

**DECENTRALIZATION AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF BURUTU AND BOMADI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS**

**Prof. Kelly Bryan Ovie Ejumudo, PhD<sup>1</sup> and Anyanwu Onyekachi Johnson<sup>2</sup>**  
**<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Administration, Dennis Osadebay University, Anwai, Asaba, Nigeria, <sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, Novena University, Ogume, Delta State**

*Email: ejumudo.kelly-bryan@dou.edu.ng*

**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined decentralization and infrastructural development in Nigeria using Burutu and Bomadi local government areas of Delta State as case study. The data utilized in this study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through the administration of questionnaire, while the secondary data were derived from relevant textbooks, journals and other documents. Descriptive (survey) research design was employed, while simple random sampling technique was used accordingly. The population for the study is one hundred and forty-six thousand, nine hundred and ninety(146,990) adults of Burutu and Bomadi local government areas, while the sample size consists of three hundred and ninety-nine (399) adults often communities drawn from the two local government areas. Chi-Square was employed for analytical purpose to review the nature of statistical significance and relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development as well as governance capacity and infrastructural development. The study also showed that the culture of corruption hinders infrastructural development and there exist a significant relationship between development predisposition, financial capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas. The study recommended that there should be a favourable predisposition to development so as to be able to appropriately manage available resources (means) to achieve expected development (ends) in local government areas in Nigeria and the local government should shun corruption and corruptive practices and imbibe the culture of service so as to promote grass-root development. Finally, Local governments in Nigeria should device strategies for enhancing revenue generation and utilize same for developmental purposes.*

**Key Words: Decentralization, Infrastructural, Development, Burutu, Bomadi and Nigeria**

**INTRODUCTION**

Globally, increasing attention has for long been paid to the possible contribution of local governments to the development process (UN, 2022). Both developed and developing countries had, infact, showed keen interest in these possibilities, according to the national reports submitted at the Stockholm congress of the International Union of Local Authorities in 1971. The situation in developing countries like Nigeria was even considered more compelling. The considerations that constituted the major planks for the above position include the preoccupation with top-down development strategy which relied on borrowed capital and technology and emphasized import-substituting industrialization at the expense of agricultural and rural modernization, the realization among scholars, development agencies, advisers and programmers that local institutions should play a key role in the economic development process just like the industrialized countries of Europe, North America and Japan as well as the well-documented case of Israel (Dumont, 2023).

The demand for political participation, which became a major feature of the global wave of democratization of the early 1990s and a usual call for the devolution of powers by central governments to self-governing communities at the local level, also made decentralization policies to

become fashionable world-wide (Rondinelli, 2015). The sub-national governments are expected to be closer to the local population and more accountable for their actions. It was the above wave of democratization coupled with the exigency of the expected role of the local government in the desired development process in the developing world after the success stories recorded mainly in Europe and North America that made decentralization in the context of devolution of power to the grass-roots level very appealing (Ukeji, 2014). In a similar vein, it was widely believed that decentralization will result in a variety of policy approaches at the local level, some of which will be more successful than others, apart from the reasoning that decentralization of real power to local authorities is a means of enhancing political participation amongst the people because of the increased levels of interest and involvement in local government which it engenders. This process according to Morris (2022), enhances democratic values and performs a systems maintenance function, thus promoting political stability

In the face of the above reality, it appears that countries like Nigeria are yet to fully recognize the contribution that local governments can make in achieving national development goals. This may be a plausible explanation for why government activities at the local level have, by and large, been considered extrinsic to central concerns. Another seeming reason for this attitude is that most developing countries have highly centralized governments that naturally concentrate on their own role in development, in isolation from local government (FAO, 2023). Apart from the problematic of the species of local government decentralization arrangement in Nigeria which has largely rendered grass-roots administration as appendages of some sort to state government, there are sundry factors that have arguably affected the expected link between decentralization and the development process. While appropriate decentralization is only a necessary condition for development and, in this instant study, for infrastructural development; there are intervening variables that have the potency of actualizing infrastructural development given decentralization vehicle (Donaldson, 2021). The variables include development predisposition, governance capacity, culture of accountability and financial capacity. The contention in this study therefore, is that the absence or near absence of the above intervening variables has largely constrained the critical role that decentralization is supposed to have played in bringing about infrastructural development in Nigeria

### **Statement of the Problem**

The 1976 local government reforms sought, at least in letter, to decentralize some significant functions of state governments to the local level in order to harness the local resources for rapid development (Local Government Guidelines, 2016). Accordingly, the then Federal Military Government decided to use devolution as a form of decentralization to enable governments at the grass-roots level to pursue, among other basic objectives, the provision of appropriate services and development activities in response to the needs and demands of the local people (Aluko, 2016). Several decades afterwards, decentralization does not seem to have effectively and efficiently achieved the intended objectives. While some local government councils are comparatively relatively doing well, many of them are facing varying degrees of service delivery and developmental challenges. The contention in this study, is that decentralization to the extent that it is supposed to gain more effective achievement of locally selected goals, it is arguably not a sufficient condition for effective infrastructural development in Nigeria, as elsewhere in the developed and developing world.

As a-matter-of-factly, there are intervening variables that potentially have the capacity of providing the sufficiency that is needed for properly designed decentralized local government environments to effectively achieve infrastructural development. This study which examines decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas of Delta state, further argues that poor development agenda, poor governance capacity, poor financial capacity and the culture of corruption are constraining factors to the necessary link between

decentralization and infrastructural development. It is the presence of the above factors in a reversed positive context that can potentially serve as intervening variables in the actualization of effective infrastructural development through decentralized local governments in Nigeria. This is the gap that this study seeks to fill using Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas as a case study.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas, while the specific objectives are to:

- 1 Investigate the impact of development predisposition on infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government areas.
- 2 Examine the role of governance capacity on infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government areas.
- 3 Assess the impact of the culture of corruption on infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government areas.
- 4 Examine the role of financial capacity on infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government areas.

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas.
2. There is a significant relationship between development predisposition and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government areas.
3. There is a significant relationship between governance capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government areas.
4. There is a significant relationship between the culture of corruption and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government areas.
5. There is a significant relationship between financial capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local Government area

### **Literature Review**

#### **Local Government: A Conceptual Explanation**

The United Nations Office for Public Administration (1976) defines local government as a political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exert labour for prescribed purposes. The government body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected. This definition has been widely accepted as largely embracing so much so that both the Cambridge (UK) conference on local government in Africa and the United Nations Conference at the Hague on Administrative Aspects of decentralization (both took place in 1961) considered and adopted the United Nations definition. The implication of the above definition is that: each unit of government in any system is assumed to possess the following characteristics : a given territory and population, an institutional structure for legislative, executive and administrative purposes, a separate legal identity, a range of power and function authorized by delegation from the appropriate central or intermediate legislature, and lastly, within the ambit of such delegation, autonomy, subject always, at least in Anglo-American tradition, to the limitations of common law such as the test of reasonableness.

Another important element of the definition is the fact that local government or local self-government (a concept that underlines the democratic aspect of election) cannot include rule by local notables, by traditional or hereditary rulers, some special elite or such people, as a matter of right. In the same manner, local self-government is not reconcilable with the running of local affairs

by local men nominated for the purpose by the central government. This participation of the local population in the selection of representatives, whether by election or by some special selection, is a very fundamental prerequisite of local government or local self-government.

An approach to the understanding of the meaning of local government regards all sub-national structures below the central government as local government (Alderfer, 2024). A major flaw with this approach is that a sub-national structure might be regional, state or provincial government. Again, this approach fails to distinguish between devolution and decentralization. The former refers to the transfer of substantial decision-making powers and responsibilities from legally independent units outside the control of the central or federal government and regional or state government as the case may be, while the latter is used to describe the transfer of administrative responsibilities to field administrative units of the central or federal government. Local government is a good example of devolution of powers and responsibilities by the Central or Federal government, while field administration, statutory bodies are good examples of deconcentration. Thus, not all sub-national structures below the central or federal government possess the essential characteristics or features of a local government.

A more comprehensive definition of local government, and one that captures the essential features of local government, is contained in the guidelines for the reform of local government in Nigeria. According to the guidelines (1976), local government is government at the local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the councils substantive control over local affairs, as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services, and to determine and implement projects, so as to complement the activities of the State and Federal government in their areas, and to ensure, through active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiatives and response to local needs are maximized. The above definition implies that there are certain distinguishing features of local government, which are also well articulated in the works of political philosophers such as Mawhood (2023) and Whalen (2024). These features, as highlighted by (Ezeani, 2024), are as follows:

1. Localness: This particular feature implies that local government is the lowest tier of government; it is government at grassroots or local level. Consequently, local government is subordinate, but not subservient, to the other higher tiers or levels of governments, that is, the central or federal and the state or regional governments.
2. It has a legal existence enshrined in the constitution as in Nigeria. This protects it from arbitrary actions of higher authority. As a legal entity, it can sue or be sued and has a perpetual succession. This implies that the life of a local government does not expire with the end of each administration.
3. It enjoys substantial autonomy. Although local governments are subject to State or Federal government control in certain areas, they enjoy a reasonable degree of independence in administrative and financial affairs, such as the hiring, control and discipline of their own staff subject to a certain upper limit; the preparation of annual estimates or budgets, and the execution of certain projects (Blair, 2020,).
4. It exists within a defined territory and exercises specific powers and performs certain functions as enshrined in the constitution (as is the case in Nigeria) or statutes.
5. Local government exercises its authority over a given population. In other words, as a corporate entity, local government is created to serve citizenry resident in a known location.
6. The council is composed of elected representatives of the local people. Thus, local government cannot be ruled by local notables, by traditional or hereditary rulers, some special elite or such people, as a matter of right.

Local government is the government at grassroots designed to serve as an instrument for rapid rural development. Hence, the primary purpose of local government is to bring government

nearer to the local communities so that the local people could participate fully in the process of government. This is in order to provide local services and thus accelerate the pace of social; economic and political development. Accordingly, guidelines for local government: "is to mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development". Local government is therefore aimed at making appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes by catering their needs. As grass root-based, consisting of small units of local communities upon which political powers are devolved to cater for their needs, local government serves as viable instrument for rapid and even development of local communities. As a community-based Authority, it creates a great sense of "we-feeling" among the people of the area.

### **Justification for Local Governments**

Justification for the existence of local governments has resulted in three different perspectives on the imperative for government at the grass-roots level. Generally, it is presumed that the local people understand and conduct their own local affairs as well as understand their needs far better than others from a distance. The same people, it has been observed, will tend to defend with a sense of conviction and commitment what they, by themselves, have decided upon. There is also the idea that local government stands as a hedge against undue centralization which might have become dangerous to liberty. At an age when the functions of government seem to be expanding and when government is continually being pressed to regulate more and more of human life and behavior, and when the welfare state is becoming more and more universal in concept.

It seems impractical to concentrate all functions in the hands of one government, be it central, intermediate or local. This explains why the local government has been described as a seed bed of democracy in that it holds out against the depredation of majoritarian tyranny and provides a chance of local political pressure upon the central government. Local government can also be an instrument of political education because it can provide a school of citizenship and serve as a forum for socializing political participants. This argument with respect to the general population is to the effect that local government constitutes a valuable opportunity for the political education and political socialization of citizens. This it does by creating opportunities for local political activities and participation, making financial contributions, giving assistance in campaigns, standing as a candidate for local election and supporting party organizations in cash or kind at the local level. In these ways, local government socializes the citizen in relation to his community whilst it improves his political education.

### **Functions of Local Government Councils**

The Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria made elaborate provision for the functions of the local government. These functions include the following: collection of rates, radio and television licenses, establishment and maintenance of burial grounds and homes for the infirm, licensing of bicycles, trucks, other mechanically propelled trucks, canoes, wheel harrows and carts, establishment of slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences, construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of the State.

Other functions include: naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses, provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal, registration of all births, deaths and marriages, assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a state, control and regulation of out-door advertising and hoarding, movement /and keeping of pets of all description, shops and kiosks, restaurants, bakeries and other places for sale of food to the public, laundries, licensing, regulation

and control of the sale of liquor and participation of such council in the government of a state as regards to the provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education, the development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals.

### **Sources of Local Government Revenue**

The performance of any local government is subject to the availability of adequate funds which it can use to finance its ever increasing responsibilities ((Bardhan, 2024). In recent time, local government administration has generated a lot of interest in the national politics as a result of its strategic influence and impact on the life of the citizens in the grass root. Local government activities are fundamental as they affect the basic daily lives of the rural and urban dwellers. It is this crucial role of the local government that led to the local government emerging in 1976 as a third level of government.

Local governments in Nigeria have a gamut of functions to carry out and it is only when money is available and sufficient that these objectives can be carried out. Generally, there are two main sources of revenue for the local government system in Nigeria like in many other countries of the world (Obiukwu, 2020). They include:

#### **Internal Sources**

**Rate:** Rate is a local tax of the local government and it is generally one of its independent revenue sources. Rates are of three types, namely, capitation rate or poll tax, property or tenement rate and special rates.

**Capitation Rate or Poll Tax:** Capitation rate or poll tax, which is sometimes called general/development rate is a fixed equal amount levied on all ratable adults on annual basis.

**Property Rate:** Property rate is a fixed amount levied on owners of private buildings and tenement which is based on the current value of the property.

**Special Rate:** Special rate is-a fixed amount levied on ratable adults by the local government for specific projects like education, water supply, electricity projects, etc.

**Fees, Charges and Licenses:** Fees and charges are payment which local governments impose for certain services which they provide. The fees are designed to regulate the services as, well as provide funds for the local governments. The imposition of fees and charges on any service by a local government requires an enabling bye-law for it to be lawful. Local government charges/fees on market stalls and lock-up stores, motor parks and motorcycle parks, advertisement, contractors' registration, Birth and Death Registration, Fishing and hunting, Palm wine, Marriage Registration, Slaughter Fees respectively. They also issue a variety of licenses such as radio, and television, bicycle; wheel barrow, carts, bakery ho liquor/brewing, retail and wholesale trading, dane guns' control, dried fish and dried meat, dog, hawkers' permits, control of noise, licenses etc.

**Fines:** Fines are financial penalties imposed on individuals for a breach of bye-laws of the local government. Local government makes bye-laws in order to regulate and control services allocated to them within their area of jurisdiction. Bye-laws provide appropriate penalties in form of fines for their violation.

**Earnings and Profits:** Earning and profits are money realized by the local government from commercial ventures and industrial establishments. Examples of such ventures are agricultural farms;' soap industry, bakery, transport services and others.

**Interest on Revenues:** Local government generate revenue from interest on investment interest on state deposits, profits from sale of investments/stocks, shares from viable companies.

### **External Sources**

**Loans Borrowing:** Local government are empowered to raise loans for executing capital development projects which are within the statutory functions such as market development, drainage s health” educational, agricultural and industrial development projects. Major capital development projects can be effectively financed through borrowing. It is being repaid from the rates those who enjoy such development will pay in future.

**Grants:** Grant which is often called grants-in-aid is a financial aid which is given by the central or state government to the local government to enable it discharge its functions effectively. The main reason behind the grant system is that, since many services provided by the local governments are of very fundamental importance and central to state/central governments functions, it becomes mandatory for the state/central government to provide its funds for these functions. Consequently, four types of grants are given to local governments.

**Block Grants:** First is the block grant given in order to augment the local government internal or independent revenue.

**Specific Grants:** The specific grant, which is a fixed amount of money given to a local government for a specific purpose.

**Equalization Grants:** The Equalization grant which is made to poor and backward local governments to enable them catch up developmentally

**Matching Grants:** The Matching Grant which is financial aid made by the state/central government that embark on development projects listed as priorities of government.

**Statutory Revenue Allocation:** It is the share of revenue from state/central government as fixed by law. It came into existence in’ order to replace block or general ‘grant which has a’ lot of inadequacies. The 1976 local government reform was introduced in Nigeria supposedly as a means of providing adequate revenue to the local government. It is the accounts and the state government’s total revenue based on percentage formula. In Nigeria, it is 20%’of the federation accounts in addition to 10% of the total internal revenue of the state government. This is the most viable source of revenue for local government.

### **Decentralization: A Conceptual Understanding**

Decentralization is a word that has been used variously by different people to mean several things. First and foremost, it is regarded as the process of dispersing decision – making authority closer to the people or citizens. Decentralization that is a widespread phenomenon is the transfer of political power to local units of government (Dillinger, 2019). It includes the dispersal of administration or governance in sectors or areas like engineering, management science, political science, political economy, sociology and economics. A central issue in decentralization is the difference between a hierarchy, based on authority: two players in an unequal – power relationship and an interface: a lateral relationship between two players of roughly equal power.

Decentralization can be used to refer to an administrative measure involving the transfer of management responsibilities and resources to agents of the central government located outside the headquarters at one or more levels like province, region, division, and district (Adamolekun, 2005). The term decentralization is used to refer to a political arrangement involving the devolution of specific powers, functions, and resources by the central government to sub-national level government units. In many cases, these sub-national government units are substantially independent of the central government and have a legal status (personality). Normally the existence of provincial, regional, or state governments is enshrined in constitutions in federal and quasi-federal or hybrid states (that is, states with elements of both federal and unitary systems). Decentralization implies varying degrees of autonomy including the transfer of responsibility for budgets and financial decisions from higher to lower levels of government.

In a similar parlance, decentralization is taken to mean the transfer of substantial decision – making powers and responsibilities to corporate units outside the framework of the central government. Such units include local governments, statutory corporations, cooperatives and the organized private sector. This view agrees with Parsons (2012) understanding of decentralization as the sharing of part of the governmental power by a central ruling group with other groups, each having authority within a specific area of the state. He also opined that decentralization indicates the existence of formal political structure, each covering a defined area, representing local interest as well as the interest of the central rulers, with the local share of the power protected by formal as well as by normative rulers which are accepted by the center. Parson equally noted that the concept means unit of local government in which formal decision making is primarily exercised by locally representative councilors or officials.

The United Nations (1997) equally conceptualized decentralization as the umbrella term embracing all forms of delegation of responsibilities and /or authority within or between organizations. Essentially too, Young (2019) posited that decentralization means distributing authority and power horizontally rather than hierarchically. The purpose is to gain more effective achievement of locally selected goals, for the more diverse the environment and the fewer the rewards of precisely coordinated activity, the more advantageous decentralized decision making is likely to be. But, because of the potential for conflicts created whenever there are parallel sets of officials who, by law, are to some degree independent of each other, decentralization requires special conditions before they can succeed.

As a complex and multifaceted concept that embraces a variety of meanings, with different types of decentralization showing different characteristics, policy implications and conditions for success, it can be conceived as the hope of cracking open the blockages of an inert central bureaucracy, curing managerial constipation and giving more direct access for the people to the government and the government to the people, thereby stimulating the whole nation to participate in national developments plans.

Decentralization can be political, administrative and fiscal as well as market (World Bank, 2022). Drawing distinctions between the above types of decentralization is useful for purpose of highlighting the multiple dimensions of successful decentralization and the need for conditions among them. Even though there are tendencies for overlap in any attempt at precisely defining the various types of decentralization, the need for a comprehensive approach cannot be over-emphasized as Sharma (2024) rightly articulated. Political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralization can also take different forms, shapes and combinations across countries, within countries and even within sectors. For purpose of this study however, only the political type is germane.

### **Political Decentralization**

Political decentralization is directed towards giving citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision making. While it is often associated with pluralistic politics and representative government, it can also assist democratization by providing citizens or their representatives more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies. Advocates of political decentralization assume that decisions made with greater participation will be better informed and more relevant to different interests in plural societies (like Nigeria) than those made only by national political authorities (Dubois and Fattore, 2019).

The concept of political decentralization demands the election of representatives from local electoral constituencies which permits citizens to know better their political representatives and allows the elected officials to know better the needs, desires, demands and peculiarities of their constituents. Political decentralization commonly requires constitutional or statutory reforms, creation of local political units and the encouragement of effective public interest groups. Arguably,

no country's governmental system can be described as totally or completely decentralized. Rather, it is easier to classify countries according to their degree of decentralization and more importantly, to think of them in the light of a continuum showing the extent of discretionary authority enjoyed by sub-national governmental institutions such as local governments and statutory corporations, cooperatives (Olowu, 2021).

Political decentralization thus implies semi-independent governmental organizations that have some latitude or freedom to act without referring to the central government for approvals, but their status is not comparable with that of a sovereign state (Samuel and Adam, 2023). Their local authority, power and existence flow directly from a decision of the national legislature and can be altered when the legislature decides so. Although the local authority is too small to offer a real threat to the national government, a council dominated by the political opposition can at least serve as an irritant which may explain the reason why the government in power may step in and dissolve a council. All the same, the value of the semi-independent political body is that it provides an opportunity for government to hold dialogue with the masses to influence them and to receive feedback from them.

### **Infrastructure: A Conceptual Explanation**

Infrastructure is commonly seen as social overhead capital by many development economists. Hirshman (2020) posited that social overhead capital encompasses activities that share technical features such as economies of scale and economic features like spillovers from users to non-users. The social capital acts as a priming to expand private sector investment, and in contrast, social capital becomes relatively lacking along with the expansion of private capital and productive activities. Though the term "infrastructure" is commonly used in the development economics literature, it is not always defined, and can take on different meanings. The term "public infrastructure investment," for instance, is sometimes used to denote government investment, even though it also includes investment by publicly owned companies such as utilities. As a rule, however, such corporate investment is recorded as government (rather than corporate) investment only if the revenues of such firms cover less than half their production costs: that is, the source of funding, not the formal ownership, determines how investment is classified (Alegre et al. 2018).

More important for the present argument, infrastructure investment is sometimes used broadly to include not only physical capital formation, but also expenditure in areas considered to increase human capital such as education. Even excluding such expenditure, it is often useful to think of government capital formation as falling into several distinct categories Alegre et al. (2018). For example, it is possible to distinguish four categories in terms of the functions served by such investment: redistribution (housing, recreation, social protection); public goods (defence, environment, order and safety, general public services); hospitals and schools (health and education), and what they call simply infrastructure, that is traditional public works projects, of which transportation is by far the most important in quantitative terms in most countries. This type of public works has the most direct economic impact by reducing firms' production and transaction costs. The economic impact of government investment in health and education sectors is more long-term and less direct in character, as it facilitates the building up and maintenance of the economy's stock of human capital. Investment in public goods affects the economy's allocative efficiency indirectly through framework conditions for productive activity.

All the same, infrastructure is the construction, operation, and maintenance of the long-lived physical assets required to deliver such specific public services as land transportation (highways, roads, streets, bridges, and ancillary services such as street lighting, street cleaning, signage and the like.), potable water (supply, distribution), wastewater management (sewerage, disposal), and solid waste collection and disposal (including hazardous waste). The importance of infrastructure is plausible explanation for the adoption and deployment of public/private partnership strategy in the provision of utility services such as electric power generation and distribution, natural gas

distribution, airports and airways, ports and navigation control systems, railroads and public transit systems, irrigation and telecommunications.

Arguably, most important infrastructure usually assigned to decentralized governments—roads, water and sewerage, and solid waste disposal, since infrastructure investments are, by definition, located in a particular physical location. When that happens, the private sector's indirect production costs gradually increase and private sector capital input declines. At this stage, demand for social capital investment recurs and such investment is expended. Social overhead capital contributes to enhancing productivity and assists in the realization of the potential ability of human capital, and creates situations in which that potential can fully function. It also contributes directly and indirectly to improving the safety and quality of people's lives. Within the scope of infrastructure, electric power, ports, roads, and telecommunications are often used as the services and intermediate goods that are essential for the productive processes of private sector.

### **Development: A Conceptual Discourse**

Development is an ever-changing step towards achieving some goal and the optimum realization of the well-being of people in their communities. It is not an absolute but a relative term because it is difficult to measure, especially as a particular activity may be considered development or a step forward in a particular society, but it may not be so considered in another society. Development is very much related with aspirations and expectations of the people. It is interaction of the people with the natural resources available to them. Quite often, development is viewed as some dynamic change of society from one stage to another without assuming that it is the final stage. Marsh (2023) conceived the concept as huge changes in the lives of people and societies and a progression from one condition to another; that is, from underdevelopment to development.

The modern concept of development can be traced to 1987 when the report of the Brundtland Commission defined development to include economic, environmental, social, cultural and health as well as political needs. In defining development therefore, one cannot avoid concerns with social and political issues, while focusing on goals, ideals and economic matters. Some scholars have, however, emphasized the need for human-centred development; that is, the focus of development needs not be machines or institutions, but people. In the same vein, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) maintained that the people must be at the centre of all development (UNDP, 2018).

The World Bank (2022) also asserted that investing in people, if done rightly, would provide the finest foundation for lasting development. It further noted that all people have the same basic needs in form of clean water, fresh air, comfortable housing, etc., which must be met if development is to take place. Development is also seen as an aspect of desirable and planned change influenced by governmental action. Thus development is a value-based and a broad concept. Development is a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems (Todaro and Smith, 2019). It transcends beyond the improvement in income and output to the radical transformation in institutional, social and administrative structures. Although development is commonly seen in a national context, its holistic realization may necessitate fundamental modifications of the international economic and social system. Development is therefore a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it also connotes increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being (Rodney, 2022).

Although the orthodox view of development assumes that growth in income will translate automatically to improvements in the welfare of the citizens of any given country (Iyoha et al, 2023), due to the experience of many less developed countries in the 1950s and 1960s, which revealed the simultaneous existence of rapid growth and the general deterioration in the condition of human life; attempts have been made to humanize the concept of development. In the thinking of Seers (2019),

for instance, evaluation of developmental levels must be concerned with what has been happening to poverty, unemployment and inequality. Besides, development is a continuous process of generating and more efficiently allocating resources for achieving greater socially satisfying ends (Aboyade, 2024).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Considering the fact that development is emerging as the goal of humanity and the resultant surge towards the satisfaction of basic needs like food and shelter, education and health, the government has come to stay as major instrument of development. Additionally, as a result of the need for decentralized development, the critical role of the local government in the development process has continuously resonated in the literature of development studies.

In view of the above and cognizant of the existence of several theories that represent intellectual attempts and explanatory accounts by scholars of various persuasions for the presence or otherwise of development in different settings and communities, the theory of decentralized development will be adopted in this study. According to Dickson (2024), a major of the above theory, local government is an instrument of development and resultantly a concrete embodiment of government with proximity to actual contact with the people at the grassroots. He added that the local government is a public agency that is expected to actualize the developmental aspirations of the local people through the mobilization of available resources and partnership with the other levels of government in the multi-layered governance structure. Dickson (2024) equally posited that different forms of partnership (either among local governments themselves or between local government and a higher levels of government) has the potentiality of ensuring a greater degree of local autonomy, apart from the manifest benefits of local participation and interdependence in a broadened-decentralized decision-making environment.

Hardy (2016) also asserted that the theory of decentralized government has patent characteristics: it defines decentralization as a process; it takes into account the territorial interests of bargaining actors; and it incorporates policy reforms aimed at transferring responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government, policy feedback and provides a dynamic account of institutional partnership and local participation. The utilitarian value of the theory of decentralized development for this study is evident in its emphasis on a decentralized approach to the development process and the critical role of local government in the process through partnership amongst themselves and with other levels of government.

### **Research Method**

In this study, the descriptive survey research design was adopted. Surveys are used to collect quantitative information about items in a population survey of human populations and institutions (Gibson, 2021) and allows the researcher to collect data from the research subjects by using tools such as interviews, questionnaires and participant observation in order to obtain the relevant information by direct observation of the source personalities (primary data). The research population for this study is 146,990 comprising 103,988 adults of Burutu Local Government Area and 43,009 adults of Bomadi Local Government Area (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The sample size for this study is three hundred and ninety-nine (399) to be drawn from six communities from Burutu and four communities from Bomadi Local Government Areas of Delta State. The communities are: Burutu Main Town, Oboro, Ekiagbodo, Tuomor, Ozobo, Bulundoro (from Burutu) Bomadi Main Town, Esanma, Kalasiugbene and Akugbene (from Bomadi). The choice of the above ten communities out of the total thirty-three communities (twenty two from Burutu and eleven from Bomadi) is based on a spread considering the federal wards structure existing in each of the two local government selected for this study.

The sample was determined using Taro Yamen's formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size

N= the population of study

e = error margin estimated at (0.05)

$$n = \frac{146990}{1 + 146990(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{146990}{368.475}$$

$$n = 399$$

Therefore, 399 were considered appropriate to form the sample size, having a population of 146,990 (Olannye, 2016).

Random probability type of sampling was adopted in this study. Apart from the fact that the probability of the selection of each respondent exists, the obvious advantage of this sampling technique is that, it is much less expensive and it reduces bias and ensures validity (Bryman, 2021). Although it is statistically complex, the method can be successfully used for social science research. The research instrument that was used is structured questionnaire. The structured questionnaire for data collection in this study was divided into two sections. Section A contain a letter of introduction of the study to the respondents requesting them to assist by completing the demographic data of the respondents as well as provide other needed information in section B. Section B contained questions properly constructed to cover all variables being studied. The data collected from the administration of research instrument were scored and analyzed with the aid of Chi-square using scientific package (SPSS version 21) to test null hypotheses and analyze the responses of the respondents because of the nature of the topic (Decentralization and Infrastructural Development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas).

### **Presentation and Discussion of Results**

The data presented and analyzed in this study was categorized into three parts; the first is the presentation of results of respondents with percentage weighting attached. The second is the testing of hypotheses formulated for the study and discussion of findings.

#### **Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas

**Table 4.1: Chi-square analysis of questionnaire for the relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development**

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X <sup>2</sup> -cal.	X <sup>2</sup> -cri.	Alpha level
1	72	28	352	3	91.64	7.82	0.05
2	69	31	352				
3	74	26	352				
4	71	29	352				
5	73	27	352				

**Source:** Field Work, 2024

In table 4.1 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 91.64. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

**Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant relationship between development predisposition and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

**Table 4.2: Chi-square analysis of questionnaire for the relationship between development predisposition and infrastructural development**

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X <sup>2</sup> -cal.	X <sup>2</sup> -cri.	Alpha level
1	77	23	352	3	98.51	7.82	0.05
2	72	28	352				
3	74	26	352				
4	78	22	352				
5	62	38	352				

**Source:** Field Work, 2024

In table 4.2 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 98.51. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between development predisposition and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

**Hypothesis 3**

There is no significant relationship between governance capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

**Table 4.3: Chi-square analysis of questionnaire for the relationship between governance capacity and infrastructural development**

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X <sup>2</sup> -cal.	X <sup>2</sup> -cri.	Alpha level
1	80	20	352	3	154.54	7.82	0.05
2	77	23	352				
3	77	23	352				
4	80	20	352				
5	94	06	352				

**Source:** Field Work, 2024

In table 4.3 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 154.54. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between governance capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

**Hypothesis 4**

There is no significant relationship between the culture of corruption and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas

**Table 4.4: Chi-square analysis of questionnaire for the relationship between culture of corruption and infrastructural development**

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X <sup>2</sup> -cal.	X <sup>2</sup> -cri.	Alpha level
1	75	25	352	3	103.23	7.82	0.05
2	77	23	352				
3	61	39	352				

4	82	18	352				
5	75	25	352				

**Source:** Field Work, 2024

In table 4.4 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 103.23. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between culture of corruption and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

### Hypothesis 5

There is no significant relationship between financial capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas

**Table 4.5: Chi-square analysis of questionnaire for the relationship between financial capacity and infrastructural development**

Items	SA/A	SD/D	Total	Df	X <sup>2</sup> -cal.	X <sup>2</sup> -cri.	Alpha level
1	84	16	352	3	136.84	7.82	0.05
2	65	35	352				
3`	81	19	352				
4	76	24	352				
5	75	25	352				

**Source:** Field Work, 2024

In table 4.5 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 136.84. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between financial capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

### Discussion of Findings

In accordance with the data analysis conducted and the review of literature in Chapter two, the discussion of findings of this research study is presented below:

#### Decentralization and Infrastructural Development

Table 4.2 shows the chi-square analysis for the relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas. Also as indicated in the table 4.2 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 91.64. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between decentralization and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

The above finding is closely related to Ukeji's (2014) position that decentralization of responsibility is critical to development at the local government level. Ukeji particularly noted that decentralization increases the political decision-making centers in governance and provides an environment that can promote development at the grass-root level.

#### Development predisposition and Infrastructural Development

Table 4.4: shows the chi-square analysis for the relationship between development predisposition and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas. Also, as indicated in table 4.4 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 98.51. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical

value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between development predisposition and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

The above finding is supported by Morris (2022) assertion that the attitudes of local government administrators to governance will either positively or negatively affect their performance in terms of development. For instance, he stressed that local government that perceive a relationship between staff welfare and development and the achievement of local government goals and objectives will focus on human development as a critical input for development at the local government level.

### **Governance Capacity and Infrastructural Development**

Table 4.6: indicates the chi-square analysis for the relationship between governance capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas.

In table 4.6 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 154.54. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between governance capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

### **Culture of Corruption and Infrastructural Development**

Table 4.8: indicates chi-square analysis for the relationship between culture of corruption and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas. In table 4.8 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 103.23. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between culture of corruption and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

The above finding agrees with the view of Donaldson (2021) that corruption undermines the economy and affects development. He specifically emphasized that the diversion of valuable financial resources that are supposed to be invested in the educational and health sectors in order to promote development will resultantly affect the educational and health status of the people of any given society or country with tangential implications for development.

### **Financial Capacity and Infrastructural Development**

Table 4.10: show chi-square analysis for the relationship between financial capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi local government areas. In table 4.10 above, with alpha level of 0.05, the degree of freedom (DF) of 3, the critical value is 7.82 while calculated value is 136.84. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between financial capacity and infrastructural development in Burutu and Bomadi Local Government Areas.

The above finding is supported by Hardy's (2016) position on finance as a critical input in output of development. He added that in so far as finance is needed for the actualization of government projects and programmes, it is evidently a life-wire in the developmental process.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of how decentralization affects infrastructural development. The researcher therefore concludes that development predisposition affects infrastructural development. This is particularly because the right attitude to development will likely bring about commitment to and involvement in developmental programmes and projects. The study also concludes that governance capacity impacts on infrastructural development largely

because the level of development is reasonably linked with the ability to manage the available resources for developmental purposes. The study equally concludes that culture of corruption affects infrastructural development mainly because of the dysfunctional role that in-grained corruption plays in undermining development efforts through the diversion of investable funds. The finally concludes that financial capacity impacts on infrastructural development due to the fact that the actualization of government policies, programmes and projects is evidently linked with financial provision and utilization.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended as follows:

1. Local governments in Nigeria should be favourably predisposed to development so as to translate genuine development initiatives into concrete reality.
2. Local governments in Nigeria should have the requisite governance capacity so as to be able to appropriately manage available resource (means) to expected development (ends).
3. Local governments in Nigeria should shun corruption and corruptive practices and imbibe the culture of service so as to promote grass-root development.
4. Finally, Local governments in Nigeria should device strategies for enhancing revenue generation and utilize same for developmental purposes.

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