

## Local Government Administration and Opposition Parties in Nigeria: 1999-2011

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### Abstract

*Local government administration shapes the fate of modern democracy; because it is a medium where interest groups in the state stake and resolve their claims to political power through peaceful means. The grass root election in Nigeria since 1999 till date has been complex especially with opposition party since 1999 till date; and this violence cut across Nigeria. The democratic experiment in the administration of local government is marred with chaos, fraud, rigging, and all imaginable form of malpractices. This makes electoral process uninteresting in the grass root. The question remains is there active competition among competing aspirants of various political parties at the grass root level. The process of democratization will thrive when rural dwellers that form the bedrock of political process are allowed to make inputs in policies at the local level. Local government administration in Nigeria has been consistent with the exclusion of opposition parties. The theoretical nature of the paper examines concept, evolution and factors that hang ruling party in power against opposition party on the process of grass root election in Nigeria fourth republic, and suggest ways to resolve some attitudes meted by ruling party during electioneering to sustain our nascent democracy.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Elections, Violence, Council, Political Party, Grass root

### 1. Introduction

Local government administration is the third tier of government that serves as a vehicle for rural transformation. The philosophy of local governance stems from the fact that it is the government closer to people in the grass root in a democratic setting, and the best system to engage people in their own governance. Awasthi and Sanjay (2002) assert that an ideal local government administration means good government achieved through decentralized local governance. The local government that has relative autonomy display high levels of performance in its administration and service delivery. Omotola (2009) assert the major reason for various and endless local government administration in Nigeria was as a result of non-performance or gross under-performance of the local government. The 1976 local government reforms brought a watershed in the administration of local government in Nigeria through uniformity, multi-purpose and single tier structure (Ajayi, 2000 and Agagu, 2004). Chukwumerije (2003) assert that all efforts to free local government administration from anti-democratic hurdles for unified structure in 1970 to 1979 prove abortive. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1999 marks another round of civilian regime in Nigeria; the 1999 constitution guarantees the existence of local government administration on democratic principles but the term of office was not provided in the constitution, but "Decree 36 of 1998" state three years term for elected officers in council, later the constitution was vitiated by section 7 (1) and 8, under the control of state governors (FRN, 1999). The provisions empower state governors to operate grass root with non-elected officers (Nkwocha, 2009).

*Local government administration has turned a care-taker council imposed by state governments. In some cases care-taker ship is perpetuated through promise of elections which are invariably postponed. If the outright denial of democratically elected local councils through care-taker committees demonstrates the increasing authoritarian holds of the councils by state governors, the case of those where elections manage to hold does not give cause for cheers (Musa, 2011:10).*

In Nigeria, anytime a governor assumes office his first point of call is dissolution of local government councils whether elected or selected, for instance Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo state was elected in 2011, for him to secure grass root support because his party All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) lost woefully in 2007 local government election conducted by former Governor Ikedi Ohakim of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), to ensure his second term in office, he has to capture the local government administration by hook or crook. This generates legitimacy claims between rival appointee and elected official in the state (The nation, 2012). However, the report card of local government administration has not portended flying colours in Nigeria grass root level (Ogundiya, 2007).

## 2. Clarification of Concepts

Local government is the government at the local level; some scholars distinguish local government depending on the political arrangement of a nation, unitary or federal system. Adeyeye (2000) defines local government in the unitary state as non-sovereign community possessing the legal right which is essentially administrative agents of the central government. Olowu (1988) state that local government is a political subdivision of a nation state constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs to impose taxes for prescribed purposes, the governing body of such entity is elected. Similarly, the guideline for local government reform (FGN, 1976) defines local government as government at local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers in a defined area. The power give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as staff, institutional and financial power to initiate the provision of services to determine and implement projects to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas, and ensure devolution of functions to these councils through active participation of the people and traditional institutions, local initiative and respond to local head and conditions are maximized. Mill cited in Ajayi (2000:6) state that local government is one of the free institutions that provide political education, a plank by which grass roots politics can be promoted, a vehicle for political training and leadership qualities fostered in young politicians at the local level. Lawal (2000), states that local government is the tier of government closet to the people and is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain. It is expected to play the role of promoting the democratic ideals of a society and coordinate development program at the local level as a basis for socio economic development in the locality. According to (FRN, 1999), local government means government at the local level exercise through representative council, established by law to exhibit specific powers within defined areas. Local government council is an institution whose operations address the needs and aspiration of the citizenry and extends the administrative and political control to rural community (Wanjohi, 2003). The idea for creating local government makes people at the grass root level to participate in governance. Emezi (1984) sees local government as system of local administration under local communities that are organized to maintain law and order, provide some limited range of social amenities and encourage cooperation and participation of inhabitants towards the improvement of their conditions of living. It provides the community with formal organizational framework which enables them to conduct their affairs effective for the general good. The foundation of local government administration in Nigeria was anchored on the 1976 local government reforms, the reform create autonomy and viable local government. The autonomy gave them power to control their jurisdiction as granted by the central level especially in functions assigned them.

Opposition party is a system where two opposing political parties are opposing or resisting, being in conflict; antagonism, being in contrast with another, an obstacle. It involves two political parties or an

organized group opposed to the group, party, or government in power. A body of opposers; specifically, those members of a legislative body who are opposed to the administration for the time being, or the political party opposed to the party in power, frequently used adjectively: as, an opposition scheme; the opposition benches in the British House of Commons (Wikipedia, 2010). Opposition is the fundamental bases for the development of democracy, as it recognizes rights for political and social actors to publicly criticize and challenge the government in its actions and policies. In this perspective, whoever is interested in studying democracy is compelled to tackle, in a way or another, the question of political opposition which one of the greatest political theorists of our times has defined as the first axis constituting polyarchies, alongside the inclusion or participation axis (Dahl, 1971). Sometimes, this is anchored on checks and balances, institutionalized conflicts to minority parties. Most often, the notion is refer relationship, standing in some form of disagreement to another body.

### **3. Evolution Local Government Administration in Nigeria**

Local government administration in Nigeria is traced back to the pre-colonial period when powerful empires and kingdoms existed in Nigeria, these empires and kingdoms have bulk of administrative activities at these levels of administration (Okoli, 2000). The advent of British brought a change from traditional to colonial government based on indirect rule. The administration was under the traditional rulers in a place where there are no traditional institutions. This led to native authority ordinance promulgated in 1910, this make input to indirect rule system and recognized traditional rulers as sole authority to maintain law and order. In south-west, the existing traditional institutions did not recognize traditional rulers as absolute rulers, in the south east, there was non-existing traditional institutions; In the north, indirect rule system was accepted due to existing traditional system that regard emir as sole authority (Imuetinyan, 2002). The federal system of 1950 marked another stage of local government administration in Nigeria with three regions, where each region decides to adopt its own system, the regional system of local government administration collapse in the first republic. The military intervention of 1996 brought a radical change to accommodate the hierarchy of military structure and redress the abuse in the system (Gboyega, 2001). The regions and their successor states takes over the control of local government policy-making and carry out reforms that are appropriate to their circumstances with mixed results. The 1976 reform is a turning point in the development of local government administration in Nigeria, Ugwu (2001) states that the reform is a watershed in the evolution of local government administration in Nigeria; the reform makes way for national local government system. Orewa and Adewumi (1983) states that the major thrust of the reform entrust beneficial political responsibility to people for effective service delivery, but other reforms restrict scope but the reform follow due consultations at the federating units. The reform conceptualize local government as the third tier of government operating in a common institutional framework with defined functions and responsibilities, local government was funded from the federation account and has control over its spending, and provisions for a democratically elected officers were entrenched in the 1979 constitution of the second republic. Gboyega (2001) observes that the second republic was turbulent in the history of local government administration; it was a time when state and federal level went in agog to contest the control of local government with each other. The state abuse some provisions of 1979 constitution to suit their desires, they void aspects of 1976 reforms. The 1979 to 1983 did not experience local government council election; sole administrators were appointed (Iyoha, 1997). The re-emergence of military to political arena in 1984-1998 brought a change in local government from state to federal level, in 1985-1993, Babangida regime enhance local government autonomy, abolish ministry of local government, establish executive and legislative arms in local councils and disburse allocation direct with increase of 15% to 20% in 1992. Igbuzor, (2003), states that the reform transform the status of local government by transferring powers to local councils more than state government, Abacha regime of 1993-1996 revised some reforms by Babangida administration. The democratic government of May 29, 1999 reincarnates the problem of local level administration; the provisions of sec. 7 and 8 recognize local

government as the third tier of government and gave state power to lord over local level (FRN, 1999). The local government election held on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1998 by Abdulsalam Abubakar administration assume office six months after May, 29, 1999. The electoral law in which local government officials were elected (Decree No. 36 of 1998) provides three years term, but Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON) went to Supreme Court to pray for a period of four years term in collaboration with national assembly, the apex court ruled that national assembly does not have power to alter the tenure of local government officers. On May 2002, the three years term was put to a halt by state governors, they now appoint care-taker chairmen in 774 councils pending the date of election. The election was postponed twice due to tussle between state independent electoral commission (SIEC) and independent national electoral commission. The election was postponed to 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2003 few days after general election, on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2003 the Association of local government of Nigeria (ALGON) push for the amendment of constitution to empower state governors, to appoint council chairmen and councilors, when Nigeria governors forum (NGF) met with Mr. President at the council of state they set up a technical committee on the review of local government structure in Nigeria (Obasanjo, 2003). The committee submits its report in 2006, local government election was held in 2007. Many states like Kogi, Lagos, Niger, Enugu, Oyo among others created new council areas in line with the modalities of 1999 constitution, federal government refused to recognize them. Nwabueze (1983) in Ugwu (2003), observed that the constitutional power to establish local government administration structure, composition and functions is state government affair.

#### 4. Local Government Administration and Opposition Parties in Nigeria

*Sunday Independent* (2007:7) state that governors were bent on holding elections as a fall back on the tribunals' nullification of the elections; they use the local government officials they installed to get their exalted positions. There are indications that some governors may lose their seat, since the tribunal sittings, they have been jittery over a possible outcome of the cases. Some governors have not been going to tribunals because the cases against them are overwhelming, they are using the local government election to consolidate their hold in various states as the 'elected' chairmen would not like their paymasters to be disgraced in a possibly bye-election.

The PDP governments relied on the law which stipulated that State Independent Electoral Commission is responsible for local government elections. *Sunday Independent* (2007) learnt that PDP's insist on conducting election despite protests by the opposition parties was responsible for the spate of violence that greeted the exercise. The opposition believed on lopsided arrangement by the ruling party to scuttle the ambition of candidates of the opposing parties for instance, voters burnt down at least five offices of Edo State Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC) in protest of alleged irregularities. The offices in Owan East, Igueben, Orhionmwon, Ovia North East and Ovia South-West, the chairman Justice Anthony Okunega confirmed the destruction of voting materials in these areas. The trouble started in Owan East when voting materials for the exercise found their way in the house of the PDP chieftain. The youths set the area ablaze due to misconduct on the April election, the EDSIEC office at Oredo local government area, there was no voting because the materials were destroyed by some party members following counter claims that materials were smuggled out to some leaders of PDP in the area. The intervention of security agents averts blood-letting, state anti-robbery squad arrest thugs in Benin City for violating no movement order. They were in the city with commercial vehicles perfecting their rigging strategy, while others that boycott the election were busy going about their lawful business. The ACN chieftain, Chief Tom Ikimi condemned the election in the state in Igueben local government with 27,000 registered voters; but 10,000 ballot papers were delivered to the electoral officer. The remaining 17,000-ballot papers was handed over to PDP for their candidates, but reports from all the local governments areas across the state is same pattern. The party official and Press sought shortfall in delivering electoral materials, a contingent of thugs dispatched from Uromi invaded and burnt down the premises of the commission. The mobile policemen and soldiers pave way for the evil

machinations of PDP leadership; Justice Okunega loaded vehicles with electoral materials. Instead of distributing the materials amongst the various electoral officers took unprecedented step of delivering the sensitive materials to government house where the ballot papers were shared between PDP, 70% Edo State PDP and 30 percent to the people. Governor Osunbor and Chief Tony Anenih were accused of perpetuating the evil in the state but the governor will turn around and adopt the result for announcement to bow on the whims of their political master and benefactor. The last 4 years installed one of his cronies, as chairman of the local government council. It is important that President Yar'adua must take more than an interest in these disgraceful acts to perfidy against people of Edo State by leaders of his own party, the PDP (Ugborgu, 2007:B7-B8).

In Ogun State, it was a battle ground among PDP members as opposition parties boycotted the election like All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Action Congress (AC), Democratic Peoples Alliance (DPA), National Conscience Party (NCP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD) held a meeting on Tuesday December 11 in Lagos, and resolved to boycott the election due to lack of confidence in the Ogun State Independent Electoral Commission (OGSIEC) to conduct a free and fair election. They alleged that OGSIEC led by Chief Tunji Fadairo (SAN) did not provide a level playing ground for all parties with a perfect plan to deliver all the councils to the PDP. This amount to waste of time in an election the worst result has been prepared. Some dragged the state electoral commission to court asking them to review its reconstitution of the electoral body on the aegis of coalition of progressive political parties. Unfortunately, they did not grant the prayers of the opposition and state government went ahead to conduct the election without opposition parties on the election. *Sunday Independent (2008)* observed that ballot boxes arrive late at the polling stations in Abeokuta, Ilaro, Ota and staff of the umpire body was observing siesta, combine team of policemen, immigration officer and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps manned the polling stations. There was impressive turnout at Mokola wards 5 where the Minister of Mines and Steels Tunji Ishola voted in the Asasi centre and former President Obasanjo vote in his home polling unit. The scenario in Oyo State was marred by violence following the exclusion of opposition parties. The godfather of Ibadan politics, late Chief Lamidi Adedibu and PDP hawks unleashed mayhem on their perceived opponents. There was total anarchy throughout the period of election; the police assert that 130 suspects were arrested across Ibadan the state capital and Shaki area for electoral offences. The police public relations officer, Olabisi Okuwobi said that suspects were caught with dangerous weapons and thumb-printed electoral materials. The AC, ANPP, AD, UNPP and AA insist on no election because of the precarious situation in the state but the State government went ahead with the election. Governor Lam Adesina and AC leader called for the cancellation of local government election conducted in the state on December 15 which could have being an election in a civilized society like Oyo state. The former chief servant opined that he never trust PDP, as a satanic party with dubious agenda. But Adedibu described the poll as free and fair in the history of the state. The governor Chief Alao-Akala assured the residents that election would be free and fair on a different ball game when the election started. The poll was characterized with late arrival of materials to some polling stations and absence of voters' registers across the state. The troubled area manifested in Enugu State on December 15 local government elections, where two people lost their lives in Igbo-Eze South local government area due to election violence in the state. The victims whose identities could not be ascertained died when fighting broke out between supporters of PDP and Labor Party at Ibagwa-aka town, communities in the council. The three buses belonging to the supporters of a member of House of Representatives member from the area whose election was quashed by tribunal were set ablaze by political thugs. The police public relations officer (PPRO) in Enugu, Mr. Mike Abatam, and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) confirmed the violence in the area cannot access the number of casualties including deaths. The command arrested Labour Party supporters for master minding the violence; they burnt one L300 bus at Igboeze south local government area while the election was ongoing, they suspect the tampering of the materials. The officer of Enugu State Independent Electoral Commission (ENSEIC) in the council bowed out from his duty post because of the tense atmosphere, that raise fears for possible cancellation of the election in the local government. The ENSEIC

Chairman, Chief Abel Nwobodo denied the violence and ruled the possibility of canceling the election, stressing that the exercise was peaceful, irrespective of the 5pm extension time in Igbo-eze, Udenu and Nsukka Local councils, due to late arrival of materials. Barr. Sullivan Chime voted in his home town former Speaker state House of Assembly, Hon. Abel Chukwu in company with Deputy Senate President Senator Ike Ekweremadu voted in Aninri his home town and access the exercise as peaceful. However, PDP swept the results in an exercise marred by massive rigging. In Kano State election, many people lost their lives and property worth millions of naira was destroyed with the incumbent ANPP's bid to win at all cost brought smoke that catches fire, as these states are licking the wounds inflicted by the December 15 local government election, Nigerians are yet to witness another battle that awaits the local government election (Ugoani, 2009). In Abia state, the ABSIEC scheduled January 19, 2008 for their local government election. The Commission got its approval from all political parties in the state to conduct the proposed local government poll. In a swift reaction, PDP denied the claims insisting that the matter was never discussed. Speaking with Sunday Independent(2008), in Umuahia, the acting chairman, Benson Ezem states that there was no way they would be part of the agreement to hold the election in January 19 when there was court order restraining ABSIEC from conducting grass root election in the state. He requested all other political parties other than PPA to stay away from the election because it is unconstitutional. He urge other political parties to stay away as PDP believes in the rule of law and we'll not have nothing to do with the election, and criticized Prof. Stephen Emejiuwe, for misinforming the public that all the political parties had filed documents to participate in the election. From all indications, PPA government of Abia State went ahead with the election.

## **5. Factors Constraining Local Government Administration in Nigeria**

Autonomy: all efforts in 1976 to recognize local government as a tier of government were futile; local government administration is still an appendage of state and federal governments. Despite the constitutional elasticity provided for local government system beginning with the 1979 constitution and subsequent ones that defined functions and sources of funding of the system, local governments have not been able to extricate themselves from the apron string of state and federal governments in Nigeria (Osaghae, 2006). The higher levels of government interfere in their operations in ways that undermine their autonomy. The structure of power that ensures' unitary-federal system and political value of the political elite as shown in state and federal governments interventions in the affairs of local government have gone a long way in diluting the innovations brought about by the entrenchment of local government as a tier of government.

Funding: The financial paucity in local government administration could be blamed on what Suberu (2004:16) referred as the cost of distributive federalism in his words, for a federal system that is dominated by the redistribution of central collected revenue. Most local governments in Nigeria are contented with the federal or state financial allocation to them, thereby becoming a mere distribution outlet for federal and state generated revenue. The architect of 1976 local government reform bewailed that local government have produced exactly the opposite of their original objectives. Instead of bringing development closer to the people in the grass root they bent on producing absentee chairmen who are seen only at the council headquarters when the monthly "Abuja Allocation" arrives and vamoose with their standby Jeeps and Mobile police escorts after super-intending over the sharing of the national cake among the relevant stakeholders. Most governors exploited the constitutional provision for the establishment of joint state and local government account to control local government funds; they hijack the nomination and subsequent election for their acolytes as council chairmen. Aspirants who emerge victorious after rigorous process paid allegiance and political dues to the governor by accepting whatever deductions they make from the joint state- local government account. Nigeria lacks equity and fairness in sharing revenue as epitomized by the incessant manipulation of revenue allocation criteria and tax policies by the political class. The local government in its attempt to provide some social services nationwide assumes more responsibilities than would ordinarily be

the case under a federal constitution. Table 1 below shows the summary of federal allocation to local government from 1999 to 2007.

	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>State Government.</b>	<b>Local Government</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	Abia	113,956,322,728.62	66,957,033,320.83	180,913,356,049.45
2	Adamawa	111,973,469,608.66	88,385,118,660.50	200,358,588,269.16
3	Akwa Ibom	384,370,238,540.34	110,896,366,303.24	495,266,604,843.58
4	Anambra	97,592,169,763.11	85,847,453,591.19	183,439,623,354.30
5	Bauchi	128,248,345,518.84	98,833,751,081.01	227,082,096,536.85
6	Bayelsa	414,158,710,867.12	38,101,830,075.82	452,260,540,942.94
7	Benue	120,963,431,284.39	100,676,342,004.41	221,639,773,288.79
8	Borno	127,814,189,455.35	114,329,322,081.28	242,143,511,536.62
9	Cross River	115,403,682,833.25	74,990,493,054.89	190,394,175,888.13
10	Delta	463,459,893,918.76	97,961,571,804.08	561,421,465,722.84
11	Ebonyi	97,825,886,665.52	51,780,333,382.06	149,606,220,047.59
12	Edo	119,085,051,909.31	77,565,785,400.62	196,650,837,309.93
13	Ekiti	92,732,057,109.79	60,134,219,325.71	152,866,276,435.50
14	Enugu	103,979,483,787.19	68,964,491,966.13	172,943,975,753.31
15	Gombe	96,583,878,576.74	49,916,381,357.36	146,500,259,934.10
16	Imo	132,104,455,243.39	99,280,101,362.71	231,384,556,606.10
17	Jigawa	117,009,316,440.23	108,615,763,243.89	225,625,079,684.13
18	Kaduna	138,928,609,161.09	117,182,125,094.69	256,110,734,225.77
19	Kano	179,437,799,067.94	191,497,373,448.88	370,935,172,516.81
20	Katsina	140,721,433,816.83	139,822,729,992.43	280,544,163,809.26
21	Kebbi	109,325,901,797.25	86,787,009,340.22	196,139,911,137.47
22	Kogi	108,937,683,153.98	86,187,515,182.33	195,125,198,336.31
23	Kwara	99,576,991,214.56	66,011,107,696.79	165,588,098,911.35
24	Lagos	182,535,977,642.02	149,392,517,393.59	331,928,495,035.61
25	Nassarawa	90,518,301,030.98	54,487,876,090.81	145,006,177,121.79
26	Niger	126,254,889,591.23	111,114,801,956.06	237,369,691,547.30
27	Ogun	114,180,594,528.10	81,197,512,355.95	195,378,106,884.06
28	Ondo	183,313,507,542.89	74,082,244,267.18	257,395,751,810.07
29	Osun	107,476,926,982.08	102,574,611,292.67	210,051,538,274.76
30	Oyo	135,928,952,381.15	127,369,093,326.38	263,298,045,707.53
31	Platueau	81,759,592,808.53	73,434,508,057.07	155,194,100,865.61
32	Rivers	517,682,993,860.57	104,313,280,579.65	621,996,274,440.22
33	Sokoto	118,067,536,171.07	96,232,809,149.69	214,300,345,320.76
34	Taraba	103,462,234,004.51	72,869,810,839.60	176,332,044,844.11
35	Yobe	104,904,723,192.25	72,326,009,351.84	177,230,732,544.09
36	Zamfara	112,898,217,046.50	70,091,324,490.36	182,989,541,536.86
37	FCT	149,703,394,069.21	43,324,238,682.88	193,027,632,752.09
	Total	5,742,903,843,313.33	3,313,534,856,541.80	9,056,438,699,855.13
38	Fed Govt			7,390,688,951,768.72
	Grand Total			16,447,127,651,623.80

**Source:** Federal Ministry of Finance 2007

Despite that local government received N3,313,534,541.80 from the federation account within the periods of 1999 to 2007 financial years for service delivery to Nigerians, their performance remain poor (Eboh and Igboke, 2006). Public resources have been poorly managed, characterized with frivolous activities, leaving

little for essential services. The provision of services is available mostly in affluent areas and the quality of services is highly variable, and cost recovery within the sector is increasing and individuals that pay for such services are poor.

**Managerial Credibility Gap:** Most local government staff exhibit poor work attitude detrimental to productivity. The poor work attitude to work like absenteeism, indiscipline, laziness, non commitment, lateness to work (Ogunrin and Erhijakpor, 2009). The poor work attitude like absenteeism may be linked to poor remuneration, lack of equity and stagnation on the job and this compel workers to seek extra incomes from private firm (Maduabum, 1990). Thus today many local governments carry a lot of redundant workers who receive huge salaries and wages. This development has indeed financially weakened the local governments in the pursuit of their tenets. This problem is further compounded by some state governments which have created unnecessary political offices and authorized payment of salaries to the wives of local government councillors. In local government councils, from chairman to messengers are lawless, they are found wanting in their place of duty. In this type of scenario, the government cannot be close to the people and the necessary development at the grass-root cannot take place (Abdulhameed, 2013). This is why virtually all the 774 local government areas in the country have become a desert of under-development.

**Poverty of Leadership:** is a nationwide phenomenon in that local government administrations have come under serious criticism in recent years for their role in poor service delivery and bad governance. The growing perception among local citizens is that local governments are citadels of sharing national cake. For example, it is now public knowledge that local government chairmen are not supposed to account for security vote. There is the eagerness among the poor rural folk to share from this so-called free money. If properly applied and judiciously spent, the vote is supposed to be used by the local government chairmen to pursue their protective functions. Aiyede (2005) states that the management of resources have made it difficult for people in the grass root to enjoy the dividends of democratic elected local government administration in Nigeria. The experience in the first twelve years produced a situation of either no election or pseudo election. The reason for these developments is not far-fetched from state governors who control local government councils for obvious reasons. This is why care-taker committees are appointed to administer local government councils where they cannot rig local government election because of formidable opposition parties. Some states organized election if the state independent electoral commission is strong enough to rig the elections especially in states like Benue, Edo, Kogi and Lagos states (Abdulhameed, 2013). The 2003 re-election of President Obasanjo threaten local government chairmen, councilors and patrons who are worried that the third tier of government is to be scrapped. The flag bearers of respective political parties at huge financial costs were alert when Mr. President pronounces the postponement of local council elections pending the reform of local government as follows:

What we are witnessing is abysmal failure of local government system. It is on record that no time in the history of the country has there been the current level of funding accruing to local governments from the federation account, yet the hope for rapid development has been a mirage as successive councils grossly underperformed in almost all the areas of their mandate (Obasanjo, 2003)

**High Level of Corruption:** Indeed, corruption and abuse of office by local government administrators have assumed a different dimension. It is perpetrated by both bureaucrats and political office-holders. These categories of local government administrators are neck deep in inflating contracts, outright embezzlement of council funds, taking kickback on contracts; and non-execution of contracts among other corrupt practices. The inability of local governments to provide quality services as demanded by the people has been linked to corruption virus among local governments' officials. There is the growing practice among the state governments to divert local government funds through state-local government joint account. This is possible because local government allocations from the federation account are disbursed through the state governments. Most state governments have taken this advantage to divert part of the allocation to otiose projects thereby robbing the local governments of the capacity to perform their functions and live up to the expectations of the people. In 2010, Benue state House of Assembly suspended 12 council chairmen in the



state and directed that the chairmen should refund 150 million naira financial misdeeds associated with the excess crude funds received by local governments in the state (*National Mail*, Issue 12). Also in Enugu state, former governor Chimaroke Nnamani was arrested prosecuted on the allegation of diverting local governments' funds by the EFCC (<http://www.articlesbase.com>), it is surprising that 31 former governors tampered with local government funds (Ukiwo, 2006).

## 6. Conclusion and Suggestion

The local government administration impacts on the lives of the rural people directly; the imperative is that people should be allowed to choose their own leaders freely at that level. Many greedy Nigerians view it as opportunity to install their stooges and to consolidate their political stronghold which brought massive rigging that accompanies such exercises. In order to ensure democratic local government in Nigeria, there is need for all interests to twist the flag of integrity and honor for the democratic system to endure and survive. The events since independence is the abuse of the system from the hands of unscrupulous politicians always lead to failure.

In the present dispensation, the officials of the electoral umpire have shown a high degree of ineptitude and corruption. The electors themselves have not helped matters. Their problems range from inertias to culpability in the manifestation of "do-or-die" electoral history, and lose and die affairs' for those trying to confront the fraudulent electoral system in Nigeria. The option to win is to join the mainstream politics or the political party in power. The alternative is scorching heat and dryness in the wilderness of opposition political party. Presently, we have the soul-less political prostitutes and entrepreneurs of bread and butter, who change conditions that advance for "come and eat" in the stores of malfunction electoral system. The paper expresses that since political independence, the way elections are conducted especially from political elites who endanger our democracy because of their attitude in the quest for power. Election legitimizes a regime and if elections are illegitimate, then the government is illegitimate, the paper concludes credibility as a step in democratizing process with opposition party.

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