

# Accountability Culture and Public Acceptability of Local Government System for Enhanced Grassroot Development in Nigeria: the Role of Public Relations

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## Abstract

In this study the correlation between accountability culture in the administration of local governments in Nigeria and the recent public outcry for the proscription of that tier of government is examined, as it affects development in the country's grassroot areas. It was motivated by the call for the abrogation of the local government system due to alleged poor performance. The objectives sought were to: ascertain the level of correlation accountability practices or lack of it has in the public demands for the proscription of local government system in Nigeria and determine the effect of the local governments' accountability standards on project development at the grassroots' levels. The research methodology adopted survey design technique, with structured questionnaire as the main instrument for primary data collection. The data were analyzed with the statistical tools of Likert's 5-points scale and Spearman's correlation coefficient. The results obtained show that there is a strong correlation between poor accountability by local government administrations in Nigeria and the public outcry for the disbandment of that tier of government. There was also significant correlation between the lack of accountability culture in local government administrations in Nigeria and the poor development at the grassroots' levels of the country. Based on this outcome, the applications of public relations attitudinal-change strategies from negative practices to positive practices in fund management by local government chairmen in Nigeria was proffered for enhanced development at the grassroots' levels of the country.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Local Government's administration, grassroots' development, public relations, public perceptions.

## 1.1 Introduction

Local government is the third tier of government in Nigeria that is nearest to the people at the grassroots. It is a structure that provides for the goods and services needed by the people and also brings development and good governance to the local levels. This notwithstanding, development has not thrived up to public expectations at the grassroots level in Nigeria due to alleged paucity of the culture of accountability and transparency in the administration of local government in Nigerian, (Adeyemi et. al, 2012). Akinbode (2010:1) observed that the primary reason for the existence of the local governments is the efficient and effective provision of services and coordination of activities and functions at the local level. Local government is the government at the grassroots that is nearest to the local populace. The implication of its constitutionally guaranteed governance structure and its closeness to the people is that the institution of transparency and accountability and their norms in governance should be more evident at this level. But contrarily, local governments in Nigeria are often seen as nurturing grounds for barefaced corruption and near absence of transparency and accountability in the conduct of governance (Abubakar, 2010: 25). The local government administration in Nigeria has been befuddled with allegations of mal-administration and mismanagement of public funds, leading to recent public outbursts for a local government review, while others call for an outright abrogation of this third tier of government originally created to bring government closer to the grassroot in the country.

For instance, according to Obasanjo (2003:1), the need for review of the present structure of governance at local government level is informed by three disturbing trends, among others, which had been identified with the recent inception of democratic dispensation in the country:

- (i) The non-performance or gross under-performance of the Local Governments;
- (ii) The high cost of governments and near prohibitive costs of electioneering campaigns to individual political

contestants in Nigeria; and  
(iii) Fragmentisation and continual fragmentisation of Local Government Councils including impractical division of towns and cities into unworkable mini-Local Governments.

Experience, in other democracies, has shown beyond doubt that these trends are inimical to national development (Obasanjo, 2003:1). Kamla (2010) added that the failure of local government in the area of service delivery over the years has made the citizens to lose faith and trust in local government administration as an institution in Nigeria. Igbuzor (2006) observed that the problems of local government in Nigeria include among other things, inadequate planning, poor implementation of policies, inadequate revenue, corruption and mismanagement, lack of adequate manpower, lack of autonomy, lack of participation by the people, intergovernmental conflict and lack of accountability and transparency in the administration of local governments in Nigeria.

Accountability system in the management of local governments in Nigeria is said to be anything but standard. Hence, the Nigerian public, especially the rural dwellers and the grassroot people are shortchanged of what they term their democracy dividends. They rarely find it easy reaching their local government chairmen and top officials, some of whom live and come to work from the big cities, while others live in ivory towers remote from public access. Funds for projects meant to bring governmental presence to the people are siphoned or shared amongst the local governments' ruling cabals. Fingers also often point at some governors who withhold local government funds and dispense to the chairmen and councilors whatever they wish, just to keep warming their seats at the council offices. So, what could be done to restore international accountability standards in the local government system in Nigeria, in order to engender the desired grassroot development in the country? That's the main focus of this study, with emphasis on Awgu Local Government in Enugu State and Ohafia Local Government in Abia State of Nigeria respectively.

Meanwhile, the word accountability originated from the Latin word, *accountare*, meaning to account. According to Seidman (2005: 394), historical reports reveal that the concept of account giving has ancient roots in record keeping activities related to governance and money-lending system of some ancient people like the Greek and the Romans. However, Jabbra et al (1989) observed that there are eight areas of accountability as follows: ethical, administrative, political, managerial, legal/judicial, constituency relations and professional accountability respectively. In this study, however, we are concerned with administrative, managerial and constituency relations accountability in local government administration in Nigeria. This is because efficient and accountable resources management and utilization is a *sine qua non* for societal development.

On the other hand, development according to Abott (1967:5) and Nwuneli (1986:184) is a many sided process in human society. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. But global emphasis today is on sustainable development, due to the threats of ozone layer depletions, deforestations and mindless exhaustion of natural resources by humans. Hence, effective local government administration includes the judicious utilization of resources in such a way as to protect its commonwealth for present and future generations. Moemeka (1989:4) argues that development should aim at bettering both the human, cultural, socioeconomic and political conditions of the individual and consequently of the society.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of government in Nigeria, otherwise known as the local government system is a very important administrative structure designed to bring government closer to the people. That was meant to translate to governmental dividends, development and two-way communications to the people. Unfortunately, many Nigerian citizens, home and abroad and even international watchers alleged that the local governments have not lived up to this billing in spite of the country's enormous oil wealth. Poverty, diseases, lack of good access roads, electricity, pipe-borne water and other infrastructural facilities still characterize many local governments in Nigeria, leading to high rate of rural-urban migration. Added to these, most of the local governments cannot boast of good primary/secondary schools, hospitals or healthcare centres, with the dire consequences of high infant, maternal and paternal mortality rates. Majority of the country's citizens, especially those living in the rural areas live below the poverty line, (Transparency International, 2007). The country is now ranked number two, after Bangladesh with the worst maternal mortality rate, and this is worse at the rural areas. All these compel social commentators to query the level of practice of accountability culture by the local governments administrators in Nigeria and the nexus between that and the recent calls for the scrapping of the local government system. With worsening social, political and economic development, especially at the grassroot local government levels, many Nigerians are really getting fed up with the third tier of government. It is the argument of some social scientists that if the culture of accountability is brought to bear in local government administrations in the country, it will serve as a veritable organ for the much desired grassroot sustainable development in Nigeria. What then are the levels of correlations between local government accountability standards and the calls for the abrogation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of government in Nigeria, and also to the levels of

development at the grassroots? This study tried to find out.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To ascertain the correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system.
- ii. To determine the correlation between poor accountability practices at the local government administrative system in Nigeria and the level of development at the grassroots.

### 1.4 Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system.
- ii. The correlation between poor accountability practices at the local government administrative system in Nigeria and the level of development at the grassroots is not significantly high.

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study which is an integrated qualitative and quantitative appraisal of the level of correlation between lack of accountability culture at the local government administrations in Nigeria and the recent call for the proscription of that tier of government was designed to serve as an eye opener to the administrators of the nation's 774 local governments on the need to adopt accountability practice as a guarantor of tenure stability for them. This will also aid them in winning back the eroded confidence of their subjects and people calling for the scrapping of the local government system in the country. It is expected to draw-out clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the accounting standards being used in the local governments, with a view to highlighting areas for amendments. It also emphasized the values of effective public relations two-way communications media/strategies as a potent weapon for correcting the negative perceptions which majority of the Nigerian public harbors about local government administrators in the country.

### 1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was restricted in scope to a survey of the opinions of informed select Nigerians in two rural communities (Awgu in Enugu State and Ohafia in Anambra State), and two major cities in the country: Abuja the present Federal Capital territory and Lagos the former Federal Capital territory. The criterion for the choice of the two rural communities and the two cities was to achieve a rural-urban balance in the study. The study group included:

- Civil Servants.
- Traders and Farmers
- Local Government Staff.
- Journalists
- Professional Accountants and Public Relations practitioners.

### 1.7 Review of Related Literature

#### 1.7.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical undercurrent for this work is founded on the social network and social support theory. According to Macnamara (2005), this theory holds that social interactions can promote or inhibit individual and collective behaviour. The theory emphasizes the importance of "Social Network" which refers to the set of linkages and social relationships between people and "social support," which refers to the content of these relationships, i.e. what is actually being shared or transmitted during different interactions. Such social supports include:

- i. Emotional Support, i.e. caring, esteem, love, respect.
- ii. Instrumental Support, i.e. Money, services, tangible aid, transport.
- iii. Informational Support, i.e. advice, suggestions or information useful to problem solving (Macnamara 2005; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1995).

What this portends is that local government chairmen must try to maintain effective relationship always with their subjects, and such relationships must be anchored on discernible emotional, physical, psychological and information supports to those subjects, which were the main reasons they voted you into power in the first place. The local governments' chairmen relationship marketing with the people should be rooted on sound image and reputation, which would yield positive perceptions of them from their subjects. The steady flow of relevant information from the local government chairmen to the people would help shape and mold the impressions and perceptions about the council chairmen. Such positive public perceptions would in turn make public mobilization for participations in political, social and economic development much easier.

#### 1.7.2 The Concept of Local Government

Local government is the third tier of government in Nigeria that is nearest to the people at the grassroots. It is a

structure that provides for the goods and services needed by the people and also brings development and good governance to the local levels (Adeyemi et. al., 2012). Igbuzor (2006) also observed that local government is the governmental structure that is closest to the people at the grassroots. The United Nations Office for Public Administration 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 exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is usually elected.

The 1976 local government reform defines local government as: government at local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial 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 governments in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of these functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized.

### **1.7.3 The Nigerian Federation and Administrative Structure**

The Nigerian federation is presently divided into 36 states and 1 Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). The States are Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara. Each state is further divided into Local Government Areas (LGAs). There are 774 local government areas (LGAs) in Nigeria. Kano State has the largest number of LGAs at 44, and Bayelsa State has the fewest at 9. The Federal Capital Territory of Abuja has 6 LGAs. The Local Government Areas replaced the Districts that were the third tier administrative unit under the British government, (USAID, 2004; Adeyemi et. al, 2012). However, this is not the case; instead of discharging their functions as development centers, local governments have acquired notoriety for corruption, fiscal indiscipline and overall irresponsibility (Afrobarometer, 2008: 1; Abubakar, 2010: 25; Agbo, 2010: 20).

### **1.7.4 The Local Government as an Agent for Grassroot Development**

Adeyemi et. al, (2012) cited Adedeji (1989) as saying that the local governments are supposed to serve as authentic instrument for national development; which will eventually enhance national development and stability. It is also supposed to build bridges of trust and legitimacy between the local people and the government. It should ensure the provision of basic development needs and thus enhance the efforts of the central government. The local government should also serve as a democratic basis for the purpose of accountability and control, making access to information and participation by communities in its activities a key governance foundation. It should serve as an agent of effective and efficient delivery of governmental services and development to grassroot citizens and the rural dwellers. All these entail bringing government closer to the people in its true essence.

### **1.7.5 Factors Militating Against Local Governments' Performance in Nigeria**

Other factors militating against local governments' performance in Nigeria include:

- (i) Lack of the financial and human capacity to deliver on the statutory and shared responsibilities between it and the other tiers of government (Oviasuyi et al, 2012; Aghayere, 1997).
- (ii) The recruitment of persons who do not possess the requisite leadership and managerial skills to deliver the gains of governance to the people (Oviasuyi et al, 2012).
- (iii) Lack of continuity by succeeding governments. Succeeding government fails to continue with the programmes and projects that are left behind by a past administration. This has over the years led to economic and financial wastage as well as the retrogression of development; and
- (iv) There is also the problem of constitutional inadequacies, confusion and complexities, such as that which statutorily see local authorities as an appendage of the state and further that of the federal government.

According to Adeyemi et al. (2012), the performance of local government functions in Nigeria has been found to be poor, because evidence have not been found of local government planned, coordinated physical development. Some watchers, however, argue that this is partly because State Governments control interferences and domineering influence, which have helped deny the local governments of political identity, autonomy and significance.

### **1.7.6 Ethical Accountability**

Ethical accountability is the practice of improving overall personal and organizational performance by developing and promoting responsible tools and professional expertise, and by advocating an effective enabling environment for people and organizations to embrace a culture of sustainable development. Ethical accountability may include the individual, as well as small and large businesses, not-for-profit organizations, research institutions and academics, and government, Jabbara et al (1989).

### **1.7.7 Administrative Accountability**

Internal rules and norms as well as some independent commissions are mechanisms to hold civil servants within

the administration of government accountable. Within department or ministry, firstly, behavior is bounded by rules and regulations. Secondly, civil servants are subordinates in a hierarchy and accountable to superiors. Nonetheless, there are independent “watchdog” units to scrutinize and hold departments accountable; legitimacy of these commissions is built upon their independence, as it avoids any conflicts of interest. Apart from internal checks, some “watchdog” units accept complaints from citizens, bridging government and society to hold civil servants accountable to citizens, but not merely governmental departments recounted Jabbra et al (1989). For instance, in Nigeria we have the EFCC, the ICPC and the Code of Conduct Bureau.

### 1.7.8 Development

Abott (1967:281) observes that development requires qualitative as well as quantitative change. Be it quantitative or qualitative change, development must have a human face in order to be meaningful. This means that developmental efforts must enhance the well-being of man in society. Nwuneli (1986:184) agrees to this view when he says: “Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. The achievement of any of those aspects of personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole.”

Ile (2001:411) posits that development entails “change that is continuously taking place in man and his physical, social, cultural and other environments.” A country is developed nationally when the rural areas are not touched with the blessings of development (Opubor, 1985:156). Any notion or definition of development in Africa that does not take into account fundamental change, for the better, in the lifestyle of the peasant farmer, the fisherman, the petty trader, the herdsman or the labourers is grossly inadequate (Opubor, 1985; Edeani, 1993).

### 1.8 Methodology

The study adopted survey design technique, with structured questionnaire as the main instrument for primary data collection. The data were analyzed with the statistical tools of Likert’s 5-points scale and Spearman’s correlation coefficient. With an infinite population size, Freund and Williams formular was used to determine the sample size of 244 at a 5% margin of error and 95% level of confidence. Proportionate sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaire to the selected 2 rural communities and 2 cities in Nigeria.

### 1.9 Data Presentation and Analysis

#### (i) The Respondents’ Demographic Data

The respondents’ demographic data show that: 57.79% were males while 42.21% were females; 20.08% were in the age bracket of 21 to 30 years, 29.92% in the age range of 31 to 40 years, 25% were aged between 41 to 50 years, while 25% were either 50 years or above. 9.43% had only O’Levels, 27.05% had either OND or NCE, 39.75% had First Degrees, while the remaining 23.77% had either Masters Degrees or PhDs. 42.21% were civil servants, 39.75% were farmers or traders, 9.43% were accountants while 8.61% were public relations practitioners.

**Table 1: Respondents’ views on whether there is a correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	91	37.29%
Agree	105	43.03%
Undecided	12	4.92%
Disagree	21	8.61%
Strongly Disagree	15	6.15%
Total	244	100%

Source: Field survey, 2013.

Data displayed on table 2 show that 37.29% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is a correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system. 43.03% of the respondents equally agreed with that; 4.92% were not quite sure; 8.61% somehow disagreed, while 6.15% totally disagreed with the point. Figure 1.1 below gives a pictorial representation of this result.



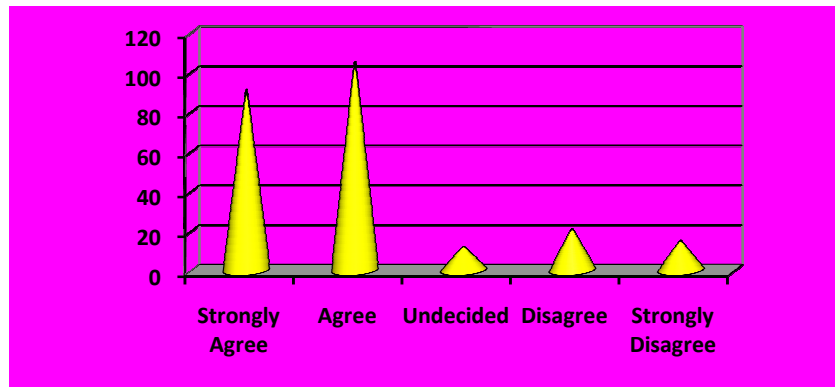


Fig. 1: A test of the correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system in the country. Source: Field survey, 2013.

iii. Table 3: Respondents' views on whether there is a correlation between poor accountability practices at the local government administrative system in Nigeria and the level of development at the grassroots.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	101	41.39%
Agree	93	38.11%
Undecided	13	5.33%
Disagree	19	7.78%
Strongly Disagree	18	7.38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field survey, 2013.

Data on table 3 indicate that 41.39% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is a correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the levels of underdevelopment at the grassroot areas. 38.11% of the respondents equally agreed with that; 5.33% were not quite sure; 7.78% somehow disagreed, while 7.38% totally disagreed with the point. Figure 1.2 below gives a pictorial representation of this result.

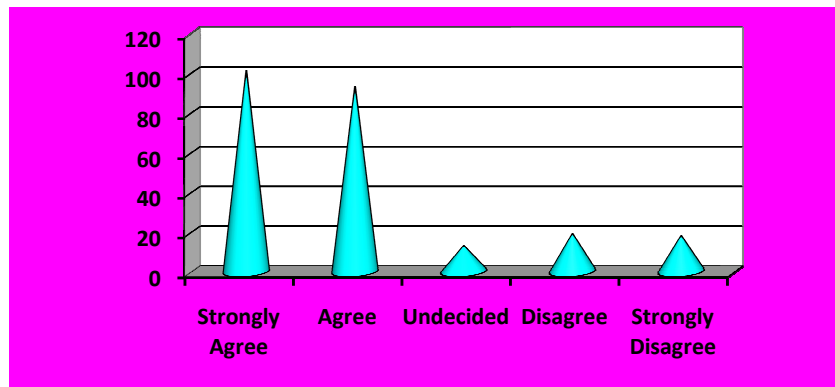


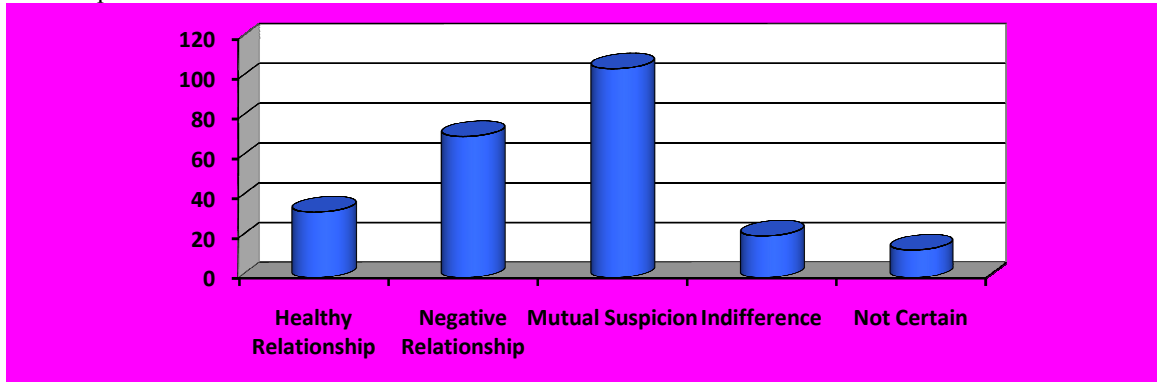
Fig. 1: A test of the correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the level of development at the grassroots. Source: Field survey, 2013.

Table 4: Assessment of the effect of the local governments' accountability practices on the relationship between Council Chairmen and their Subjects.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Healthy Relationship	33	13.52%
Negative Relationship	71	29.10%
Mutual Suspicion	105	43.03%
Indifference	21	8.61%
Not Certain	14	5.74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

Data on table 4 show that 13.52% of the respondents view the relationship between local governments' chairmen in Nigeria and their subjects to be healthy. 29.10% view it as being very negative; 43.03% said it is based on mutual suspicions; 8.61% believed that most of the subjects are indifferent to what happens with their local government's administration, while 5.74% chose to reserve their comments on this. Figure 1.3 below gives a pictorial representation of this result.



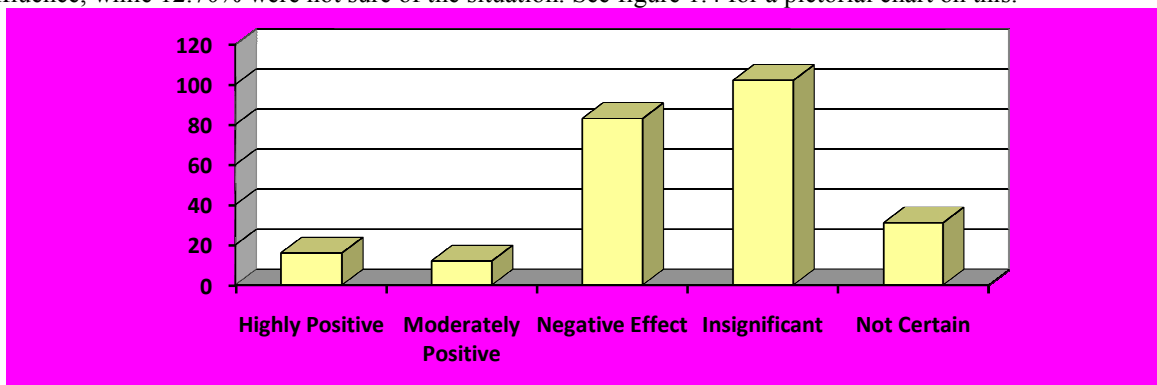
**Fig. 1:** A test of the effect of the local governments' accountability practices on the relationship between Council Chairmen and their Subjects. Source: Field survey, 2013.

**Table 5:** Assessment of the effect of the local governments' administrative style and two-way communications between the council chairmen and their subjects.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
High Positive Effect	16	6.56%
Moderate Positive Effect	12	4.92%
Negative Effect	83	34.02%
No Significant Effect	102	41.80%
Not Certain	31	12.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

Data displayed on table 5 reveal that 6.56% believed that the administrative styles of the local governments' chairmen had high positive influence on two-way communications between them and their subjects. 4.92% said it only had a moderate influence; 34.02% said it had serious negative influence, 41.80% said it had no significant influence, while 12.70% were not sure of the situation. See figure 1.4 for a pictorial chart on this.



**Fig. 1.4:** A test of the effect of the local governments' chairmen administrative style and two-way communications with their Subjects. Source: Field survey, 2013.

**Test of Hypothesis One:**

Ho: There is no significant correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system in the country.

Hi: There is significant correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system in the country.

**Test Statistics** = Spearman Correlation Coefficient ( $r_s$ )

**Table 4: Statistical Test of Hypothesis 1**

Options	Data 1	Data 2	Rank 1	Rank 2	D	d <sup>2</sup>
Strongly Agree	91	101	4	5	-1	1
Agree	105	93	5	4	1	1
Undecided	12	13	1	1	0	0
Disagree	21	19	3	3	0	0
Strongly Disagree	15	18	2	2	0	0

Adapted from tables 2 and 3. Source: Field Survey, 2013.

$$\sum d^2 = 1 + 1 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 2$$

$$\text{So } r_s = 1 - \frac{2 \times \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{(2 \times 2)}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

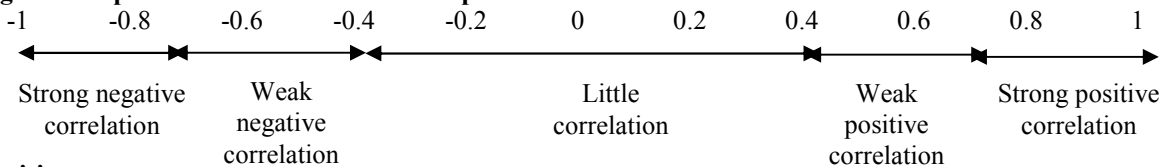
$$r_s = 1 - \frac{2 \times 2}{5(5^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{4}{120}$$

$$r_s = 1 - 0.033$$

$$r_s = 0.967$$

**Fig. 6: Interpretation of the Result of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient:**



**Decision**

Since the result of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient ( $r_s = 0.967$ ) shows a strong positive correlation, we hereby reject the  $H_0$  and accept the  $H_1$  which says that “there is significant correlation between poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system in the country.”

**Test of Hypothesis Two**

$H_0$ : The correlation between poor accountability practices at the local government administrative system in Nigeria and the level of development at the grassroots is not significantly high.

$H_1$ : The correlation between poor accountability practices at the local government administrative system in Nigeria and the level of development at the grassroots is significantly high.

Test Statistics = Spearman Correlation Coefficient ( $r_s$ )

**Table 4: Statistical Test of Hypothesis 1**

Options	Data 1	Data 2	Rank 1	Rank 2	D	d <sup>2</sup>
Strongly Agree	101	91	5	4	1	1
Agree	93	105	4	5	-1	1
Undecided	13	12	1	1	0	0
Disagree	19	21	3	3	0	0
Strongly Disagree	18	15	2	2	0	0

Adapted from tables 3 and 2. Source: Field Survey, 2013.



$$\sum d^2 = 1 + 1 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 2$$

$$\text{So } r_s = 1 - \frac{2 \times \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{(2 \times 2)}{5(5^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{2 \times 2}{5(5^2 - 1)}$$

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{4}{120}$$

$$r_s = 1 - 0.032$$

$$r_s = 0.968$$

### Decision

Since the result of the Spearman Correlation Coefficient ( $r_s = 0.968$ ) shows a strong positive correlation, we hereby reject the  $H_0$  and accept the  $H_1$  which says that “the correlation between poor accountability practices at the local government administrative system in Nigeria and the level of development at the grassroots is significantly high.”

### 1.10 Summary of Results

The summary of this study result is as follows:

- (i) The level of accountability practices in the financial management of local governments in Nigeria is significantly poor.
- (ii) There is significant correlation between the poor accountability practices at the local governments in Nigeria and the calls for the scrapping of the local government system in the country
- (iii) The present local governments’ accountability standards have significant correlation to the under-development at the grassroots levels in Nigeria.
- (iv) The local governments’ chairmen administrative style has significant negative influence on the relationship between them and their subjects.
- (v) The local governments’ chairmen administrative style also has significant negative effect on two-way communications between them and their subjects.

### 1.11 Discussion

This study revealed that the level of accountability practices in the financial management of local governments in Nigeria is significantly poor, thus, leading to public dissatisfaction and recent calls for the scrapping of the system in Nigeria. A culture of accountability is sine qua non for meaningful development at any level of governance. Without it, development will be stultified and the much vaunted dividend of democracy will be denied the people. Thus, the aim of bringing government closer to the grassroot for which the local governments were created for will only amount to a pipe dream. No wonder then, there is almost a cold two-way communications relationship between majority of their Council chairmen and their subjects, as one of the results of this study indicated. The calls by some concerned citizens of the country for a scrapping of the local government system in the country is therefore not misplaced, as they are seen not to be living up to their billings. That also largely account for the negative relationship between most local government chairmen in Nigeria and their subjects, as the study revealed. How then can they meaningfully mobilize the people for participation in political, economic and social courses? Under the current climate of fears, distrust and lack of cooperation between the Council chairmen and their subjects, it will be difficult to achieve meaningful development at the grassroots’ levels in Nigeria.

### 1.12 Recommendations

We hereby recommend as follows:

- i. That public relations enlightenment workshops should be organized for local government chairmen across the country on the need for prudential management of council funds, in order to win the confidence and cooperation of their people.
- ii. Local government chairmen across the country should also employ the social marketing, political marketing and public relations strategies to educate their subjects on their civic responsibilities to the councils. According to Raftopoulou and Hogg (2010), many public sector marketing efforts are intended to affect the behaviour of citizens in relation to important activities (such as taxation and laws) which are crucial to successful governance at all tiers of

- government.
- iii. The citizens should also be educated by civil society organisations to always demand for periodic account of how funds accruing to councils' coffers are managed from the chairmen, as covered by the freedom of information (F.O.I.) bill.
  - iv. Local governments chairmen and managers in the country should also be statutorily mandated to keep an open-door policy in the councils' administration, as the governmental tier that any common man could walk in to demand answers to any question bugging his mind regarding any area of governance.
  - v. To promote their public acceptability, the local government chairmen must institute effective two-way communications system between them and their subjects via dynamic political marketing and social marketing structure. Henneberg (2004: 226) defines political marketing as the marketing function of facilitating the societal process of political exchange between politicians, political parties and voters. Political marketing also involves the marketing of politics to the populace for effective participation in the democratic processes (O'Shaughnessy, 2002:1082).
  - vi. To boost their income-generation capacities, local government chairmen in rural parts of Nigeria must try to develop their areas for tourism attraction in order to stem the tide of rural-urban migration, which has contributed to the worsening housing situation in the cities, and graduate unemployment (Awaritefe, 2004; Eftichaidou, 2001; Eziyi, 2010; Akinmoladun and Oluwoye, 2007; Ademiluyi and Raji, 2008). The problem is worse in the cities, where huge housing supply deficits, dilapidated housing conditions, high cost of housing as well as proliferation of slums and squatter settlements exist (Adedeji, 2005; UN-HABITAT, 2006b; 2006d; Daramola, 2006).
  - vii. The local government chairmen should also inculcate indigenous communication tools, media and strategies in disseminating information to the people, since these have been found to be more result-oriented especially in the rural areas (Mbakogu, 2004; Mustengyezi, 2003; Obasi, and Ebirim, 2008).

### 1.13 Conclusion

Billions of taxpayers' money is being allocated to the local governments in Nigeria every month with nothing to show for it. A culture of accountability at the Nigerian local government system is therefore advocated in this study as a way out of the woods. If a culture of accountability in all its ramifications is enthroned in that system, it will help to stem corruption and promote the much-needed economic development in the country's grassroots. This is however achievable through astute public relations attitudinal-change strategies from the Council chairmen, which would consequently change the negative public perceptions about them to the positive sides, thereby helping to regain public confidence and cooperation for the local government system in Nigeria.

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