were elected in a free and fair election for it to be legitimate. He continued by saying that given the distinct characteristics of their regions, local governments should be given a lot of freedom to decide on and implement their own policies, programs, initiatives, and rules and regulations.

Grassroots Development

A definition of grassroots development is necessary because the academic literature on the subject lacks clarity. This phenomenon is well described by Aroh (2002), who contends that it is difficult to define in terms that apply to everyone because grassroots development has such a strong foundation. He asserts that "grassroots development" refers to a set of principles for enhancing the lives of rural residents, who frequently make up a sizeable portion of the population. The terms "community development" and "rural development" are sometimes used synonymously to describe grassroots development, which is a paradigm for analyzing the results of community growth and expansion. This perspective looks closely at indicators of progress like institutional strength, local customs, economic prosperity, civic engagement, educational attainment, and philosophical openness.

Although the term "grassroots development" may seem vague, the World Bank, Gaventa and Lewis, and George Kennedy all provided definitions that were used in this study. According to the World Bank's (1975) definition of grassroots development, it refers to policies and programs that work to raise the standard of living of a particular population, in this case, the locals. The Gaventa and Lewis (1989) term and the World Bank definition are consistent. Instead of trickle-down policies, they favor community-led initiatives to raise living standards in areas with weak economies. George (1988) defined grassroots development as all initiatives taken to support underdeveloped communities so they can reshape their own future in line with their own needs and ideals. "Grassroots development" in this context refers to tactics that prioritize "bottom-up" tactics that involve locals in resolving local issues and promoting their own interests over "top-down" or "trickle-down" tactics.

Ikpoba Okha

The Ikpoba Okha local government area in the southern Nigerian state of Edo is administered from the city of Idogbo. The LGA is made up of a number of cities and communities, including Evbuomodu, Uwusan, Obazagbon, Agedo, Evbumufi, Ekosa, Obadoloviyei, and Obenevbugo. The estimated 372, 080 inhabitants (NPC, 2006) of

Ikpoba Okha primarily identify as belonging to the Benin ethnic group. Both Christians and traditionalists are well-represented in the area's religious landscape, and the Bini language is widely spoken. The Orhe festival is the most well-known occasion in Ikpoba Okha LGA. Ikpoba Okha LGA has an area of 862 square kilometers and an average annual temperature of 28 degrees Celsius. The average wind speed and humidity in the LGA are 11 km/h and 69 percent, respectively. The economy of Ikpoba Okha is largely based on agriculture, with local production of food staples like yam, plantain, bananas, and vegetables. For instance, the Oka and Oregbeni markets offer locations where residents of the Ikpoba Okha LGA can buy and sell a variety of goods and services. The blacksmith, lumber, and hunting industries all make significant economic contributions to Ikpoba Okha.

Theoretical Framework

The localism theory is used in this study to investigate why state and municipal governments in Nigeria have failed to promote bottom-up growth. A few authors who have spent a lot of time writing about localism include Jenkins (2004), Boyle (2009), Hartwich (2013), and Ibietan and Ndukwe (2014). The ability of subnational institutions and governments to support bottom-up growth and leadership is stressed by these thinkers. The "localism" philosophy and way of life, in contrast to centralization, emphasizes the significance of neighborhood-level citizen participation in decision-making. Jenkins (2004) contends that the Catholic Church's subsidiarity doctrine, which emphasizes local institutions carrying out local duties, can be used to interpret the advantages of localism. Similar justification was offered by Ibietan and Ndukwe (2014), who claimed that localism aims to "create effective "subsidiaries" at the local level that can handle the responsibility of governance as well as the provision of social services" (p. 136).

The foundation of localism is the idea that decision-making and problem-solving should be transferred to the smallest branch of government possible. Local control becomes a farce when federal and state policies and interactions favor centralization. Under such circumstances, regional decision-making autonomy would undoubtedly suffer. Localism loses a significant amount of its political influence when other levels of government take on duties that belong there.

Numerous authors have emphasized the significance of local government in promoting localism in governance and development because they view it as the political and administrative structure best suited to doing so. Three theoretical frameworks are presented by Ola (1984) to support the necessity of decentralized decision-making. Over the years, many authors have examined various aspects of Nigerian municipal administration using these theoretical frameworks. All of these theoretical frameworks have an impact on the benefits of localism as a form of decentralized governance. The first school of thought argues in favor of municipal control for political reasons. According to this theory, opportunities for citizen involvement in public policy can be

best developed and expanded by the level of government that is closest to the people. People's involvement in politics is essential for accountability and resource mobilization, and it is widely acknowledged that local governments are important in preparing citizens for these more significant national obligations (Ola, 1984; Ibodje, 2000).

Additionally, it is thought of as a means of facilitating fruitful discussions and local management of significant national issues. In nations with complex multiple communities, sectional sympathies can occasionally outweigh other feelings of national commitment. If this simmering tension at the grassroots level suddenly explodes, it could have disastrous consequences for national cohesion. Thus, it is thought that the presence of local government in such circumstances can prevent specific tribal communities from developing into points of rising tension that could undermine the interests of the country (Idada, 2007).

The point of view presented in this paper is that, on the one hand, government at the sub-national level has the potential to create meaningful development and successful governance if the concept of localism is followed in design and practice. On the other side, if there is little or no devotion to the notion of localism, effective government and development at the grassroots are jeopardized. In Nigeria, the interactions between local governments and other levels of government have weakened localism as the core pillar of grassroots governance and development. Simply put, local governments have been denied the necessary ability to function as the true agents of grassroots growth. They are hardly institutions. Despite the fact that successive Nigerian constitutions since 1979 identified local government as a tier of government with functional duties, they have failed to devolve them. To all intents and purposes, municipal administrations are viewed as an extension of state governments (Tobi & Oikhala, 2021).

Empirical Literature Review

Tobi and Oikhala (2021) conducted a study on Local Government Reforms and Grassroots Development in Nigeria. The study relied on data sourced from textbooks, journals, official publications and used a theory of localism to explain how the federal and state governments had incapacitated local governments. The study argued that various reforms had attributed the perennial failure of the Nigerian local government system to the status of local government in the Nigerian federal arrangement. It opined that Nigerian Federal arrangement, particularly the relationship between local government and other government tiers, has continued to undermine the autonomy of the former to operate optimally. The study found that apart from poor implementation of recommendations of various committees, inconsistencies in the provisions of the constitutions, inadequate funding, and resistance by state governments have collectively undermined the effectiveness of local governments as the agents of grassroots governance and development in Nigeria. The study concluded that the effectiveness of Nigerian local governments would only improve considerably if the federal and state

governments guarantee an atmosphere that would enable them to perform their statutory functions.

Abdulhamid O. & Chima P. (2015) did a study on Local government administration in Nigeria: the search for relevance. The study examines both the inherent weakness of the constitutional foundation and the contradictions created by the 1976 reforms. Using a theoretical analysis, it was observed as part of its finds that the combined effects of constitutional gaps and reform contradictions have rendered Nigeria's system of local government an unfortunate 'orphan', and that, lacking a strong constitutional foundation, local government in Nigeria has been subject to the whims of both state and federal governments. The study argues that, despite numerous constitutional developments, current constitutional provisions for local government in Nigeria leave much to be desired. It recommended that, to improve the system, local government should be given the status of a federating unit in the constitution, with its powers and functions clearly spelt out; the constitutionally mandated State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) should be abolished; and the constitution should be amended to create a chapter which guarantees the identity and autonomy of local government as a third tier of government.

Uloko, Yahaya, Fatai, Ochedi, Mutari and Muhammed (2023) carried out a research on Local Government Reforms in Nigeria. It examines local government reforms and effective governance in Nigeria. The research began with the premise that local government as a tier of government in the country is the most important institution that could guarantee sustainable development at the grass root level. However, the research adopted the qualitative method of data analysis, it revealed that institutionalization of good governance is one of the best strategy for sustainable development at the local level. This could be achieved through constructive engagement in policy design and implementation, the institutionalization of accountability standards in local government procurement, the acquisition of competent professional civil servants, and compliance with public service ethical code as major ways through which sustainable development could be guaranteed at the local level. The study further concluded that enforcement of local government autonomy, improving the collection and utilization of local internally generated revenue as well as close collaboration between local government and relevant government agencies as ways for the institutionalization of good governance and by extension sustainable development at the local government level.

However, the gap from the above literature which this study intend to fill is that, none of these study have been able to examine if these reforms has contributed to the development at the grassroots level in Nigeria most especially in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. To this end, this study seek to examine local government reforms as a pathway to grassroots development in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State

Methodology

In this study, a Desk research method was adopted. Desk research is a type of research that is based on the material published in reports and similar documents that are available in public libraries, websites, data obtained from surveys already carried out, etc. Some organizations also store data that can be used for research purposes. It is a research method that involves the use of existing data. These are collected and summarized to increase the overall effectiveness of the investigation. For this study, reference was made to textbooks, periodicals, newspapers, and official documents, such as the Federal Republic of Nigeria's (1979) and Nigeria's (1999) constitutions and the 1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reform. A content analysis was performed on this data.

Findings and Discussion

Local Government Reforms in Nigeria: Chronicles

This section discusses the various reforms carried out in the Nigerian Local Government system.

Pre-1976 Local Government Reforms in Nigeria

Gboyega (1987) outlined four phases in the growth of Nigeria's local government. He clarified that the objectives of each stage of the development of a government were distinct. The first epoch took place when the Native Authority structure was established, which was in colonial times. The prevailing idea at the time was to create local administrative structures in order to achieve colonial control as a whole. In the second phase, which spanned from 1952 to 1966, several reforms were put into place to boost public participation in local government. It first appeared in the East and West at the beginning of the 1950s. In the third stage, which lasted from 1966 to 1976, aspects of the values of decentralized, populist governance were rolled back. In many states, especially those in the Midwest, local government was conceived as development administration and seen as an extension of the state. Through a number of reforms, the federal government sought to establish a uniform local government structure in the final phase. This took place as the 1976 local government reform was being put into effect.

The 1976 Local Government Reforms

The modifications made in 1976 made sure that each local government had equal access to resources like funding and staff. The main issues that the reform aimed to address included those related to politics, administration, relationships with traditional leaders, intergovernmental relations on governance functions, and financial allocation sharing. A first in Nigerian local government history, the reform created multi-purpose single-tier local government councils. The Divisional Local Administrative System, which had previously operated in various regions of the federation, was consequently abolished. A minimum population requirement of 150,000 and a maximum population

cap of 800,000 were also established by the reform. All local government areas are subject to these restrictions. The modification allowed locally elected council members to carry out political responsibilities. The adjustment also made grants from federal and state funds possible. Federal and state governments were supposed to provide regular funding to local governments, with 25% going to equity and 75% going to population (Oyewo, 1993).

Some of the reforms from 1976 were actually codified in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution from 1979. The level of municipal government is established by Section 7 of the Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979). In order to comply with section 149, the local government promised an equal split of the statutory revenue allotment to the Federation Account between the federal and state governments. The Fourth Schedule of the Constitution firmly establishes the statutory obligations of local governments. As the third level of government in Nigeria and the level closest to the people, each local government area is required by law to develop an annual budget estimate in order to carry out its governance duties. A unified local government service board and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs carry out community development and other duties specified by each state's government (Ola, 1984; Idada, 2007). Local government was given official recognition in Nigeria's 1979 Constitution, but because of a complex web of contradictions, it was frequently absorbed by higher levels of government.

The 1984 Local Government Reforms

Shagari's civilian administration, which assumed control of Nigeria on October 1, 1979, was troubled by the local governments' subpar performance. As a result, it intended to relocate them. The military's intervention in politics on December 31, 1983, however, prevented the reform plan from being implemented. The military regime led by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari abolished the Second Republic's new municipal councils. It continued to follow the rules established in 1976, though. The military regime under Buhari acknowledged the need to reposition the local government system, as the previous civilian government had advocated. Thus, the Local Government Reform Committee was presided over by Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki, the Sultan of Sokoto, when it was established in 1984.

The Committee discovered that a variety of factors played a role in the third-level government's underwhelming performance. These included flaws in local government, the ineffective appointment and lackadaisical dedication of council political functionaries, unhealthy state government meddling in local government statutory matters, the state governments' lackadaisical attitude toward the delay and partial release of local government statutory funds, and a culture of corruption (Aransi, 2017). The Ministry of Local Government Affairs' various responsibilities as well as the employees' inexperience and passivity were also notable findings (Iyoha, Ubhenin, & Aiya, 2005).

The Committee's findings also charged state governors with undermining local government operations by taking advantage of contradictions in the 1979

Constitution regarding the relationships between the state and local governments. Idada (2007) noted in response to the Dasuki committee's report that the committee made some incredibly eye-catching recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of local government. Among them are the ideas that new local governments should be formed every ten years, that they should be based on populations between 100,000 and 150,000, and that the target area should have at least 20,000 tax-paying citizens (20,000). Other ideas included emphasizing geographic proximity, administrative ease, and economic vitality as well as basing the creation of a new local government on the requests of traditional associations and the community.

Local Government Reforms under the Ibrahim Babangida Administration

The recommendations of the Dasuki Committee were postponed until after the Ibrahim Babangida administration had started its new regime of local government reforms. The policies of Babangida had a significant positive impact on municipal governance. By establishing a presidential system of government at the municipal level, they changed Nigerian politics. Section 5(1) of the reform guidelines changed the title of the local government chairman to "Chief Executive and Accounting Officer." In accordance with the new regulation, the Accounting Officer is no longer permitted to sign checks or vouchers, and Supervisory Council members are now considered to be members of the local government's executive branch. The Supervisory Councillors were chosen by the Executive Chairman, who then collaborated closely with them to manage their various divisions. Additionally, the Local Government Council, which is composed of elected Councillors, is recognized as the body that makes local government laws (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1991).

At the municipal level in Nigeria, the regulations created the first distinct separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government. They established guidelines for decisions like choosing a leader and selecting supervisors. They emphasized the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of local government and how it mirrors the interaction between the State House of Assembly, the Governor, and the Commissioners as required by the Constitution. The modifications were transient. Under the Abacha dictatorship, local government returned to its previous state before the 1988 and 1992 reforms.

Local Government Reforms in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

In Nigeria, the Obasanjo-led civilian government implemented yet another round of local government reform in response to the subpar operation of the system. Thirteen members of the technical committee were inaugurated by the Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Usman Sanda Ndayako. The committee was tasked with reviewing the performance of local governments since 1999 and recommending whether or not they should be kept as the

third tier of government, as well as looking again at the expense of electioneering during local government elections and looking into the inefficiency and high cost of governance (Idada, 2007).

The committee's investigation found evidence of interference in municipal affairs from both the state and the federal governments. Key findings included inadequate funding, a lack of state government commitment to local government issues, and the incomplete and delayed distribution of funds designated for local government. As a result, some recommendations included decentralizing authority and allowing municipalities to manage their own finances without consulting the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs (Aransi, 2017; Aghayere, 2008). Despite federal adoption of the Committee's reports, the effort to reform local government was unsuccessful because federal authorities ultimately prohibited local political functionaries from being elected, defeating the purpose of the original objectives. It then established the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC), which oversaw the March 2004 municipal elections. This leads us to the conclusion that, despite numerous attempts at change, the local government system in Nigeria has not significantly improved (Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto & Nkah, 2014). Nigeria's local government has come under fire because it has deviated from its core duty of promoting grassroots development (NISER cited in Olukotun, 2019).

Challenges of Local Government Reforms in Nigeria

This section examines the challenges faced by the Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State and offers explanations for why the reforms have not succeeded in transforming local governments into efficient agents of grassroots governance and development.

Poor Implementation of Local Government Reforms

The failure to implement the recommendations of the numerous committees on local government reform is one reason why local governments in Nigeria are ineffective as facilitators of grassroots governance and development. The majority of the recommendations made by the various committees and adopted by the Nigerian federal government have not been implemented, which has reduced the effectiveness of the local government system there. This is why, despite the reforms panel's identification of the issue in 1976, 1984, 1988, and 2003, it has persisted in the Nigerian local government system. Therefore, in order to gain attention and spend tax payer money, the Nigerian federal government has used the local government reforms as a rhetorical ritual (Mabogunje, 2016; Aransi, 2017).

Negation of Localism in the Nigerian Local Government System

Local government in Nigeria has failed to act as a catalyst for grassroots development over time due to patterns of central-local relations that deny the ideals of

localism. The term "central-state-local relations" as it is used here, however, specifically refers to the power relationships between the three levels of government in Nigeria's federal, state, and local systems. It focuses on the constitutional, political, financial, judicial, and administrative interactions between the various branches of government and local governments.

It is a great disappointment that local governments in Nigeria are not in the best possible position to encourage good governance at the grassroots level. Nigeria's local government system is beset by a wide range of issues. One of the most significant causes of the local government performance crisis is the desire for autonomy (Mabogunje, 2016). The independence of local governments in Nigeria has impeded the development of grassroots organizations (Aransi, 2017). Therefore, it should not be surprising that a number of administrative reforms, such as the local government reforms of 1976, 1984, 1988, 1991, and 2003, aimed to strengthen grassroots governance in response to the need to increase autonomy.

Before being overthrown by a military coup on December 31, 1983, the Alhaji Shehu Shagari civilian administration, for instance, intended to address the troubling encroachment of local government concerns by state governments. In response to this kind of incursion, the military administration under Major General Muhammadu Buhari also implemented a reform in 1984. In a similar way, the Ibrahim Babangida administration gave priority to the need to strengthen local autonomy. According to rumors, former president Babangida pledged to give local governments the freedom needed to operate as a true "third tier" of government (Aghayere, 2008).

Even though these reforms were, at various points, intended to deepen localism in local governance, poor execution, as mentioned above, and a lack of commitment, especially by the various state governments, have a tendency to undermine their effectiveness. As a result, the states in Nigeria still view the local government system as an afterthought.

The Inconsistencies in the Constitutions

Despite the series of reforms, local governments have not been able to effectively serve as agents for grassroots development. One reason for this is the current relationships between local government and other levels of government, especially the state. These are made explicit in the 1999 Constitution. (As modified).

- Each municipality has a council that is chosen through free and fair elections under Section 7 of the Constitution of 1999 (as amended) (1). It's interesting to note that the same subsection requires the State House of Assembly to pass laws governing the structure, makeup, responsibilities, and funding of municipal governments. Despite the fact that local governments are thought of as the third tier level of government, this provision implies that the councils are irrelevant with regard to issues of local government form, establishment, financing, and

control. Municipal governments must be established and managed by the State Legislature.

- The State Houses of Assembly must approve a bill creating an Economic Planning Board in order to encourage local governments to participate in economic activities at the state level as required by Section 7(3) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). The Local Government Council, the body that makes laws for the local government, has no clearly defined role.
- Municipalities in Nigeria receive the majority of their funding from the Federation Account of the federal government. According to Section 162(6) of the 1999 Constitution as amended, all allocations owed to local governments of the state on the Federation Account and from the State Government must be paid into a separate account called the "State Joint Local Government Account." Simply put, the local government chairman is not a signatory to the Account. This implies that local governments in Nigeria are losing some of their power and that the system may have a flaw that is lowering local government's effectiveness. Municipalities never receive their fair share of state funding because of this (Mabogunje, 2016).
- The State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC), which was established by Section 197(1)(b) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), is in charge of local government council elections (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

Apart from the above, other sharp practices have continued to undermine the autonomy of local government. These include:

- i. Local government supervision inside the state is the responsibility of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs. As a result, the Governor has appointed a Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, likely and mostly out of sympathy for his political party, and this individual is now responsible for answering to the Chief Executive elected by the electorate at the grassroots level.
- ii. The state government has agencies like the Local Government Service Commission that are responsible for hiring, training, posting, promoting, and disciplining local government employees.
- iii. The policy of not holding elections for municipal councils. Many state governments have adopted the practise of establishing caretaker or management committees to oversee local councils between official elections. Most members of these committees were loyal to the governors who selected them rather than the people they were tasked with representing, and they often lacked local knowledge or were not even from the area. They were appointed as a reward for their political party's patronage.

Resistance to Local Government Autonomy by State Governments

It is no secret that since the Fourth Republic's inauguration on May 29, 1999, local governments' fortunes have not improved. Instead, the patterns of central-local relations have continued to undermine the notions of localism in the Nigerian local government system. There is a growing consensus that municipal administrations must adhere to state policies and procedures and do not have the power to act independently of the state. The governors of the various states continue to impede the operations of local governments by invoking amendment 7(1) of the constitution. For instance, Mr. Rauf Aregbesola, the former governor of Osun State, substituted the word "Omonluabi," which is not mentioned in the constitution, for the coat of arms of the local governments in Osun State in a hasty and illegal manner. In the constitution, he also changed the title "Executive Chairman" to "Executive Secretary." For eight years, Osun State's Local Government operated effectively and efficiently under his direction. No local elections were held in the State during his eight-year tenure as governor (from 2010 November 18 to this past November 18). And to make matters worse, the Governor does not directly report to the esteemed Local Government Executive Secretaries. Instead, they were under the control of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy (Jannah, 2017).

The story of how state and federal governments have usurped local authority and resisted local principles of governance is one that almost every state in Nigeria can relate to. The attitude that many state governments have toward the issue of local government autonomy in Nigeria is even more worrisome. The majority of the federated states' responses to local government autonomy have been peculiar and problematic, but if the proposed changes are adopted, they will put local governments on the proper pedestal so that they can support grassroots development. Many of the state legislatures that make up the federal federation have yet to approve the legislation that would grant Nigerian municipalities some degree of independence. As of December 2018, only ten of the nation's 36 states had endorsed local government autonomy. Since that time, each of Nigeria's 36 states has been in charge of overseeing the local governments of the nation.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Local Governments in Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution (as amended), Section 7(2) I, states that Local Governments are responsible for defending the public interest within their respective jurisdictions. Municipal governments must start neighborhood projects that will improve the lives of their constituents in order to accomplish this goal. This is confirmed in Section 7 of the same constitution (3). The state requires local government councils to participate in regional economic planning and development. The Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution specifies in great detail the duties of Local Government Councils. All of these responsibilities are intended to strengthen Nigeria's local governments so they can more effectively act as a catalyst for change at the grassroots level.

However, as was previously mentioned in this study, the narratives on the Nigerian local government system show that it has been one of constant improvement with few outcomes. Many reasons have been put forth for this, including a lack of funding, a lack of local government autonomy, and a failure to carry out reform recommendations from higher governmental levels. Given the foregoing, it is determined that the Nigerian local government system needs reforms in order to address contributing factors such as constitutional inconsistencies, poor reform implementation, citizen alienation from local governance, and interference by State Governments in the affairs of Local Government Councils. The reorganization of the Local Government system must therefore be seriously supervised by the Federal Government of Nigeria. This should entail taking steps to increase the autonomy of local governments in Nigeria. As part of these efforts to lessen the paternalistic control of local governments by state governments, the Babangida administration established a procedure whereby local governments received their monthly statutory allotment directly from the Federation Account.

It is also necessary to abolish the Joint State Local Government Account, which has been used by various state governments to deny local governments funding necessary for development. To do this, Section 162(6) of the 1999 Constitution must be changed. As a result, the financial independence of local governments will be strengthened. Similar to this, the Local Government Service Commission and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs of the State should be abolished because they are not necessary for municipal governance. Moreover, with the assistance of the populace at large, the local government system in Nigeria might be made more effective. As a result, it is crucial to promote democracy at the local level by electing representatives to local government positions. This will stop caretaker or management boards from running city governments.

In this section of the study, measures that can make local governments in Nigeria effective and efficient agents of grassroots governance and development were covered. The political will of Nigeria's political leaders to carry out the necessary reforms at the local level, however, is what will determine whether these steps to increase the effectiveness of the local government system in Nigeria are successful. Nigeria's political leadership must be committed to promoting good governance and local development if the nation's local government system is to be improved.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The previous sections looked at how the power dynamics between local government and other levels of government in Nigeria, and specifically the Ikpoba Okha LGA of Edo State, have made it difficult for local government to promote grassroots development. The evidence presented above indicates that Nigerian local government has not historically adhered to localism's principles. Since 1979, local government council elections have been forbidden in a number of states. Party loyalists who are unfamiliar

with the region are usually appointed to oversee local government operations in the majority of the states that make up the Federal Republic of Germany. As a result, there is a gulf between the general public and city officials. They owe the governor who appointed them more than the people they are supposed to be serving. This goes against the principles of localism.

The research on local government reforms all agrees that the master-servant relationships between various levels of government that support central-local hierarchical ties have steadily eroded local government autonomy. The state government's tyrannical behavior is paralyzing local governance (Alao, Osadeke & Owolabi, 2015). Under Babangida, efforts were made to loosen the state's tight control over the provinces and municipalities. Due to several competing initiatives, the anticipated successes didn't materialize. Prior to the dissolution of the Local Government Service Commission and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, the government's allocations were traditionally distributed right away to the local governments. After civilian rule was restored in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria, which was established in 1999, one might have anticipated that the local government structure in that nation would get better. Ironically, given the nature of the era in which they were developed, the majority of efforts made during the military era, and particularly under the military rule of General Babangida, to strengthen local government autonomy have been mocked and abandoned. As a result, local administrations have continued to exist as an arm of the state governments in almost all federal states.

Despite a poor reputation over the years, Nigeria's local government system is still crucial to the social, economic, and political development of the nation. The final reform reports from 1976, 1984, 1988, and 2003 all mentioned this. The federal and state governments should create an environment that allows each single-tier of government in Nigeria, especially the local government, to perform its duties effectively if local governments are to serve as the agents of grassroots development in Nigeria. Only when given the freedom to do so can local governments effectively carry out their duties. Additionally, the environment must guarantee that state governments uphold their constitutional obligations, that there is morally upright leadership, that there is adequate funding, that local government reforms are successfully implemented, that the Nigerian leadership is reoriented, and that the public sector is supported by goodwill (Aransi, 2014; Gboyega; 1987; and Mabogunje, 2016).

If local governments are to be given the autonomy they require to spearhead grassroots governance and development, the power relationships between local government and the other levels of government in Nigeria must be reevaluated.

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