Street Level Politics, local Governance and Local Power Structure in Northern Nigeria: A Social Network Analysis

Usman Abbo[1], Abubakar Ahmad Bello[2], Mukaila Bello[3], Zawiyah Binti Mohammed Zain[4]

Ghazalie Shafie Graduate School of Government Universiti Utara Malaysia[1]
Department of Public Administration, the federal Polytechnic Mubi[2]
Department of Public Administration, the federal Polytechnic Mubi[3]
Ghazalie Shafie Graduate School of Government Universiti Utara Malaysia[4]

Abstract
The key elements of successful local Governance have been identified as participation, sustainability, social inclusion and enabling policy environment. A successful policy framework must therefore involve initiators, Legitimizers, planners and executors, which in practical parlance are not guaranteed by mere decentralization. This is because it does not ensure inclusiveness in decision making. This paper therefore attempt to investigate the local power structure in northern Nigeria with the view to understand how decisions are made at the street level in order to ascertain how "open" or "close" is the prevailing local power structure in an average local Government. The paper adopts a qualitative methodology in which an in-depth face-to-face, semi-structure interview was conducted with six participants, two from each of the three geo-political zones of Northern Nigeria. The paper specifically tries to achieve four objectives which include: the identification of the local power structure of an average local Government in Northern Nigeria, determining the personal characteristics of the identified stakeholders, ascertaining their level of influence, lobbying capacity and bargaining power and developing a collaborative Governance framework that can ensure inclusiveness and greater citizen participation using the social network analysis.
Keywords: Street level politics, local power structure, local Governance, Leadership, Northern Nigeria

Introduction
Street level politics as conceptualized by this paper connote a grassroots or local participation in political decisions and actions. It depicts a routine political life of the non-elite society, involving the political, social and economic capabilities of the ordinary people. Discussion on street level politics therefore, involves paying attention to the perceptions, behavior and political views of the ordinary people.

A state is said to be established on the basis of contractual agreement between the rulers and the rules, where the underlying objective is the creation of a greatest happiness for the greatest number (Lambright, 2012). In order to achieve this fundamental objective the state must be structured in a manner it can positively respond to the yearnings and aspirations of the masses. In the ancient Greek city state this was achieved through directly involving everyone in the decision making framework. However, with the ever increase in size and complexity of the state due to demographic transition, the involvement of everyone in political decision becomes practical an impossible task hence the need for a selected few to makes decision on behalf of the many, through a system of representative democracy.

The modern democracy thus revolves around a system under which the masses indirectly partake in making political decisions through selecting a person or a set of people who can serve as their proxies. However, challenges such as these of size of and its heterogeneity makes it difficult for just one person or group of persons at the center to effectively responds to the routine needs of the entire polity, there is therefore, the need for a political arrangement which can create avenue for more citizen involvement in decision.

This brings about the concept of decentralization, under which the power of decision making is balkanize and delegated to subordinate local authorities with the view to bring it nearer to the ordinary people (Faguet, 2014). However, in most developing countries political discourse always tend to mirror the interest of the dominant national political elites to the detriment of the local people (Lambright, 2011). There exist in practical parlance very limited spaces for the grassroots society to be involved in the political process. For instance in northern Nigeria the political elites have dominated the both the national and local politics (Tonwe, 2013). Where such domination tends to have taking several dimensions such as political, economic and social, thereby significantly relegating the grassroots society into a mere object of politics without real significance as it lacks bargaining power.

Conceptual clarification
Local power structure
Local power structure is the complex network of relationships between the recognized power holders and the interplay of their roles in a community. These power holders, otherwise known as leaders, direct the affairs of

the society towards the achievement of objectives. Bratton (2012) describes power structure as "patterned distribution of authority and influence among various actors in a group or community".

Leadership

The concept of leadership is very crucial to the survival of any society. Even where there are established norms, leaders are still needed to ensure compliance with such norms for societal orderliness and healthy being. Spllane (2012) define leadership as the "directing, influencing and controlling of others in pursuit of a group goal". This implies that the function of making decisions lies on the leaders. Dubrin (2015) even sees leadership as being synonymous with decision-making and therefore regards decision-makers as community leaders.

He further posits that an effective means of identifying leaders should include a systematic observation of who decision-makers are for various community issues. Leaders provide the basis for improving the quality of life in communities (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). Because effective leadership does not exist in many rural communities, rural community development efforts should include identifying and training potential leaders from diverse backgrounds (Spllane, 2012).

Problem statement

Theoretically decentralization is considered to be an ideal administrative arrangement for effective local Governance, in the sense that it has an inherent capacity of facilitating good Governance by entrenching accountability and responsiveness (Boetti, Piacena & Turati, 2012). However, in practice, decentralization has appeared far from achieving such objectives. This is because the mostly identified elements of successful local administration are social inclusion, participation, sustainability and enabling environment (Faguet, 2014). A successful policy framework should therefore involve initiators, legitimizers, planners and executors but these entire element are not guaranteed by mere decentralization because it does not ensure inclusiveness of all the local power structure and social network in policy making (Starr, 2015).

This seems to constitute a serious dilemma of the decentralization considering the fact that it was bound out of the need for the reconstruction of government from hierarchical top-down to a system of self-government epitomized by participation and cooperation where responsiveness and accountability are the key words (Starr, 2015). However, it has becomes incapable of addressing the power disparity at the local level, thereby creating another centralized power structure in which a significant portion of the society are excluded from participating in leadership and decision making in matters affecting their lives.

The practice of decentralization as it currently applied to local governance in northern Nigeria has appear grossly inadequate in creating a balance of power among the various social group and local institutions, whereby some continue to wield substantial influence and bargaining capacity to the detriment of the others, which in most cases resulted to rancor and acrimony.

Against the above background, it is therefore the contention of this paper that there is a need to study and identify the local power structure in northern Nigeria with a view to developed a model of local governance which can ensure inclusiveness and collaboration among local actors. This is because as argued by Paarlberg and Yoshioka (2015), "by striving to involve new people in the leadership structure of a community, one may introduce new ideas and reach a broader segment of the community". In the light of this, it is therefore necessary to investigate community power structure, find out how "open" or "close" it is and to understand how decisions are made for successful execution of development projects at a local level.

Objectives of the study

To this end, the general objective of this paper is developed a collaborative governance model that can ensure balance of power and inclusiveness at the local Government level in northern Nigeria. The specific objectives which can facilitate the achievement of this objective are as follows:

(1) To identify the local power structure of an average local Government in northern Nigeria.
(2) To determines the personal characteristics of these stakeholders.
(3) To determines the bargaining power, the lobbying capacities, the influence and the contribution of these stakeholders in local Government.

Research Methodology

To achieve the above objectives, this paper conduct an in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interview with six respondents two from each of the three geo-political zones of northern Nigeria, this was complimented by contend analysis through extensively reviewing literature on local government, decentralization and grassroots politics in northern Nigeria, as this can facilitate the identification of the prevailing local power structure, the degree of inclusiveness/exclusiveness and nature of stakeholders at the local level. The social network analysis was used in identifying the local power structure, types of role, relation ties and perceives influence of each.

Identification of local power structure in northern Nigeria

Rural community development literature emphasizes the importance of citizen participation as a means of strengthening communities (Brodkin, 2012). Advocates and practitioners of rural community development also believe that citizens should be meaningfully involved in community decision making (White, 2013). For development to occur there is need for a greater participation of local people in development process which will change the nature and direction of development intervention as well as result in a type of development which will have local people's support and recognition (Evans, 2012).

However, O'Sullivian (2015) emphasizes the impact of community structure, especially its power structure, on the availability of chances for citizens' participation in its decision-making process. Community leadership structure, its composition, and administrative styles dictate the level and extent of citizen's involvement in its decision-making and development activities.

 This paper therefore adopt social network analysis with the view to identify the local power structure in northern Nigeria, based on the result from the interview conducted eight important stakeholders were identified within the local power structure as follows:

National Politicians: this involve number of political elites with national portfolios such as state Governors, senators, ministers, members of the house of representatives and top civil servants such as permanent secretaries, accountant general and military service chiefs. These are the most dominant and influential group, that tend to exercise substantial control over local politics of their respective state. State governors are mostly the most powerful of this entire group in the sense that they exercise substantial control over local finance and election.

Local Politicians: these are the second powerful group which involves local government chairmen and local council members. These categories of people are mostly subservient who are answerable to the national politicians. The paraphernalia and apparatus of power at the local level are usually shared between the local and national politicians to the detriment of the other groups.

Traditional rulers: these involve emirs whose sphere of authority is constitutionally limited to a mere nominal and advisory role. These categories are virtually control by the first category.

Community leaders: these involve of local chiefs usually appointed by the emirs such as Maianguwa, Jauro or Bulama these group are directly under the emirs and they usually exercise some degree of local control under their jurisdiction they are use virtually to mobilized support for both national and local politicians through the distributions of items such as fertilizer and food stuff.

Religious organization: this involves various religious leaders and sects which exercise substantial influence over their followers. However, this group is also living under the mercy of the national politicians though both local politicians and traditional rulers possess influence over some of these religious bodies, though not all.

**Social Grouping:** these composed of groups such as local traders, vigilante group

Youth: this constitute the most visible yet politically passive social group, the youth only serves as errand boys of politician where in most cases they are deploy as thugs during election.

IG 1.1 Social Network Analysis of local power structure in Northern Nigeria

National politicians Local politicians Traditional rulers Community leaders
Religious organization youth Social group political Decisions Influence
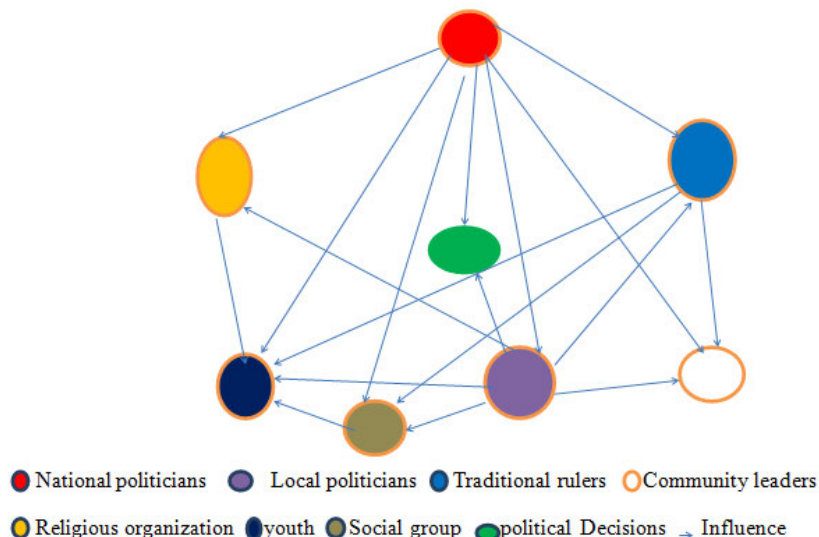
It is crystal clear from the above social network analysis that the local power structure prevailing in the northern Nigeria is "closed" as it does not ensure inclusiveness of all the stakeholders in political decision. As can be seen from the above figure only two sets of actors has access to political decisions; the national politicians who are the most dominant and the local politicians. In terms of influence both the local and the national politicians tend to have enormous influence over all other stakeholders such as Traditional rulers, religious organizations, social group, community leaders and youth, which is a clear manifestation of gross exclusion of the masses from political decisions. The most passive of all the actors are the youth who do not have the capacity to influence any of the stakeholders in the local power matrix.

Against the above background, as observed by Abbo, Romle and Bashir (2015), in Nigeria the institutional mechanism for central coordination at the grassroots level are either weakly internalized or not internalized at all hence conflicts and crisis become recurrent decimals, because there is total absences of inclusiveness and openness in political decision. There is therefore the need the evolve an administrative mechanism which can ensure inclusiveness and collaboration among the identified stakeholders, as this can go a long way in mitigating conflicts as well as facilitating good governance at the grassroots level. This paper therefore, proposed a social network analysis framework which can provide guide on how the various stakeholders should interact, influence and collaborate with one another for the achievement of common good.
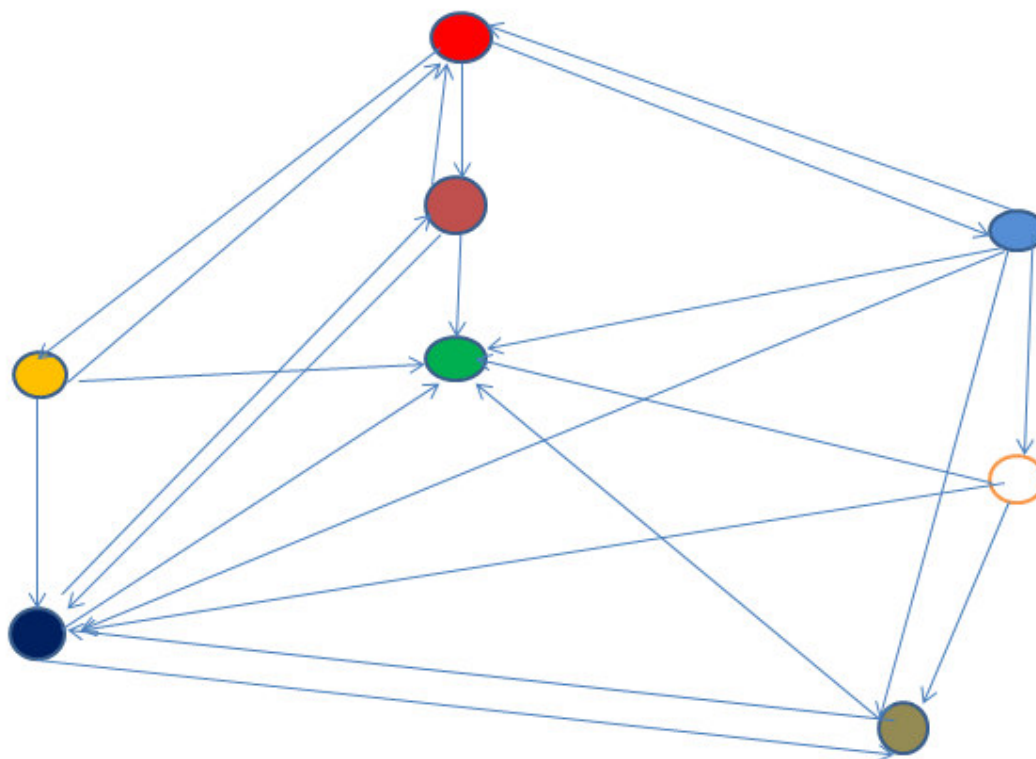
Conclusion

Against the above background it is the conception of this paper that in order to achieve high degree of citizen's participation in decision making at the street level there is a need to orchestrate and re-design the local power structure in similar to the above model. This is because to ensure effective local democracy it is a necessary pre-condition that all the stakeholders at the local level must have equal opportunity and access to political decisions. There is also the need to minimize the influence of national politicians on local politics as this will ensure that the outcomes of political decisions at the local level mirror down the yearning and aspirations of the ordinary citizens against the present framework under which the national politicians demonstrate total ownership and control of both the machineries and apparatus of power at the grassroots level.

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