

THE AUTONOMY QUESTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL NIGERIA

Philips O. Okolo, PhD

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Sciences.
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.
Philips.okolo@ndu.edu.ng

&

Koffi Romeo Lawyer-Keme

Department Of Political Science, Faculty of Sciences.
Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama, Bayelsa State.

Abstract

This paper examines the nexus between the autonomy question of local government and socio-economic development in rural Nigeria. It adopted the sustainable development theory, and relied on qualitative data, with extensive utilization of journal articles, monographs, magazines, and relevant web pages. The analysis were purely descriptive and content based (i.e content analysis), wherein inferences were drawn. The paper unraveled that despite the imperativeness of local government autonomy to rural socioeconomic development, there has been persistence issues of excessively interference (politically and economically) by both state and federal government. In this regard, emphases were thus placed on, among other things, instilling in the minds of the populace a favorable attitude toward accepting as well as adhering to local government autonomy and discouraging practices that will favour excessive usurpation of powers of local government by state governments in the country. The paper suggested among others that full (political and economic) autonomy should be granted to local governments, and therefore the federal government of Nigeria should urgently approve the revised federal constitution for Down up financial relationship.

Keywords: Autonomy, local government, socio-economic development, sustainable development

Introduction

All over the world, local governments are established to provide essential services to the population in a given local government area, which can be divided into socio-economic services and political services. These services include, but are not limited to, roads, markets, education, health care, street and street lighting maintenance, collection of rates, rent, birth registration, death, voting and other state functions that local governments cooperate with the state and the national government in order to accomplish their objective of creation. Since independence in 1960 and the local government reform of 1976, political exigencies have underpinned the establishment of local governments.

However, the local governments have failed to meet the needs of the people of Nigeria and in particular the needs of the rural / local people who directly require the services of local government. According to the collection of developmental indicators from the World Bank (2015) cited in Okolo and Kasikoro (2021), the local population in Nigeria makes up 52.22% of the total population. Poverty is affecting the rural population in Nigeria. 80% of rural dwellers are living in extreme poverty with limited infrastructure and social facilities (International Food and Agricultural Development IFAD in Abdul, 2012; Okolo & Kasikoro, 2021; Okolo & Karimo, 2019).

As significant as this tier of government has been, its autonomy has been a huge impediment which infringes on its performance as well as function ability in current times. This impediment is hinged on political but undue interference of the higher levels of government such as federal and state governments, coupled with the issue of corruption to embezzlement as well as gross inadequacy of well trained and qualified personnel to bring about the much-desired socio-economic development of rural areas. A local government is simply a semi-autonomous territorial unit created by the constitution or general laws of a state to undertake certain functions within specified or limited geographical location.

To Okoye (2021), a local government is a political and administrative unit which is empowered by law to administer a specified locality. It involves a philosophical commitment to the idea of community participation and involvement in government at grassroots level which in turn will engender the needed socioeconomic development of rural areas.

In Nigeria, local government is created to bring government closer to the people. The conceptualization of local government by the Nigerian Federal Government leaves one with no iota of doubt that it is largely both theoretically sound and service oriented to the people. It speaks of representative councils with substantial control over local affairs for the provision of services and implementation of projects in their areas, to complement the activities of both the state and federal governments in ensuring socio-economic development of rural areas in Nigeria. This conceptualization amply recognizes the desire for local government autonomy as the substantial control of local government is aimed at staff, institutional as well as financial matters, among others in the socioeconomic development of the rural areas. The desire to catalyze balanced development, maximize citizens' participation, as well as the arousal of government response necessitates the agitation for local government autonomy. The local government serves as a type of political and administrative structure with a view to facilitating decentralization, national integration, efficiency in governance, and a sense of belongingness at the grassroots level. The local government is a unit of administration globally (Okoye, 2021).

Local government autonomy is viewed as the root of socio-economic development in terms of dealing with the people which democracy is hinged on. Hence, local government autonomy is visibly viewed as catalyst for socioeconomic development of rural areas in Nigeria. To this end, this paper seeks to examine local government autonomy and socio-economic development of rural areas in Nigeria. knowing the roles, the government needs to play in the development of any society as well as the clear inability of the national and state governments in the task of meeting the needs of the rural areas, local government autonomy is seen essentially to complement the efforts of the states and national government in the task of socio-economic development of rural areas through rural development programmes.

It is quite obvious that the rural areas in Nigeria lack good health care facilities, standard primary school system, pipe-borne water, lack of roads; the market are collapsing, there is upsurge rural to urban migration because rural areas in Nigeria lack basic social amenities to attract rural dwellers to stay in villages. Thus, life sustenance became extremely problematic, particularly in the rural localities (see Okolo & Boubai, 2022; Otuya et al, 2019) due to lack of local government, autonomy which would have enhanced the socio-economic status of the rural people in rural areas in Nigeria (Okoye, 2021). In view of this backdrop, this paper stands expedient to examine the nexus between the autonomy question of local government and socio-economic development in rural Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Giving the complexity, ambiguity and plethoric nature of concepts, particularly in the less scientific sphere, it is paramount to define and properly clarify on the use of concepts, thus, the major concepts are addressed herein.

Local Government

The term local government is difficult to obtain a generally accepted definition. It may be called the primary government established by law, having jurisdiction over its operation and recognised by the constitution. As stated by the United Nations Office of Public Administration-UNOPA (1976) cited by Okolo and Simerah (2017), a local government is a politically subdivided unit of a given country (within a federal governance system) consisting of laws that substantially control local affairs, including powers that are the constitutionally mandated purposes of taxation.

Similarly, local government can be seen as decentralisation, devolution, de-concentration (Ibodje, 2007). In his view, Stanyer (1976) cited in Ibodje (2007) argued that it is not easy to define it in exact verbal terms. Raji, et al. (2017) noted that local government is so much a product of a particular local environment that there are almost as many different kinds of institutions as there are different countries or nations. Osakede and Ojo (2004) cited in Okolo and Osimerah (2017) argue that people see the concept of local government from different angles due to differences in different governments and lower levels of leadership.

As an element of decentralisation, local government is a consequence of decentralisation. As noted in the literature by Olowu (1988), there are two advantages in the definition of local government. In terms of comparative studies, all these state agencies are considered as central government under the government at the central level. Secondly, the special features and details of the local government are determined in a more cautious manner. These salient features are concentrated in the following five areas: (1) legal personality, (2) locality, (3) effective citizen participation, (4) broad budgetary and employment self-sufficiency in terms of limited central authority control, and (5) performing peculiar functions with unique ascribed powers (special powers to perform various functions).

These characteristics highlighted are important in distinguishing it from various institutional forms at the local level and also ensure that organisational effectiveness remains rapid. Akani (2017) coined local government from the point of view of legitimacy as a broad classification in which local government can participate in the formation of a non-sovereign protective community that includes the legal rights and necessary institutions to express its internal significance.

Abdul (2012) articulates local government from a legitimacy perspective, as broadly classified, in which local government can participate in forming a non-sovereign protective community as well as incorporates rights in terms of legality and necessary institutions to express its internally concerned associations. In these statutes it is assumed that local level authorities generally have the right to carry out tasks without external involvement and control, and that local communities participate in the management of their own affairs

Obi (2010) defined local government as the subdivision of the whole government of a country or state, considered as local government, governed and managed by a system subordinate to, but controlled independently of, state power, by competent locals, or Own property in specific areas that are constructed through the community's shared interests and shared history. Obviously, both Obi's and Abdul's arguments

make it clear that the local government was not completely freed from central government control. This shows that the local government exchange and services have separate responsibilities, so the powers and powers of the local government holders are similar.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that this division of responsibilities is based on political interests and political agendas. Ohwona (2019) divide it as follows. (1) Requests and progress to improve the local government system under democratic support. (2) local government directs national and regional development. (3) Equitable distribution of financial resources between central, provincial and local authorities. (4) Equitable distribution of labor between the central administration and local administrations. (5) The balance between exchange and local government is efficient. (6) Information sharing and dissemination at all levels is accurate and consistent, and consultations are accurate and complete. (7) the expansion of democracy in all aspects of government, such as the full expectation of all citizens, regardless of gender or race, at the executive and governmental levels; (8) Social and political harmony. (9) Clarifying intergovernmental issues and the ability of central governments to pressure local governments to change laws. (10) The basic principles of governance are trust and justice and (11) the ability to innovate.

In designing a sound democratic political system, local government should be considered a cornerstone, as it acts at a certain level as the heart vehicle to ensure capable and responsible citizens. Abdul (2012) definition comes fairly close to the actual characteristics of local government, distinguishing three distinct attributes: local elections or choices; and a degree of autonomy, Ibodje (2007) defined local government as a democratic administrative unit of a region within a unitary democracy of a country, endowed with defined and controlled governmental powers and revenue streams for the provision and development, control and regulation of specific local services. It is therefore an area defined geographically, socially and economically by its surroundings or environment. The shortcoming of Ibodje's definition is that democracy is essential to establishing local government, but local government can win without a democratic form of government. To support our point, consider the example of a government brought to power by a coup; such a government is less democratic and more oppressive. Therefore, it can be concluded that local governments may also be undemocratic, which can be called undemocratic local governments.

The definition proposed by Ibodje (2007), despite its obvious weaknesses, captures the essence of local government, which is closely related to many of the characteristics that Marshall recognised. At its core, local government is a government agency that exercises power in a restrictive manner, defining power within specific geographic boundaries and statutory jurisdictions. The main attribute of local government is the power to approve legislation in terms of specific control, so autonomy is enjoyed in moderation. These attributes of local government are crucial considerations when local government is restructured, as it ensures that the fundamentals of local government are not overlooked.

Ovaga (2012) defines local government as that peculiar level of government which is said to be the closest to the people, saddled with specific powers to which shall control all the activities and affairs of the rural populace within its own sphere of influence. Therefore, local government councils should play the role of promoting social ideals as well as coordinating development plans at the local level. It is also expected to provide the basis for local socio-economic development. As the name suggests, local government is a government established for the sole purpose of directly administering the local people/populace.

Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic generally refers to the economic life and behaviour of the people in a particular society. Socio-economic can be measured by what the people do for a living. What people do about work, income, social life, religion, political, economic and wealth creation, Socio-economic determines how people relate to others. The socio-economic life determined how the people related to good health, good education, and good roads (Abdul, 2012). The socio-economic generally refers to what improves the life of the citizen living within a defined area.

Eseduwo (2010) noted that socio-economic issues are confronting issues that the living behaviour of the people in the manner that relate to economic activity as unemployment, poverty, lack of education, e.t.c. Socio-economic is not only concerned with the income an individual has to better his living standard, but also a high level of employment, infrastructure, stressing values rather than achievement. The socio-economic development process comprising provision in relation to needs of infrastructures by the rural populace for the welfare of the people, particularly, the peasants, which if not addressed properly will result to development crisis (Okolo & Rufus, 2019). In this regard, socio-economic is used in this paper to mean the infrastructural need of the people which include; roads, water supply, hospitals, bridges, houses, employment creation and active participation in policymaking.

On the other hand, Development means a dramatic change in the lives of people living in a particular area. This includes economic as well as social changes in the population. Development is an all-round process that not only accelerates economic growth, reduces inequality and eradicates extreme poverty, but also involves issues of majorly causing changes to public attitudes, social arrangement as well as institutions of governance.

In principle, development should reflect all changes in the knowledge society system, what the people want and their aspirations as well as socially formed groups in this system, from generally unsatisfactory living conditions to living conditions or conditions perceived to be materially and spiritually better (Imhanlahini & Ikeanyibe, 2009). This entails that development is not just to erect a magnificent building or skyscrapers or building markets in the bush for a political expedition.

Moreover, development is the process of economic, social, political and cultural change devised within a particular population by all stakeholders, both internal and external (community, government, private sector, civil society, etc.) in a sustainable way (Abdul, 2012). Development, therefore, requires vision or a measure of the state of being of desirable condition; an understanding of the dynamics of the process of transformation in a historical perspective and making conscious and deliberate efforts aimed at improvement by all stakeholders. Abdul (2012) posited that development involves actions, reactions and interactions which are products of rational thinking, conscious planning and genuine citizens participation.

In aggregation, socio-economic development is a concept that underlies all changes in the socioeconomic field. Its importance is demonstrated by Stemlovsky (1987, P. 5) cited in Okoye (2021) who emphasises that "the concept of development is that which emanates from what is considered as a vision that is optimistic, an expression of concerns of social life and an analytical tool". Other concepts of development can be found in social and economic development studies. Instead of discussing them, it is better to focus on constructing the concept of socio-economic development from the area of provision socio-economic services.

Theoretical Underpin and Methodology

Sustainable development theory is adopted as the theoretical framework for this research. As a theory, sustainable development was popularized in 1987 by the Brunt land Commission of United Nations in its report tagged “Our Common Future”. According to United Nations (1987) sustainable development implies that development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs”. The theory is centered on sustainability of resources for today and tomorrow use, and considers the environment as the principal issue to protect in the process of utilizing the resources.

This prompts Wilson (2011) to state that sustainable development has become a key issue in socio-economic development and environmental resources management of the society. Sustainability no doubt is the goal of the mankind to ensure that there is a balance between resource consumption and continuity in the ecosystem (Shaker, 2015).

The choice of sustainable development theory is to address the needed rural development that will improve the social and economic condition of living of the rural people and their environment for today and tomorrow, which can be obtainable through the operation of autonomous local government system in Nigeria. The rural areas are characterize with poverty and development challenges arising from perceive neglect and deprivation of the powers of local government to function effectively, hence, local government autonomy is discussed as strategy to strengthen the local government for better and effective functioning for effective rural sustainable development in Nigeria.

This implies the use of local government to improve the socio-economic life of the rural people without compromising the future of the rural people. The study argues that sustainable rural socioeconomic development is achievable through the application of political, financial, and administrative autonomy of the 774 local governments in Nigeria.

Methodologically, the paper adopted the qualitative research method, with extensive utilization of archives, texts, journal articles, monographs, magazines, and relevant web pages. The analysis were purely descriptive and content based (i.e content analysis), wherein inferences were drawn (Eneanya, 2012; Okolo & Boubai, 2021; Boubai, 2021).

The Issue of Local Government Autonomy in Nigeria

The quest for local government autonomy in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era, when during the intensive demand for the development of the rural people, and subsequent desire of the colonial master to strengthen federalism leading to creation of the regional governments with powers and authority to develop the rural areas. Ever since, the local government system has received several reforms aimed at supporting the functions and powers of the local governments in Nigeria (Wilson, 2013).

Among other reforms, the 1976 reforms clearly and formally identified the local governments as the third tier of government in Nigeria, and today Nigeria has 774 local governments with the main objective of bringing government closer the people and developing the rural areas and people therein. In his view, Okoli (2009) stated that the development of local government autonomy in Nigerian local government system started in 1984, when Dansuki report was adopted to address issues of freedom in the finances and administrative functions of the local governments.

Nwachuku (2000) sees local government autonomy as the degree of freedom, authority and powers or command which a local authority can exercise in the management of its own affairs without interference of the state or federal government. The above explains local government autonomy from the perspective

of degree of freedom of local government in making and implementing policy decisions concerning its affairs. The local government desire freedom in the management of its programmes and projects without recourse to other tiers of government.

Agunyai, Ebirim & Odeyemi (2013) opined that local government autonomy connotes the power of freedom to the local government to exercise its authority within the confine of the law or constitution. The scholars further argued that autonomy of the local government is subject to the provisions of the law or constitution. However, the scholars could not explain which law or constitution should the local government derive its powers. Is it the law or constitution of the state government or federal republic of Nigeria. This gap leaves both scholars and practitioners of local government administration with unclear operational direction on local government autonomy in Nigeria.

Uketor (2009) states that local government autonomy implies the degree of power accorded the third tier of government with regard to legal, administrative and financial independence within the limit of the constitution. The autonomy becomes imperative in such areas as legal, administrative and financial operations if the local governments in Nigeria must function. On the contrary, Akpan & Ekanem (2013) argues that the law or constitution where the local government ought derive its autonomy is practically strangulating the local government and depriving its autonomy.

However, several attempts by the National Assembly to amend the relevant sections of the 1999 to enhance local government autonomy have met brick wall. In his view, Ogunna (2014:45) identified local government autonomy from two perspectives namely, “the resources available to local government as a determinant of its autonomy; and ability to have control over these resources in terms of legal, political and administrative powers to harness and apply the said resources”. The capacity of available resources at the disposal of the local government and its ability to control same for the socio-economic development of the rural areas determine its autonomy.

On that vein, Ebiziem & Obi (2015) corroborated with the above view, as they see financial autonomy as the basis for local government autonomy in Nigeria. The scholars further noted that as attempt to achieve financial autonomy for local government, the federal government increased the financial allocations to local government from 10% in 1986 to 15% in 1992 and 20.60% in 2008 till date. This argument is inadequate as it could not acknowledge relevance of other sectors such as the administrative, political and legal autonomy in development of the rural areas.

In another perspective, Akpan & Ekanem (2013) opined that various reforms carried out in local government were aimed at granting the local governments its needed autonomy in Nigeria for effective functioning, as observed in the 1976 reforms, the provisions 1979, 1989 and 1999 constitutions. However, Akindele, Olaopa & Obi (2002), Ammani (2012), and Jamo (2018) argued that the various reforms and provisions of the constitutions were inadequate to achieve effective local government in Nigeria, as the Local Government still suffers unnecessary interference from other tiers of the government, thereby creating administrative, political and financial setback for the local governments.

Awofeso (2004) supported the above view and opined that despite the efforts made by previous administrations, the local governments still remain non-autonomous in practical terms. President Buhari Mohammed in Jamo (2018) attribute the failure of local government in development of the rural areas to nonoperational autonomy of the local government, thereby giving opportunity for unwarranted state government interference on local government affairs, leading to poor performance of the local

government in rural development in Nigeria. Then, local government autonomy is needed for effective rural development in Nigeria.

The Autonomy Question of Local Government and Socio-Economic Development in Rural Nigeria

It is factual that local government is all over the world conceptualised as a body that is concerned with developing rural areas. Akwara and Idu (2013), contends that as agent of rural development, local governments are to utilize funds made available to them by both federal and state governments as well as their internally generated revenue to improve on the lives of the people within their areas of operation through initiation and attracting developmental projects to the local governments such as provision of access roads, water and rural electricity. Apart from being a viable political and administrative organ for the socio-economic development, local governments also act as the training ground for the breeding of grassroots democracy fundamental in national development (Oladunjoye, 2010).

To effectively perform these varying tasks, according to Olabisi (2013), there is need for local government autonomy to allow the local government specific powers to perform array of functions, plan, formulate as well as execute its own policies, programmes and projects, and its own rules and regulations as expected for its local needs. This autonomy encompasses power to control its finance, recruit and discipline its staff. It is predicated on the fact that when local government has power to take decision on its own as regarding its finance and policies, rural areas will have the assurances of socioeconomic development. This is accentuated by the fact that local government is closer to the people and when local government councils have the powers of their own without any overbearing influence from the state, they could implement decisions policies which will enhance the socioeconomic development of rural areas in the country without having to wait for the state which in most cases focus mainly on the state development and neglecting the rural areas.

In Nigeria, there obvious cases by observation that the money meant for socioeconomic development of rural areas have been diverted as well as mismanaged by the state governors. He concluded that local government autonomy will make local government councils to have direct access to their finances with which to implement policies and decisions which will promote grassroots socioeconomic development.

Ehiri (2010) argues that inadequacy in the provision of social services such as education, healthcare services, etc. is a product of failure to grant autonomy to local government. He added that local governments have constitutional responsibility for providing essential services within the sphere of jurisdiction but lacks the financial autonomy to do so. This is in line with Imhanlahimi (2008), who contends that local government are legally empowered to exercise authority within the confines of the law or constitution. This is to enable them discharge legally or constitutionally assigned responsibilities, satisfactorily, but without undue interference or restraint from within or higher authority.

Samihah (2011), on his part states that the responsibility of providing basic essential services and bringing about socioeconomic development has been delegated to local governments as the third tier of government. He went head that the types of social services which a local government may require to provide include housing water, adult and vocational education, rural electricity, feeder roads, and transport primary health facilities and other social services. As a consequence, local governments have to effectively identify and target essential infrastructures as well as social services at any given point in time, neediest areas, have systems in place to track expenditure on projects and be able to determine if the allocation of resources has an impact. The most immediate need thus is to grant local government autonomy so that they may be empowered in graining an understanding of where the priority areas are

and what the local governments are planning to do. It will also give citizens an opportunity to hold local governments accountable for the delivery of social services.

Awofeso (2004), contends that local government as the closest government to the people is not totally autonomous. Its autonomy in relation to other tiers of government has been quite complex and sometimes controversial. He argued that the 774 local government areas in the country are contributing nothing to national development especially the area of social services. Nigerian local government system has changed from being an organ of bringing government and dividends of democracy closer to the people to an organ for compensating political acolytes of the ruling parties in the states. This has created serious problem and has continually hindered the socio-economic development of rural areas in the country through their autonomy.

Collaborating the facts above, Branchati (2005), asserts that local government globally are considered as strategic institutions for the provision of basic socio-economic, environment and other services. Their strategic advantage of proximity to the grassroots makes them valuable as well as viable for providing effective and efficient services required by the community. They can and should be engines of growth as well as propellers of socioeconomic development in rural areas in Nigeria.

Concluding Remarks and Policy Suggestions

This paper has examined the autonomy question of local government autonomy and socioeconomic development of rural areas in Nigeria. It was unraveled that in order to quickly and effectively move towards local government autonomy in Nigeria, a multi-pronged strategy requiring a number of factors must be used. To this end, emphasis should be placed on, among other things, instilling in the minds of the populace a favorable attitude toward accepting as well as adhering to local government autonomy and discouraging practices that will favor excessive usurpation of powers of local government by state governments in the nation, particularly those that are antagonistic to democratic principles, such as the use of undemocratic leaders or party loyal to government. The paper came to the conclusion that the autonomy of local government is crucial to the socioeconomic development of rural Nigeria. This suggests that the level of autonomy local governments enjoy influences the socioeconomic development of rural areas in terms of providing basic necessities of life and social services, and as a result, should be given priority by the higher tiers of government to improve the socioeconomic wellbeing of the rural populace through service delivery. The paper therefore suggested that:

- a. Full (political and economic) autonomy should be granted to local governments, and in order to do this, the federal government of Nigeria should urgently approve the revised federal constitution.
- b. Annual audited accounts for local governments in Nigeria should be required and presented to a joint committee made up of chosen citizens from each local government area.
- c. To promote rural employment in agriculture and wealth creation, the federal government of Nigeria should give the local government system more authority.
- d. To give local governments direct access to their share of the federal allocation, the Joint States/Local Governments Allocation System should be swiftly repealed.
- e. To prevent misappropriations, the federal government should establish a confidential committee to look into how the states of the federation have used local government funds over the past ten years.

References

- Abdul, H. A. (2012). Overview of Internal Revenue Generation of Selected Local Government. *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research*. Vol. 4 (23), 312 -341.
- Agunyai, S. C., Ebirim, S. I. & Odeyemi, T. I. (2013) Local government autonomy: A Veritable Tool for redressing Usurpation of Power of Local Governments by the State Governments in Nigeria. *PublicPolicy and Administration Research*, 3(10) 32 – 40.
- Akani, E. C. (2017). Local Government Administration and Grassroots Development in Nigeria: A Theoretical Appraisal. *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research*. Vol. 3 (2), 132 – 167.
- Akindele, S. T., Olaopa, O.R. & Obaiyan, S.A. (2002). Fiscal Federalism and Local Government Finance in Nigeria : An Examination of Revenue Rights and Fiscal Jurisdiction. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 68 (4) 557- 577.
- Akpan, F. & Ekanem, O. (2013). The Politics of Local Government Autonomy in Nigeria. Reloaded. *European Scientific Journal*, 9 (35) 193 – 205.
- Akpomuvie, O. (2010). Self-help as a Strategy for Rural Development in Nigeria; A Bottom- up Approach. *Journal Alternative Perspective in the Social Science*, Vol. 8 (2), 88-111.
- Ammani, A. (2012) Local Government in Nigerian Federalism. www.gamji.com/article. Retrieved on 29th September, 2018.
- Awofeso, O. (2004) *Issues in Local Government Administration in Nigeria*. Lagos:Lisjohnson Resources Publishers
- Branchati, D. (2005). *Decentralization: Fuelling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethic Conflict and Secessionism*. Harvard University Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Ebiziem, J. E. & Obi, U. F. (2015) An Appraisal of the Autonomy of Local Government as Precondition for National Development. *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research* 1(8) 11 – 21
- Eboh, E. & Diejomaoh, I. (2010). Local Governments in Nigeria: Relevance and Effectiveness in Poverty Reduction and Economic Development. *Journal of Economic and Sustainable Development*, Vol.1, (1), 12-28.
- Ehiri, T. G. (2010). *Comparative Issues in Local Government Administration*. Ibadan: Baaj International Company.
- Eneanya, A. (2012). *Research Methods in Political Science and Public Administration*. Lagos, Lagos University Press.
- Eseduwo, F. S. (2010). *State Local Government Relations and Rural Development in Nigeria (a study of Bayelsa State Government from 2007-2009)*. Nsukka; University of Nigeria Press Ltd.
- Ibodje, S. W. E. (2007). *Comparative Local Government*. Port Harcourt; Kemuela Publications.
- Imhanlahimi, J. E., & Ikeanyibe, M. O. (2009). Local Government Autonomy and Development of Localities in Nigeria: Issues, Problems and Suggestions. *Global Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 8 (2) 13 - 30.
- Jamo, I. A. (2018) Local Government Autonomy in Nigeria. www.dailytrust.com.ng. Retrieved on 2nd October, 2018.
- Nwachuku, G. E. (2000) *Theory and Practice of Local Government in Nigeria*. Umuahia: Ark Publishers .
- Obi, E. A. (2010). *Comparative Local Government: An EcologicalApproach*. Onitsha: Bookpoint Educational Ltd.
- Ogunna, A. E. C. (1996) *A Handbook of Local Government in Nigeria*. Owerri:Versatile Publishers Ltd.
- Ohwona, A. I. (2019). *Class Note on Advance Issues in Local Government Studies* (Pol 922 Lecture Note, 16 March, 2019). Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island.
- Okoli, F.C. (2009) *Theory and Practice of Local Government : Nigerian Perspective*. Ogui: Bismark Publication.
- Okolo, P. O. & Boubai, J. J. (2021). Local Government Autonomy and Rural Development in Nigeria: The Myth and Reality. *Proceedings of Public Administration Theories and Practice Forum of Nigeria. Annual Conference, NOUN Headquarters, Abuja 20th – 22nd Oct. 2021.*

- Okolo, P. O. & Ejime, P. Agidi, T. (2018). Governance Failure and Terrorism in Nigeria. *EBSU Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, Vol. 8, NO. 1. April, 2018. Pp. 65-78.
- Okolo, P. O. & Kasikoro, Z. (2022). Poverty and Governance: Assessing the Role of the State in Alleviating Poverty in Nigeria. *Journal of Political and Administrative Studies (JPAS)*, Department of Political and Administrative Studies University of Port-Harcourt Vol. 4, No. 1, Special Edition, 2022
- Okolo, P. O., & Osimerah. C. A. (2017). Politics of Local Government Creation: Implications for National Development in Nigeria. In *South East Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 3 (1). www.npsa-se.org.ng.
- Okolo, P. O. & Rufus, A. (2019). Development Crisis and Peasant's Survival Mechanism in the Niger Delta: The Effects of Illegal Oil Bunkering. *African Conflict Profile: Journal of Center for Conflict and Gender Studies (CCGS)*, University of Port-Harcourt, Vol. 3, No. 2, Nov. 2019, Pp. 19 – 30.
- Okoye, M. C. (2021). Local Government Autonomy and Rural Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Accounting, Finance*
- Olabisi, A. O. (2013). *Local Government Administration in Nigeria: The Problems of authority and Control* V. A. O. Oron Saye (ed), Nigeria Government and Politics, Benin City, Peterson, Publishers, Pp. 145-155.
- Otuya, S. & Okolo, P. O. (2019). Leadership and Accountability in Nigerian Universities: A Critical Factor for the Nation's Sustainable Development. *British International Journal of Education and Social Sciences*. Vol. 6, No. 11; Pp. 21 – 27. November.
- Osakede, K. O., & Ojo, I. S. (2004). Local government autonomy and Democratic Governance: A Comparative analysis of Nigeria and United State. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, Vol. 6 (1), 166 – 185
- Ovaga, H. O. (2012). An Assessment of the Factors Militating against Effective Local Government System in Nigeria. *Journal of Liberal Studies*, Vol. 15 (1), 4-12.
- Raji, A., Yinnusa, M. A., Danjuma. M. M., Abdul-Rasheed, S. L., & Adeyemi, A. (2017). Rural Areas: The Real Home of The Nigerian Economy. *International Journal of Social Science & Educational Studies*, Vol. 4 (2), 2520-0968.
- Samihah, K. C. (2011). *"Fiscal Federalism and the performance of Local Government in Nigeria's Economic*
- Shaker, R. R. (2015) The Spatial Distribution of Development in Europe and its Underlying Sustainability Correlations. *Applied Geography*. 63. 304 – 314.
- Ukerto, G .M. (2009) *The Principles and Practice of Federalism and Local Government Autonomy in Nigeria: Reality or Mirage ?* Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers.
- United Nations (1987) *Report of the Bruntland Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. Oslo, Norway: United Nations General Assembly.
- Wilson, G. (2013) The Politics of Local Government Reforms and Democratic Governance in Nigerian Local Governments. *Developing Country Studies*. 3(1) 136-143.