

Good Governance and Rural Development in Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria: A Study of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, 2010-2020

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DOI: 10.56201/jpaswr.v7.no1.2022.pg35.49

Abstract

The study examined good governance and rural development in Obio/Akpor local government council, Rivers State, Nigeria, 2010-2020. Local government is the third tier of government saddled with the responsibilities of primary basic amenities and governance at the grassroots. However, the statutory responsibilities vested in the local government have been abandoned and abused, and rural dwellers have suffered a lack of social amenities because of the lack of good governance of elected officials and political patrons at the grassroots. The study adopted the human needs theory as its theoretical construction. The study relied on the triangulation methods of data-gathering techniques. The primary data was sourced through questionnaires and interview while the secondary data was sourced through interests, journals, books and newspapers. A total of four hundred questionnaires were distributed among the respondents both males and females. Three hundred and fifty-eight (358) were retrieved which indicates eighty-seven per cent (87) validity of the study. The study unravelled in shortage of social amenities, and corruption, among others. The study recommended among others that institutions are strengthened and mechanisms to enhance accountability and curtail corruption in the local government areas.

Keywords: *accountability, development, governance, government, grassroots, rural*

Introduction

No democratic form of government can become dynamic, acceptable and sustainable if the system of governance at the grassroots level is not people-oriented, friendly, participatory and accountable (Adedeji, 1999). Sachs (2005) postulated that the stability of a fledging government depends to a large extent on the ability of the governing elites to eradicate poverty. Government cannot thrive in an impoverished country where people live below 5 Cent per day, and where stresses of diseases, famine and climate shock are pervasive.

The origin of local government in Nigeria dates back to the very beginning of colonial administration with the introduction of indirect rule, which marked the genesis of self-rule and shared rule. Since then, several adjustments have been made based on several theories of local government without success. The current efforts appear to be blindly directed towards bringing the poverty level to the barest minimum level, with the result that there are so many local

governments that are not making any impact on the socio-economic and political lives of their people. A visit to any rural settlement in Nigeria, which constitutes about 73-75% of the nation's population revealed dirt and impassable roads, women and children walking barefooted and trekking long distances to get water and firewood, pupils studying under trees, dilapidated and ill-equipped health centres and scores of poverty driven problems (Aderonmu, 2007). The rural dwellers suffer on many fronts and are powerless to improve their situation because of ill health, poor education and lack of access to many opportunities available to them. They are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and economic upheavals as well as to crime and violence. Rural dwellers have often been deprived of basic rights that urban dwellers take for granted.

Although successive governments in Nigeria since independence to date have attempted several times to eradicate poverty in the country through various programmes, the assessment of their contributions to poverty reduction is scanty compared to the huge amount of resources committed to the programmes (Egware, 2009), because local government officials are not always accountable and lack good governance. The situation where local governments merely collect budgetary allocations and taxes and rates without any form of change in the lives of the people and their environments is not good enough, and it is also unethical, undemocratic and anti-governance. The local government must begin to affect the lives of rural communities more positively by reducing poverty than ever before as such; positive changes in the lives of the rural communities will cumulatively result in the growth and development of the national economy. Anybody that has experienced poverty, especially in rural Nigeria will agree that poverty is a very dangerous human situation that can influence and alter the psychic and intellectual constitution of the person, especially where it has become abject as we noticed in most of our local government areas. Ahmed (2007) revealed that poverty in rural areas has become a common phenomenon that is almost becoming an accepted factor of life because the elected officials and rulers lack accountability, vision and mission of governance. Nigeria's poverty situation, be it at the state and local governments, however, presents itself as a paradox in the sense that the country is richly endowed in both human and material resources yet its people remain among the poorest people on the earth planet.

Although the local governments are most endowed with resources with an ever-expanding budget yearly in Nigeria, yet corrupt elite that remains a three-way relationship hold on political power has reduced its citizens to destitution. Consequently, rural Nigerians who ordinarily resent any form of slavery are only too eager now to go into slavery in Western, Asian countries for survival. Poverty is so deeply etched on their faces and in their psychology that it can be truly regarded as the major underlying factor for the moral improbity that other people so readily point to in Nigerian rural dwellers. In its full manifestations, albeit in material, moral, intellectual and psychological spheres, rural poverty has created political thugs, professional prostitutes, constant migrations and sycophancy, and Boko Haram membership, among others that make the running of government very difficult in Nigeria.

The diagnostic survey conducted in 2001 into the Federal Government public procurement revealed that "Nigeria lost several hundred billion of Nigeria last decades due to flagrant abuse of procedures, Lack of transparency and merit in the award of contracts in the public sector and accountability quandary (Uremadu, 2004). The problem of this project is based on the perceived weak accountability and good governance in Local Government administration in Rivers State, which had not only increased the height of corruption but also resulted in an enormous waste of state and national resources and decay of economic infrastructure within the economy. Other problems include poor planning and implementation of the State and National budget experienced in all facets of the state and Nigeria's public sector. Lack of transparency leading to mistrust and other negative consequences, and weak accounting infrastructure which may not support

accountability of Local Government funds. The elevation of local government to a third-tier government following the 1976 Local Government Reform with the accompanying increase in functional responsibilities brings to greater focus the need to address the issues of the integrity of the local government.

There have been views that the experience of public sector failure in Nigeria can largely be traced to the absence of fiscal transparency, accountability and probity in the management of government finances in the three tiers of government; federal, state and local governments. The local government's performance in terms of the provision of social amenities and encouraging political participation at the grass root level has not been encouraging. Instead of discharging their functions as development centres, local governments have acquired notoriety for corruption, fiscal indiscipline and overall irresponsibility. The lack of integrity, transparency and accountability at this level of governance constitutes a heavy toll on the well-being of ordinary Nigerians (Agbo, 2010). Ogele (2022, p.12) disclosed that the council workers are not exempted from abject poverty, the council workers are also “dissatisfied with their poor incomes and conditions of services. They helplessly witness how political appointees share and cart away money meant for the development of rural communities.”

Stealing public funds has become a major hobby and pastime for Nigerians in high places. It has become a big-time business. All arms of government are affected, the local government included (Gabriel, 2011). This culture of corruption which is rampant at the national level constitutes a threatening force to development at the grassroots level. It has been a significant factor leading to the general failure of local government as well as an excuse for suspending representative institutions (Humes & Ola, 1994). Corrupt practices have been deleterious not only because they divert funds from public purposes to private purses but also because they undermine the vitality of local government.

Accountability is the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibilities for them, and transparently disclose the results, Rivers state is a state in Nigeria, as a developing nation, it is facing the problems associated with under-development, such as inadequate infrastructure, inefficient and ineffective service delivery, corruption, high-level poverty and misery. The local government council is not people-oriented, friendly, participatory and accountable (Adedeji, 1999). Given the above, the paper evaluates indicators of good governance and factors militating against good governance in rural development in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, 2010-2020.

Conceptual Review

Good Governance

The concept of governance has been widely used by scholars and technocrats, especially in development literature (Ogele, 2021). Governance can be defined as the fundamental process by which the lives and dreams of people are jointly pursued by deliberate and systematic strategies and policies for the attainment of their maximum potential. It is the combination of responsible leadership and enlightened public participation (Jegade, 2001). Governance rather than being perceived in a political term as an institution is construed as the management of the lives of people in a systematic, organized way for the best possible results, using the consensus of the people's will, vision, wisdom and aspiration (Jegade, 2001). Thus if governance embraces all of the methods-good and bad that societies use to distribute power and public resources thus problems of good governance are therefore a subset of governance wherein public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to the critical needs of society. Effective democratic forms of governance ideally should rely on public participation, accountability and

transparency. This implies a high level of organizational effectiveness concerning policy formulation and policies pursued, especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and popular welfare-poverty alleviation. Thus good governance also includes openness and the application of the rule of law.

As a necessary condition for development, a system of good governance in a limited administrative sense would consist of a set of rules and institutions, (that is, a legal framework for development in this case poverty alleviation at the grass root level) and system of public administration which is open, transparent, efficient and accountable. Such a system would provide clarity, stability and predictability for interested investors/developers which would constitute the essential engine of economic development and in turn reduce poverty in the rural areas. In recent years, people have been much more concerned about good governance than anything else, especially in an attempt to sustain and consolidate the hard-won democracy continuously to gain ground at the grassroots.

According to a newspaper report (New Nigeria, October 3, 2000), Good governance is the positive action undertaken by a government to promote democracy and achieve social justice. For governance to be considered well, scholars have come out with the following attributes: accountability based on the notion of popular sovereignty is the public choice. A legal framework that guarantees the rule of law and due process, popular participation in the decision-making process based on political and social pluralism, freedom of association and expression and bureaucratic accountability based on the impartiality of office, uniform application of rules and rationality of organizational structure.

Good governance manages and allocates resources to respond to the combined problems of its citizens. Hence states should be assessed on both the quality and the number of public goods provided to citizens. The policies that supply public goods are guided by a principle such as human rights, democratization and democracy, transparency, participation and decentralized power sharing, sound public administration, accountability, rule of law, equality, effectiveness and strategies vision.

Good governance requires a fair, predictable and stable legal framework enforced impartially. Full protection of human rights, especially minorities should be independent and the police force should be impartial and incorruptible.

Rural Development

Rural development as a concept varies from one author to another based on the school of thought (Azumah, Davies and Ogele, 2021). The assumption is that the definition of rural development can easily be arrived at by understanding the concepts of rural and development separately. Rural has a common strand of meaning with country or countryside but is more frequently encountered with such nomenclature in public policy (Ogele, Sarki, Solomon and Kaka, 2020). Similarly, it connotes a non-urban style of life, occupational structure, social organization, and settlement pattern. Rural is usually associated with agricultural occupation, its settlement pattern consists of villages and the inhabitants are interdependently rooted in communal life built around nature and natural phenomena. They are agrarian and largely depend on their farming, tree cropping, animal enterprising and other related activities. Development connotes a qualitative change in any endeavour. Consequently, rural development is viewed from an all-encompassing perspective. Rural development is considered community development. Hence, Flora and Flora, cited in Ikehukwu, Eluwa and Ukah (2012) argued that community development is built on a correlation between a group of people and cooperative actions among them, instead of individual exploitation. Hanachor (2012) disclosed that what perhaps is viewed as recent in the approach to the application of rural development in recent times is considered a union of community, economic and

organizational development. Furthermore, Hanachor (2009) buttressed that community development is a designed programme to enhance, encourage, and improved the living standard of the entire community via contribution and in addition, creativity through the use of methods for instigating and motivating in a bid to facilitate the active fervent reaction of the movement. Given the above, rural development can be defined as visible changes in the grassroots, especially political, social and economic features of their livelihood. By implication, it connotes a positive change in the rural communities

Local Government

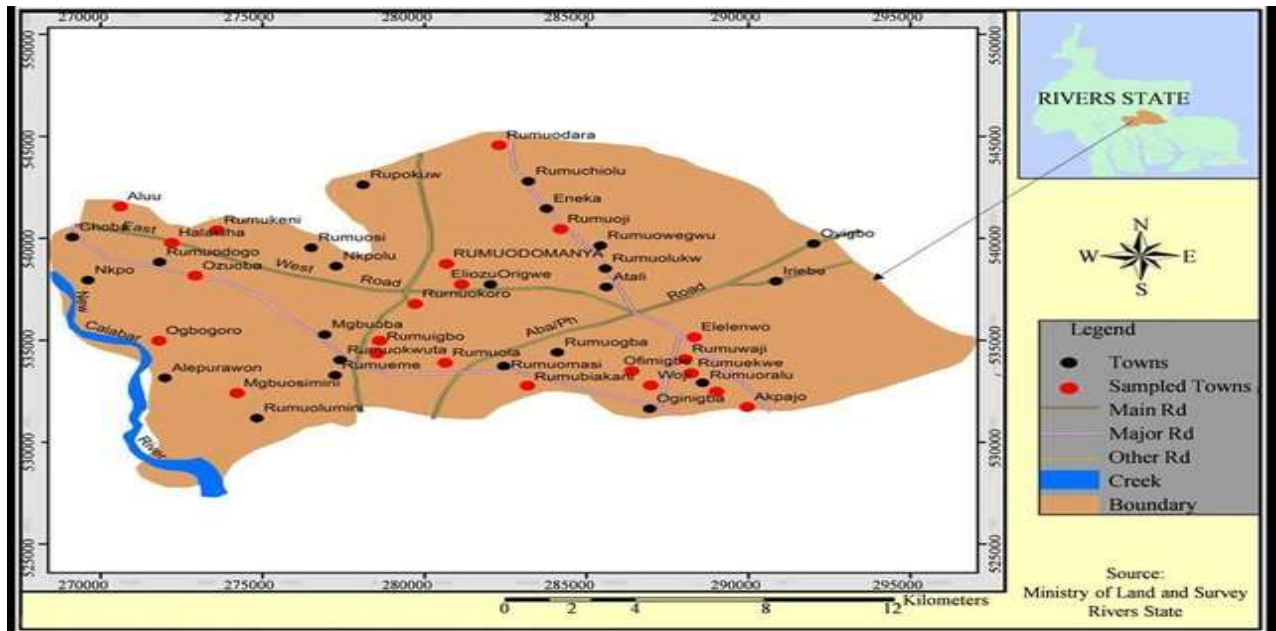
The concept of Local government has been defined by various scholars, nevertheless, it is widely viewed as a branch of public administration that exists as the lowest tier of a government system that is designed through the Constitution to provide the needs of people at the grassroots (Chukwuemeka, Ikechuckwu, Onouha, and Ndubuisi, 2014 cited in Egbo, 2018). Olisa (1990) cited in Egbo(2018) maintained that the local government is the smallest unit of government established by the Act to exercise political authority through their preventative council within a defined geographical entity. Similarly, the 1976 local government reform in Nigeria considers local government as a government that controls powers at the grassroots level through a representative council established by the Act of National Assembly, Nigeria. Agbokoba (2004) argued that local government is “a political -administrative unit that is empowered by law to administer a specific locality.” Fatile and Adejuwon (2017) buttressed that “local governments are local entities, with defined territories, discretionary power, functions, responsibilities and, more importantly, autonomy. In principle, local governments are created with the expectation that its administrative and political officers will exert influence and control the decision-making process at the grass root level without interruptions from higher tiers of government.” Osakede and Ijimakinwa (2014) argued that local government "as that tier of government closest to the people, - which is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain." In the same vein, Arowolo (2008) viewed Local government as “the involvement of grassroots people in the provision of social and economic amenities to the local areas. It is based on the principle that local problems and needs can be understood by the people of the locality better than by Central or State government.”

A synoptic review of the Obio/Akpor local government area, Rivers State

The Obio/Akpor local government council is one of the 23 Local Governments Councils of Rivers State, found in the South Southern part of Nigeria, otherwise called the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, located approximately between latitude 4⁰45” N through 4⁰56” N and longitude 6⁰52” E through 7⁰6” E. It has a general elevation of fewer than 15.24m above the mean sea level (Oyegun & Adeyemo, 1999). It is bounded by Ikwerre Local Governments Council to the north, Port Harcourt Local Governments Council to the south, Oyigbo Local Governments Council to the east Emohua Local Governments Councils to the west (see Figure1).

Obio-Akpor Local Government Council of Rivers State has a population of 283,294 persons, made up of 145,326 males and 137,968 females (NPC, 2006). From fieldwork carried out by authors, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area is among the recognized Local Governments Councils of Rivers state whose headquarter is located at Rumuodumaya town. The map below indicates the local government area and the table shows the various communities based on their political wards.

Figure 1: Map of Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (Source: Njoku-Tony *et al.*.2020)



Map of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (Source: Rivers State Ministry of Land and Survey)

Table 3.1: Wards in OBALGA and some of their Communities

Wards	Some communities making up each ward
1	Rumunduru, Rumuewhara, Eliozi, and Elingbu
2	Eliowhani, Rumuodara, Nmgbuesilari and Iriebe
3	Rumuokwurusi and Atali
4	Rumuodomaya, Rumuobiakani and Rumuobochi
5	Elenenwo
6	Woji, Rumurolu, Rumuibekwe, Rumuogba and Oginigba
7	Rumuokoro, Rumuagholu. Elieke, Awalama, Eligbolo, Rukpaklisi, Bori-camp and Federal Government College (FGC).
8	Rumuomasi
9	Rumuepirikom and Elioparanwo
10	Rumueme – Oro-owo, Oro Agbolu, Eligbam, Oroazi, Rumuchida, Mgbuosimini, and Oroakwor
11	Rumueme, Rumukpakani, Akwaka, Rumuchiorlu, Ibemeru, Oro-ogologo and Ogwa
12	Rumuigbo (Rumuomoi, Nkpolu, Mgbuadu, Mgbesilaru and Rumuorosi)
13	Rumuadaolu, Rumuola and Rumuokwuta (Mgbuoba)
14	Rukpokwu and Eneka
15	Choba, Rumuosi, Rumuekini, Alakahia, Rumuolagogu
16	Ozuoba, Ogbogoro, Rumuokwachi, Rumuokparali

Source: Authors

Obio-Akpor is a local government area^[1] in the metropolis of Port Harcourt, one of the major centres of economic activities in Nigeria, and one of the major cities of the Niger Delta. The local government area covers 260 km² and at the 2006 Census held a population of 464,789. Its postal code or ZIP code is 500102. Obio-Akpor has its headquarters at Rumuodomaya. The original indigenous occupants of the area are the Ikwerre People. Covering around 90 sq mi, Obio-Akpor is generally a lowland area with an average elevation below 30 metres above sea level. Its geology

comprises basically of alluvial sedimentary basin and basement complex. The thick mangrove forest, raffia palms and light rainforest are the major types of vegetation.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the human needs theory for this study. The theory was propounded by Abraham Maslow in 1973. Other scholars such as Burton (1990), Rosenberg (2003) and Max-Neef (2012), who were cited in Alao, Osakede and Owolabi (2015) are among the proponents of human need theory. These scholars agreed that one of the aims of government institutions is to provide for the basic needs of society. The inability of the government to support her citizens with these basic needs has resulted in resentment, hence disconnecting the people (governed) from their leaders. These theorists argued that violent conflict or conflict is inevitable when basic human needs are not met because violent conflicts are triggered by unsatisfied human needs. The above assertion collaborates Danielsen (2005) who argued that violence occurs in society when some individuals or groups of people do not have any alternative to livelihood sustenance or when they need attention, respect and consideration for their needs. He argued that some needs are more urgent than others. They include food, water, and shelter. Maslow categorized human needs in a pyramid hierarchy. Furthermore, Maslow argued that individuals at every juncture make efforts to gratify certain levels of needs, and it is only when the needs at the lower level are met that individuals will move to the other level in the pyramid.

Linking this theory to this work is predicated on the fact that the reason for establishing the third tier of government was to bring government closer to the grassroots by providing for their needs. One of the reasons for good governance in the third tier is to facilitate rural development to meet the needs of the people at the grassroots. The functions of the local government council in Nigeria, especially after the 1976 local government reforms are basically to address the needs of people at the rural level such as provision and maintenance of primary education; development of agriculture and natural resources; establishment and maintenance of cemeteries; establishment and maintenance of markets, motor parks and public conveniences; construction and maintenance of roads, streets, drains; provision and maintenance of health services; and naming of streets including involvement in naming of streets, roads and to number houses.

Methodology

The study adopted a triangulation method of data-gathering techniques. A well-structured questionnaire was used to generate the needed information for the study. Also, an oral interview was used for the reconnaissance survey to gather the required information before the questionnaire was issued. The study also employs the simple random sampling technique in the distribution of the questionnaire. The purpose of employing the simple random technique was to give our respondents an equal chance of being adequately represented. The type of data needed from this study includes both primary and secondary data. The questionnaires were segmented into three sections A (Biodata), B (Yes or NO response) and C (4-point Likert scale). The primary data are generated through the distribution of a questionnaire to our respondents and oral interview. The questionnaire was mainly used to generate the needed information for the study. The study relied on four hundred (400) questionnaires to generate the needed information. The well-structured open and close-ended questionnaire technique was employed to obtain the needed information. The secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished intellectual properties, the publications of the Local Government Council, International Journals and Google. Simple percentage, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data generated from the distribution of the questionnaires and oral interview.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The presentation of data was based on the number of a questionnaire distributed and retrieved among respondents in the Obio/Akpor local government area, Rivers State.

Table 1. Questionnaire distribution and response rate

No	Respondents	Copies of the Questionnaire Distributed	Used Copies	Copies not Retrieved
1	Council staff	30	27	3
2	Elected members	17	17	-
3	Supervisors	6	6	-
4	Stakeholders	200	183	17
5	Others	147	125	22
	Total	400	358	42

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 1 above indicated that a total of 400 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, out of which a total of 358 copies were retrieved. Forty-two (42) copies were not retrieved because the respondents who had these copies were too busy to fill them. A few copies were discarded due to the wrong filling. Moreover, the high response rate recorded was a result of frequent visits and phone calls made by the researcher.

Table 2. Gender distribution

Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Retrieved	Yes	No
Male 300	260	70	190
Female 100	98	20	78
Total 400	358	58	300
Percentage	100%	16%	84%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 2 indicates that there is no positive development whatsoever; this is shown from the gender respondents' report. Out of the three hundred and fifty-eight (358) retrieved questionnaires, fifty-eight (58) of both genders agreed that there is indeed a positive development, representing fifteen percent (16%) of the total questionnaire while three hundred (100) respondents indicating eighty-four percent (84%) of the population are saying NO, that there is no positive change on development whatsoever in the OBALGA council.

Table 3. Good governance and rural development

Questions	Responses			
	SA	A	D	SD
1. Do you think the OBALGA administration has been financially prudent?	38(11%)		120(36%)	
2. Is the OBALGA council transparent in its governance?	30(8%)		170(47%)	
	42(12%)		125(35%)	
	36(10%)		155(43%)	

3. Is there political instability due to financial impropriety in the OBALGA?	24(7%) 46(13%)	130(36%) 158(44%)
4. Do you think there is adequate synergy in leadership and accountability in the OBALGA?	105(29%) 123(34%)	90(25%) 40(11%)
5. Is there a good relationship between the head of local government and the Director of Finance/ treasurer of the OBALGA?	108(30%) 153(43%)	45(13%) 52(15%)
6. Do you think the OBALGA council administration has given enough infrastructure relative to income generation?	40(11%) 45(13%)	130(36%) 143(40%)
7. Any case of financial impropriety resulting from administrative incompetence?	11(3%) 53(15%)	140(39%) 154(43%)
8. Is there any positive link between accountability and good governance in the OBALGA council?	26(7%) 47(13%)	160(45%) 125(35%)
9. Do you accept that the OBALGA council administration has been prudent enough?	30(8%) 55(15%)	120(36%) 153(43%)
10. Were the executives accountable to the public or society in the OBALGA?	15(4%) 46(13%)	143(40%) 154(43%)
11. Were the executives accountable to higher authorities only in the OBALGA?	126(35%) 143(40%)	24(7%) 65(18%)
Total	565(14%) 777(20%)	1227(31%) 1369(35%)

Source: Field survey (2022)

The research question on accountability and good governance observed that the OBALGA administration recorded the following responses; SA as 38(11%), A as 30(8%), D as 120(36%) and SD as 170(47%) as shown in Table 3. In a similar vein, the transparency of the OBALGA council had 42(12%) as SA, 36(10%) as A, 125(35%) as D and 155(43%) as SD. Political instability due to financial impropriety in the OBALGA recorded the following responses of SA as 24(7%), A as 46(13%), D as 130(36%) and SD as 158(44%). Do you think there is adequate synergy in leadership and accountability in the OBALGA had 105(29%) as SA, 123(34%) as A, 90(25%) as D and 40(11%) as SD. Good working relationship existence between the head of local government and the Director of Finance/ treasurer of the OBALGA recorded that 108(30%) strongly disagreed, 153(43%) agreed, 45(13%) simply disagreed while 52(15%) strongly disagreed. The presence of enough infrastructure relative to the income generation by the OBALGA administration gave the following responses of SA at 40(11%), 45(13%) for A, 30(36%) as D and 143(40%) as SD. Any case of financial impropriety resulting from administrative incompetence recorded SA as 11(3%), 53(15%) as A, 40(39%) as D while 154(43%) as SD. In the case of any positive link between accountability and good governance in the OBALGA council 26(7%) strongly agreed, 47(13%) agreed while 160(45%) disagreed but 125(35%) strongly disagreed. The level of financial prudence by the OBALGA council administration was strongly agreed by 30(8%), agreed by 55(15%), disagreed by 120(36%) while 153(43%) strongly disagreed. The accountability status of the executives to the public or society in the OBALGA was strongly agreed by 5(4%), agreed by 46(13%), disagreed by 43(40%) and strongly disagreed by 154(43%). The executives been accountable to higher authorities only in the OBALGA recorded strongly agreed as 126(35%), agreed as 143(40%), disagreed as 24(7%) and strongly disagreed as 65(18%).

Table 4: Factors affecting good governance and rural development in OBALGA

Questions	Responses			
	SA	A	D	SD
1.Is greed a major obstacle to good governance in the OBALGA?	160(45%)	140(39%)	25(7%)	33(9%)
2.Is poor education and enlightenment a factor against good governance in the OBALGA?	47(13%)	42(12%)	126(35%)	143(40%)
3.Is political instability militating against good governance in the OBALGA?	119(33%)	58(16%)	86(24%)	95(27%)
4. Are cultural/ traditional beliefs factors against financial probity and good governance in the OBALGA?	8(2%)	55(15%)	215(60%)	80(22%)
5.Is godfatherism a factor against good governance and rural development in the OBALGA?	157(44%)	135(38%)	55(15%)	11(3%)
6.Could the private sector be the militating factor against good governance and rural development in the OBALGA?	85(24%)	118(33%)	59(16%)	96(27%)
7.Could higher authorities of government be responsible for the lack of good governance and rural development in the OBALGA?	58(16%)	65(18%)	109(30%) 126(35%)	
8.Is legislation responsible for lack of good governance and rural development in the OBALGA?	90(25%)	100(28%)	125(35%)	43(12%)
Total	724(25%)	713(24%)	926(30%)	501(21%)

Source: Field survey (2022)

The respondents on the factors affecting accountability and good governance in the OBALGA, considered greed a major obstacle to accountability and good governance in the OBALGA by giving strongly agreed for 160(45%), agreed 140(39%), disagreed 25(7%) while 33(9%) strongly disagreed as shown in Table 4. Poor education and enlightenment as factors against accountability and good governance in the OBALGA gave strongly agreed 7(13%), 42(12%) agreed, disagreed 126(35%) and 143(40%) as strongly disagreed. Political instability militating against accountability and good governance in the OBALGA recorded responses of strongly agreed 119(33%), agreed 58(16%), disagreed 86(24%) and 95(27%) strongly disagreed. Cultural/ traditional beliefs as factors against financial probity and good governance in the OBALGA had 8(2%) strongly agreed, 55(15%) agreed, 215(60%) disagreed while 80(22%) strongly disagreed. godfatherism as a factor against good governance and rural development in the OBALGA recorded SA 157(44%), A 135(38%), D 55(15%) and SD as 11(3%). Similarly, the private sector has been the militating factor against good governance and rural development in the OBALGA recorded SA 85(24%), A 118(33%), D 59(16%) and SD as 96(27%). The probability of higher authorities of government has been responsible for good governance and rural development in the OBALGA gave responses of SA 58(16%), A 65(18%), D 109(30%) while SD 126(35%). Legislation has been the probable reason for good governance and rural development in the OBALGA had 90(25%) SA, 100(28%) A, 125(35%) as

Discussion of Findings

Our findings indicate that projects executed have directly impacted rural dwellers in the Obio/Akpor local government council, which is considered an indicator of good governance. These findings are in line with our assertion that good governance in the local government exists to provide services to the people at the grassroots. They include i) social welfare-establishment of a sick bay in the Local Government secretariat ;maintenance of old Local Government Health centers in the area; execution of state and federal policies and programmers on health such as roll back malaria , HIV/AIDS, among others. Nevertheless, the projects carried out within the period under review have indicated that they are relatively not enough considering the growing population in Obio/Akpor local government area and the huge funds generated by the local government council. For instance, good governance indicators in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (OBALGA) have shown that primary health care in the OBALGA is inefficient and has no proper maintenance, high unemployment rate, no functional scholarship schemes, poor security, poor agricultural practices without support but above all poor governance structure. These are similar to the principles of good governance (Centre of Europe, COE, 2018). This is corroborated by the works of Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto and Nkaiya (2014) that local government administration was adopted as the main fundamental instrument for the acceleration and sustenance of rural development. This is not expected for a local government as rich as OBALGA which falls among the ten (10) richest local governments in Nigeria (Ikenwa, 2022). The most relevant of the governance theories to the Nigerian governance situation is the good governance theory as its creeds are evidence for good governance and its principles can be adopted as indices for the assessment of governance in Nigeria (Ekundayo, 2017)..

Factors militating against good governance and rural development in Obio-Akpor Local Government Council.

From the findings, it was unravelled that there are many factors militating good governance and rural development in Obio/Akpor local government area. These findings correlate with the work of Nwosu and Kalu (2020), issues of accountability *vis a vis* the administration of LGAs in Nigeria are weakened by corruption, insistent use of transition committees, pressure on ethical regulation; leadership failure and so on. So many schools of thought argued that the imposition of candidates by god fatherism syndrome is a major cause of poor accountability and bastardized governance (Eboh & Diejomaoh, 2010; Abutudu, 2011; Ukonga, 2012; Adeyemi, 2013). Though Osho and Afolabi (2014) and Okere and Ogundana (2019); in their study observed there was no significant improvement in accountability due to the application of management strategies in government sectors in Nigeria. The application of the State Joint Local Government Account destabilizes the principles of good governance such as efficiency, accountability, transparency, participation and accessibility (Sanusi, 2013) leading to abysmal rural development in Obio/Akpor local government area, Rivers State. The Joint Allocation Account Committee (JAAC) system was created by section 162 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria to “was meant to facilitate rural development of the local communities through effective supervision of the distribution and efficient management of revenue accruing to the local government councils from the federation account” (Agbani and Ugwoke, 2014,p.146). Furthermore, Agbani and Ugwoke (2014, p.153) argued that:

The local government councils have nearly the same rural development challenges. Therefore, it is the arbitrariness of the state governments that dictates the amount or percentage of deductions. Little wonder then that most local government council elections in Nigeria are huge scams. The state chief executives use the state independent electoral commissions to select the governors’ political loyalists and give chairmanships and councilorship positions as political patronages. Funny

enough the people are cowed down and generally Co tow this arrangement since they know that if they force their way into such elective posts, the governors will automatically use the JAAC deductions to frustrate any 'deviant' local government chairman.

The use of caretaker committees to run the local government is undemocratic, hence adversely impacting rural development. The caretaker committee appointed by the godfathers/patron to run the local government are accountable to the rural people. Iwuamadi (2013) argued that in situations where "the local governments are controlled by the opposition party, local councils are dissolved and caretaker committees often made up of sympathizers of the ruling party are appointed to run the affairs of the local government. Caretaker committees are appointed to fill the vacuum of leadership in local governments pending the election of substantive officers."

One of the challenges in the development of the rural areas in the Obio/Akpor local government area is corruption. The consequence of corruption in the local government administration is severe. It weakens economic performance and impacts rural development negatively. Corruption in the local government administration has become almost a lifestyle. "It has been identified as one of the problems confronting effective local government administration in Nigeria, also non-adherence to [the] provisions of the financial memorandum (FM), conspicuous consumption of the part of the local officials, lifestyles that are not commensurate with official sources of income, imposition of [the] leaders on the local government through the corrupted political process and low wages of local government officials" (Ali, 2008 cited Adeyemi, 2012, p.191).

Conclusion

The study examined the effect of good governance on rural development in the Obio/Akpor local government area, Rivers State. Governance rather than being perceived in a political term as an institution is construed as the management of the lives of people in a systematic, organized way for the best possible results, using the consensus of the people's will, vision, wisdom and aspiration. Governance embraces all of the methods-good and bad that societies use to distribute power and public resources thus problems of good governance are therefore a subset of governance wherein public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to the critical needs of society. Effective democratic forms of governance ideally should rely on public participation, accountability and transparency. This implies a high level of organizational effectiveness to policy formulation and policies pursued, especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and popular welfare-poverty alleviation. Thus good governance also includes openness and the application of the rule of law. Good governance is the positive action undertaken by a government to promote democracy and achieve social justice. For governance to be considered well, scholars have come out with the following attributes accountability based on the notion of popular sovereignty is a public choice. In a bid to achieve good governance in the alleviation of poverty at the grassroots level being the essence for the establishment of local governments, the promotion of accountability and good governance remains the greatest antidote to the problems of poverty, health care delivery, food sufficiency, infrastructural development, power, moral decadence, insecurity and unemployment at the grassroots level. In Nigeria, the constitution establishing local government does not allow the rural populace to have control or checks on the elected officials, hence makes difficult for the leaders to be accountable to the people and society.

Recommendation

- i) Political sensitization and freedom of expression should be granted to the rural populace.
- ii) There should be sponsorship and election of credible persons to positions of trust.
- iii) Advocacy for political stability and transparency should be encouraged.
- iv) Institutions should be strengthened and mechanisms put in place to facilitate accountability and curtail corruption.

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