Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.6 No.1 March, 2023; p.g. 279 – 291; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

IMPACT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

TOYE MANUWA (PhD)
Institute of Health Humanities and Entrepreneurship
University of Medical Sciences
Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria
Email: princetoyemanuwa2011@gmail.com
Phone: +234 7083 138 777; +234 8165 269 672

Abstract

Rural development is a crucial aspect of national development that aims at improving the living standards and well-being of the rural population. Despite the frantic efforts of the government to establish Local Government rule among the rural dwellers, Nigeria still faces serious economic, social as well environmental challenges among the rural dwellers. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of Local Government Area (LGA) on rural development in Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design type as the information collection mechanism from the participants (Local Government Area officials, rural dwellers, civil society organizations and development partners) for the purpose of predicting, describing and interpreting the subject matter. A total of One hundred and fifty (150) participants were randomly selected from three (3) purposively selected LGAs in Lagos State. The main instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire based on the research objectives raised in the study. To validate the instrument, the questionnaire was presented to the experts in the field of test and measurements to determine the construct and content validity, while the reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha with r = 0.811. The data collected from the respondents was analysed using descriptive statistics, while Chi-square statistical tool was used to test the stated hypothesis. The study found that there is a level of rural development in the selected LGAs within the study area; there are some factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development within the study area as discussed in the discussion of findings; researcher was able to discover the challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development such as inadequate funding, poor accountability, corruption, political interference, and lack of community participation and finally, there is no significant impact of LGA in rural development. The study concludes that LGA can be an effective catalyst for rural development if these challenges are addressed and the potentials of LGA are maximized. The study recommends that there is need to increase the allocation and transparency of funds to LGA for rural development projects and monitor their implementation and outcomes. Also, the researcher recommends that there is need to encourage community participation and empowerment in planning, execution, and evaluation of rural development projects.

Keywords: Local Government Area, Rural development, governance, revenue, rural dwellers.

Background to the Study

Development is a multidimensional concept that encompasses economic, social, political, and environmental aspects. It is not just about increasing income or GDP, but also about

improving the quality of life, expanding opportunities, enhancing human capabilities, and ensuring equity and justice. Development is also a dynamic process that requires constant adaptation and innovation to respond to changing needs and circumstances (Akpan & Udoakah, 2019).

Development is not only a goal but also a process that requires constant monitoring, evaluation, learning, and feedback. Therefore, Nigeria needs to establish effective mechanisms to measure and track its progress towards development objectives and targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2018). Development is a multidimensional concept that encompasses economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental aspects. It implies improving the quality of life and well-being of people, expanding their opportunities and freedoms, enhancing their capabilities and potentials, and ensuring their dignity and rights. Development also involves addressing the root causes of problems and challenges, rather than merely treating the symptoms. Development is not only a goal, but also a process that requires participation, cooperation, innovation, and accountability.

Nigeria has made some progress in development over the years. According to the World Bank (2018), Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) grew from $59 billion in 2000 to $448 billion in 2019, making it the largest economy in Africa. Nigeria has also reduced its poverty rate from 69% in 2004 to 40% in 2019, lifted millions of people out of extreme poverty, and improved its human development index (HDI) from 0.462 in 2000 to 0.539 in 2019. Nigeria has also achieved some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as reducing child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, and increasing access to education (UNDP, 2016).

However, Nigeria still faces many challenges that limit its development potential especially in the aspect of rural development. Despite its economic growth, Nigeria remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with about 83 million people living below the national poverty line of $1.90 per day. Nigeria also suffers from high levels of inequality, with the richest 10% of the population owning more than 40% of the national wealth, while the poorest 10% own less than 2%. Nigeria also ranks low on various indicators of human development, such as life expectancy (55 years), literacy rate (62%), maternal mortality ratio (512 per 100,000 live births), and gender equality index (0.356).

Moreover, Nigeria faces serious threats to its security and stability from various sources of violence and conflict. These include the insurgency of Boko Haram in the northeast, the militancy of Niger Delta Avengers in the south-south, the secessionist agitation of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the southeast, the farmer-herder clashes in the middle belt, and the banditry and kidnapping in the northwest. These conflicts have resulted in thousands of deaths, millions of displacements, and billions of dollars of economic losses. They have also undermined the social cohesion and trust among different ethnic, religious, and regional groups in Nigeria (Ajayi & Ojo, 2016).

Furthermore, Nigeria faces significant challenges in governance and institutions. Corruption is endemic and pervasive in Nigeria's public and private sectors, eroding the legitimacy and effectiveness of state institutions and service delivery. According to Transparency

International, Nigeria ranked 149 out of 180 countries on the corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020, with a score of 25 out of 100. Nigeria also suffers from weak rule of law, accountability and transparency mechanisms that enable impunity and abuse of power by political elites and vested interests. Nigeria's democracy is also fragile and vulnerable to manipulation and violence during elections.

First, development is essential for improving the living standards and well-being of Nigerians. By pursuing development, Nigeria can reduce poverty and inequality, enhance human capital and social protection. Meanwhile, rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated. Rural development has been recognized as a key strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reducing poverty and inequality in Nigeria (UN, 2018).Nigeria is a country with a large rural population, estimated at about 60% of the total population in 2019. According to the World Bank, about 80% of the poor in Nigeria live in rural areas, where they face multiple challenges such as low productivity, poor infrastructure, limited access to markets, education, health care and social services, environmental degradation, insecurity and conflict.

Rural development is therefore essential for addressing these challenges and enhancing the well-being of millions of Nigerians. According to Ellis & Biggs (2015), some of the benefits of rural development include:

- **Increasing agricultural productivity and food security**: Rural development can boost agricultural production and income by providing farmers with improved inputs, technologies, extension services, irrigation facilities, storage and processing facilities, and access to markets and credit. This can also enhance food security and nutrition for rural households and the nation as a whole.
- **Creating employment and income opportunities**: Rural development can create more and better jobs for rural youth and women by diversifying the rural economy beyond agriculture and promoting non-farm activities such as agro-processing, handicrafts, tourism, renewable energy, and digital services. This can also reduce rural-urban migration and its associated problems such as overcrowding, congestion, slums, crime, and social unrest.
- **Improving infrastructure and social services**: Rural development can improve the availability and quality of infrastructure and social services in rural areas such as roads, electricity, water supply, sanitation, education, health care, and communication. This can improve the living standards and human capital of rural people and reduce their vulnerability to shocks such as diseases, disasters, and conflicts.
- **Promoting social inclusion and cohesion**: Rural development can foster social inclusion and cohesion by empowering marginalized groups such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities to participate in decision-making processes and benefit from development interventions. This can also enhance social capital and trust among rural communities and reduce the potential for conflict and violence.
- **Protecting the environment and natural resources**: Rural development can protect the environment and natural resources by promoting sustainable agricultural practices such as agroforestry, organic farming, soil conservation, water management,

and climate-smart agriculture. This can also mitigate the effects of climate change and enhance the resilience of rural livelihoods to environmental shocks.

To this end, rural development is a vital component of Nigeria's development agenda. It can contribute to achieving the SDGs and improving the welfare of millions of Nigerians. However, rural development requires a holistic and integrated approach that involves multiple stakeholders such as the government, private sector, civil society, donors, and rural communities themselves. It also requires adequate funding, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and learning to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

Rural development is a crucial aspect of national development that aims to improve the living standards and well-being of the rural population (Chambers, 2015). Rural development encompasses various dimensions such as economic, social, environmental, political and cultural. However, rural development in Nigeria faces many challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, poor infrastructure, insecurity, corruption and weak governance. One of the key actors in rural development is the local government area (LGA), which is the third tier of government in Nigeria. The LGA is responsible for providing basic services and amenities to the rural communities within its jurisdiction. The LGA is also expected to facilitate participatory and inclusive development by involving the rural people in planning, implementation and monitoring of development projects and programmes (Ezeani & Eme, 2017).

However, the impact of LGA on rural development in Nigeria has been largely negative. According to a study by Oluwafemi and Akinola (2017), most LGAs in Nigeria are ineffective and inefficient in delivering their statutory functions due to various factors such as inadequate funding, political interference, lack of autonomy, poor accountability and transparency, low capacity and corruption. These factors have undermined the ability of LGAs to address the needs and aspirations of the rural people and to promote sustainable development. Therefore, there is a need to reform and strengthen the LGA system to enable it to play its role effectively and efficiently in promoting rural development. This study therefore seeks to investigate the impact of Local Government Area on rural development using some selected Local Government Areas in Lagos State, Nigeria as a case study.

Statement of the Problem

Rural development is a crucial aspect of national development that aims to improve the living standards and well-being of the rural population. Rural development encompasses various dimensions such as economic, social, environmental, political and cultural. However, rural development in Nigeria faces many challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, poor infrastructure, insecurity, corruption and environmental degradation (Adebayo, 2013 & Agba *et al.*, 2014).

Nigeria has made some strides in development over the years, especially in sectors such as telecommunications, banking, entertainment, and agriculture. However, it still lags behind many other countries in terms of human development indicators such as health, education, gender equality, governance and rural development. According to the 2020 Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Nigeria ranked 161 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures life expectancy, education, and income per capita. Nigeria also ranked 139 out of 162 countries in the 2020 Democracy Index by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), which assesses the state

of democracy based on five criteria: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government and rural development, political participation, and political culture (UN, 2020).

These rankings reflect the persistent gaps and disparities that exist within Nigeria's society and polity. Despite being Africa's largest oil producer and exporter, Nigeria suffers from chronic power shortages that affect businesses and households. Despite having a vibrant civil society and media sector, Nigeria faces frequent outbreaks of violence and insecurity that threaten human rights and democracy. Despite having a young and dynamic population, Nigeria struggles with high unemployment and underemployment rates that limit the potential of its human capital. Despite having a rich cultural and natural heritage, Nigeria faces serious environmental challenges such as deforestation, desertification, pollution, and climate change.

One of the key actors in rural development is the local government area (LGA), which is the third tier of government in Nigeria. The LGA is supposed to be the closest to the grassroots and responsible for providing basic services and amenities to the rural communities. The LGA is also expected to mobilize and coordinate the participation of the rural people in planning and implementing development projects and programs. However, the LGA in Nigeria has not been able to perform its role effectively and efficiently due to various factors. These factors have resulted in poor service delivery, low quality of life and underdevelopment of the rural areas in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a need to examine the impact of the LGA on rural development in Nigeria and identify the challenges and opportunities for improving its role and performance. It is against this background that this paper investigate the impact of Local Government Area on rural development in Nigeria using some selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Lagos State as a case study.

Objective of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the Local Government Area (LGA) on rural development in Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. assess the level of rural development in selected LGAs in Nigeria.
ii. identify the factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development.
iii. evaluate the challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development.
iv. investigate the impact of Local Government Area in rural development.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State in Nigeria?
2. What are the factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development within the study area?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development within the study area?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant impact of Local Government Area in rural development.

Literature Review- Concept of Rural Development

Rural development is a broad term that encompasses various aspects of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas. Rural development can involve different sectors such as agriculture, education, health, infrastructure, environment, social welfare, and governance (Tacoli, 2018). Rural development can also have different objectives such as poverty reduction, food security, employment generation, empowerment, and sustainability.

Rural development is important for several reasons. First, rural areas are home to a large proportion of the world's population, especially in developing countries. According to the World Bank, about 3.4 billion people live in rural areas, accounting for 45% of the global population in 2018. Moreover, rural areas are often characterized by low levels of income, education, health, and access to basic services and opportunities (Scoones, 2019). The World Bank estimates that 80% of the world's extreme poor live in rural areas. Therefore, rural development is essential for addressing the challenges and needs of the rural poor and enhancing their well-being and dignity (World Bank, 2018)

Second, rural development is vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030. Many of the SDGs are directly or indirectly related to rural development, such as SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 15 (life on land), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) (UN, 2018). Thus, rural development is crucial for advancing the global agenda of sustainable development and leaving no one behind.

Third, rural development is beneficial for fostering social cohesion and harmony among different groups of people living in rural areas. Rural areas are often diverse in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion, language, and identity. Rural development can promote social inclusion and participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups such as women, youth, indigenous peoples, minorities, and persons with disabilities (OECD, 2016). Rural development can also foster dialogue and cooperation among different stakeholders such as local communities, civil society organizations, private sector actors, government agencies, and international partners. Rural development can thus contribute to building trust, respect, and solidarity among rural people and enhancing their sense of belonging and identity (Ashley & Maxwell, 2015).

Rural development is a complex and multidimensional concept that aims to improve the lives and livelihoods of rural people in various ways. Rural development is important for reducing poverty and inequality, achieving sustainable development goals, and fostering social cohesion and harmony in rural areas (Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), 2020). Rural development requires a holistic and participatory approach that involves multiple actors and sectors and addresses the specific needs and potentials of each rural context.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected through self-structured questionnaires with relevant stakeholders such as Local Government Area officials, rural dwellers, civil society organizations and development partners. The secondary data were obtained from existing literature, reports, documents and databases. The population of the study consists of randomly selected respondents in three (3) purposively selected Local Government Areas of Lagos State. A total of One Hundred and fifty (150) respondents participated in the study. The questionnaire consists of two sections (A and B). Section A consists of demographic data of the respondents, while Section B, contained twenty statements based on the four objectives raised in the study using four point Likert scale type of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). To validate the instrument, the self-designed questionnaire was presented to the experts in the field of test and measurements to determine the construct and content validity. Modifications made were used to improve the quality of the instrument. Reliability deals with consistency of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha with r = 0.872 the result of the reliability confirmed that the research was reliable. Simple percentage was employed to determine the frequency of data collected and to answer the research questions while Chi-square statistical tool was used for analysis of data collected for the stated hypothesis.

Analysis of Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution Showing the Gender of the Respondents

Gender		**Percentage (%)**
Male	67	44.7
Female	83	55.3
Total	**150**	**100**

Table 1 shows that out of 150 respondents that participated in this study,67 (44.7%) were male, while 83 (55.3.0%) were female. From this, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents were female.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution Showing the Teaching Experience of the Respondents

Respondent Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
LGA officials	45	30
Rural dwellers	90	60
Development Partners	15	10
Total	**150**	**100**

Table 2 shows that out of 150 respondents that participated in this study, 45 (30%) respondents were LGA officials, 90 (60%) respondents were the rural dwellers, while 15 representing 10% of the respondents were development partners.

Answering of Research Questions

The research questions were all answered with the use of mean and standard deviation.

Research Question 1: *What is the level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State in Nigeria?*

In answering this research question, mean of responses of the respondents to each item on the questionnaire that addressed the level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State in Nigeria and was calculated using 2.5 as the cut off. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis Showing level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	In my LGA, there are basic infrastructure and services, such as roads, electricity, water supply, sanitation, health care, education.	2.68	1.188
2.	In my LGA, there is poverty reduction and income generation opportunities for rural dwellers, such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism.	2.62	1.196
3.	In my LGA, there is environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change impacts, such as erosion control, flood management, waste management	2.74	1.228
4.	In my LGA, there is social inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, elderly, disabled, etc	2.66	1.112
5.	In my LGA, there is participation and governance of rural communities in decision-making processes and resource allocation.	2.67	1.138
Grand mean		**2.674**	

Table 3 reveals the level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State in Nigeria. Responses to items that sought information on perceived level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State in Nigeria revealed that perceived level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State in Nigeria was positive, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 2.50 and their weighted mean score was 2.674 which is above the benchmark weighted mean score.

Research Question 2: *what are the factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development within the study area*?

In answering this research question, mean of responses of the respondents' opinion to each item on the questionnaire that addressed the factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development within the study area and was calculated using 2.5 as the cut off. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis Showing factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development within the study area

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	The availability and quality of human, financial and physical resources in the LGA.	2.54	1.184
2.	The level of autonomy and accountability of the local government to the central government and the local community is low.	2.64	1.078
3.	There is no proper alignment and integration of the local development plans and policies with the national and regional development frameworks and priorities.	2.25	1.140
4.	The LGA lacks the capacity and willingness to innovate, learn and adapt to changing needs and opportunities in the rural context.	2.62	1.135
5.	The level of effectiveness in monitoring and evaluating the LGA systems in order to measure and improve the outcomes and impacts of the local development interventions to rural development.	2.52	1.172
Grand mean		**2.514**	

Table 4 reveals that factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development. Responses to items that sought information on the factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development revealed some of those factors are in line with the respondents' opinion and was also positive, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 2.50 and their weighted mean score was 2.514 which is above the benchmark weighted mean score.

Research Question 3: *what are the challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development within the study area?*

In answering this research question, mean of responses of the respondents' opinion to each item on the questionnaire that addressed the challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development within the study area and was calculated using 2.5 as the cut off. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis Showing factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development within the study area

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	Lack of adequate infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, water, and sanitation which hampers the access to markets, services, and opportunities for the rural population	2.62	1.135
2.	There is low level of human capital and skills among the rural workforce, which limits their productivity and employability.	2.75	1.175
3.	Some LGAs face environmental degradation and climate change impact which affect the rural livelihoods and natural resources.	2.54	1.184

4.	My Local Government Area has potential for agricultural diversification and value addition.	2.65	1.140
5.	There is possibility for LGA authority to leverage digital technologies and innovation in order to enhance the rural connectivity, access to information, and service delivery	2.64	1.078
Grand mean		**2.64**	

Table 5 reveals the challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development within the study area. Responses to items that sought information on perceived challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development within the study area revealed that perceived challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development within the study area was positive, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 2.50, while the weighted mean score was 2.64 which is above the benchmark weighted mean score.

Test of Hypothesis

The research hypothesis generated in the course of this study was tested using Chi-square statistical analysis at 0.05 alpha level.

H_{01}: *There is no significant impact of Local Government Area on rural development.*

In testing this research hypothesis, the independent t-test statistical tool was used at 0.05 level of significance. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

Table 6: Summary table of Chi-square analysis showing the significant impact of Local Government Area on rural development

Items	A	SA	D	SD	TOTAL	df	calx²	tabx²	Decision
There is coordination and collaboration of LGA with other stakeholders to establish effective communication channels, joint planning and implementation mechanisms, and harmonized policies and strategies.	43	27	64	16	150	20	19.85	21.026	Accepted
Monitoring and evaluation of LGA's activities and outcomes have been strengthened by developing clear indicators and targets, collecting reliable data and information, conducting regular reviews and feedback sessions on rural development	26	31	69	24	150				
LGA authority has been able to curb corruption thereby promoting good governance for rural development	11	26	78	35	150				

LGA authority has been able to provide adequate training, equipment, and incentives for staff to enhance rural development.	42	36	58	14	150				
There is provision of basic amenities for the rural dwellers by LGA authority.	32	9	68	41	150				

Decision Rule

From the table above the calculated value is 19.85 is less than the critical value of 21.026 with df of 20 at 0.05 alpha level. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant impact of Local Government Area in rural development" was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

From the result obtained from the data collected on Research question One, Table 3 reveals the level of rural development in selected LGAs of Lagos State in Nigeria which was positive, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 2.50 and their weighted mean score was 2.674 which is above the benchmark weighted mean score. This is in agreement with Ajayi & Ojo (2016) which submit that level of rural development can be assessed by various indicators, such as access to basic infrastructure and services, such as roads, electricity, water supply, sanitation, health care, education, etc; poverty reduction and income generation opportunities for rural dwellers, such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism, etc as well as environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change impacts, such as erosion control, flood management, waste management, etc.

From the data obtained from Table 4 as regards factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development. Responses to items that sought information on the research question revealed some of those factors are in line with the respondents' opinion and was positive, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 2.50 and their weighted mean score was 2.514 which is above the benchmark weighted mean score. This is supported by Ezeani & Eme (2017), who opines that rural development is a complex and multidimensional process that aims to improve the quality of life and well-being of rural people. It involves economic, social, environmental, cultural and institutional aspects that interact and influence each other. However, the role and performance of LGAs in rural development are not uniform or consistent across different contexts and countries. There are various factors that can influence how LGAs function and contribute to rural development, such as availability and quality of human, financial and physical resources in the local area, level of autonomy and accountability of the local government to the central government and the local community as well as the degree of participation and collaboration of the local stakeholders, such as farmers, civil society organizations, private sector and other development partners.

From the data obtained from Table 5, it was revealed that the sought information on perceived challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development within the study area was positive, because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 2.50, while the weighted mean score was 2.64 which is above the benchmark weighted mean score. This corroborates with

the submission of OECD (2016), that the challenges and opportunity facing LGA in rural development can be interrelated and interdependent, meaning that they can reinforce or undermine each other. Therefore, it is important to understand how these factors affect the role and performance of LGAs in rural development in order to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for improvement.

From the data obtained from Table 6, it was revealed that the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant impact of LGA in rural development" was accepted, because the calculated value (19.85) is less than the critical value (21.026) with degree of freedom of 12 at 0.05 alpha level. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant impact of Local Government Area in rural development" was accepted. This is supported by Agba *et al.*, 2014, who opines that there has been a satisfactory significant provision of quality services and facilities that meet the needs and expectations of the rural people in Nigeria. The LGA authority operates without any consideration for the social, environmental and economic needs of the rural dwellers that they were expected to govern.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the researcher was able to conclude that there is a level of rural development in the selected LGAs within the study area; there are some factors that influence the LGA's role and performance in rural development within the study area as discussed in the discussion of findings; researcher was able to discover the challenges and opportunities facing the LGA in rural development such as inadequate funding, poor accountability, corruption, political interference, and lack of community participation and finally, there is no significant impact of LGA in rural development. The study concluded that LGA can be a catalyst for rural development if these challenges are addressed and the potentials of LGA are maximized.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need to increase the allocation and transparency of funds to LGA for rural development projects and monitor their implementation and outcomes.
2. There is need to strengthen the capacity and accountability of LGA staff and officials through training, supervision, and performance appraisal.
3. There is need to foster collaboration and partnership among LGA, state government, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders in rural development initiatives.
4. There is need to encourage community participation and empowerment in planning, execution, and evaluation of rural development projects.
5. There is need to promote innovation and best practices in rural development by adopting evidence-based approaches and learning from successful models.

References

Agba, M. S., Akwara, A. F., & Idu, A. Y. (2014). Local government and social service delivery in Nigeria: A content analysis. Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 3(4), 105-114.

Ajayi, J. O., & Ojo, E. O. (2016). Local government and rural development in Nigeria: An assessment of the role of traditional rulers. International Journal of Development and Sustainability, 5(8), 375- 386.

Akpan, N. S., & Udoakah, N. (2019). Local government and rural development in Nigeria: An analysis of institutional dynamics and constraints. International Journal of Rural Studies, 19(1), 1-7.

Ashley C. and Maxwell S. (2015). Rethinking rural development. *Development Policy Review*. 34(4):395–425.

Chambers R. (2015). Rural Development: Putting the Last First. 5th Ed. London: Longman.

Ellis F. and Biggs S. (2015). Evolving themes in rural development 1950s–2000s. *Development Policy Review*. 34(4):437–448.

Ezeani, E. O., & Eme, O. I. (2017). Local government administration in Nigeria: Current problems and future challenges. Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research, 4(3), 95-103.

FAO (2020). The State of Food and Agriculture 2018–2019: Agricultural Biotechnology – Meeting the Needs of the Poor? Rome: FAO.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), (2016). The New Rural Paradigm: Policies and Governance. Paris: OECD.

Scoones I. (ed.) (2019). Livelihoods Perspectives and Rural Development. 2nd Ed. London: Zed Books.

Tacoli C. (2018). Rural-urban interactions: a guide to the literature. *Environment and Urbanization*. 30(1):147–166.

Transparency International (TI), (2020). The corruption perception index (CPI) in 2020.

United Nations (UN), (2018). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: UN.

United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), (2020). Leaving No One Behind in the Digital Era: A Strategy for Digital and Financial Inclusion in Least Developed Countries. New York: UN.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), (2016). Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone. New York: UNDP.

World Bank (2018). World Development Report 2018: Agriculture for Development. Washington DC: World Bank.