

The Reconfiguring Local Governance and Community Participation in Africa: An Empirical Analysis from Nigeria and Ghana

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Abstract

In the modern day government, local governance, decentralization and democracy are the major significant towards developing the communities across the world. This paper examines the initiative of the central government to decentralize the significant responsibilities of responsive government to local government through the local governance which are growing across the world. The paper argues that democratic decentralization as a means of transfer of power and resources from central government to lower units of government to deliver downwardly accountable and responsive local representation have entirely produce stronger local institutions for mass participation, local governance and community development. The methodology adopted was purely secondary data which involved a broad desktop literature review from various scholarly sources, document analysis, newspapers, text books, and policy analysis within the framework of the subject matter. The outcome of the study shows marked differences in the vulnerability factors and the management local governance in term of citizens' participation through their communities. This paper also revealed that in the pursuit of local governance, Ghana followed a sequence of administrative, political, and fiscal decentralisation whereas Nigeria pursued a political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization. As a result, Ghana has made a little progress but more than Nigeria's, in strengthening LG institutions. The paper concludes that the demands of good governance and modern local governance is to enable conduit for effective and efficient local governance for better development for the citizenry.

Introduction

Governance at the local level are playing an increasingly important role in the lives of the citizens in some areas such as health, security, education, and public work among others. Furthermore, it was revealed that the indigenous coping mechanisms employed by the poor may become less effective as increasingly in the mismanagement of both human and material resources.

The levels of government can collectively ensure that local government administration is strengthen to enable it lives up to the task of developing the grassroots. It will also open the eye of the public particularly those living at the grassroots level on the bottlenecks depriving them of access to rapid development, so that they can channel their grievances to the appropriate quarters (Shiyanbade, & Esan-Atanda, 2024). More importantly, this study will also add to the existing literature on how local government

administration in Nigeria can be revoked in order to reflect its mandate on rapid grassroots development. Ample part of this study will be useful as research materials for other researchers who might want to expand the scope of research on grassroots development (Shiyanbade, Adegoke, Bamidele, & Adenopo, 2024).

Mohammed (2023) continues on the performance view of local governance because he claims that the performance of institutions can be measured according to the outcomes of service delivery and the role of the legislators in good governance. His comparison of the Nigerian local governments reveals that the disparity in performance has to do more with the legislative control and capacity to control than the participation mechanism. In this vision, emphasis is placed on instrumental, but not on intrinsic, value of democratic local governance.

Community development involves conscious acceleration of change in social, economic, political and technological spheres as well as planned social change in both rural and urban areas. It also relates to projects that have obvious local significance that can be planned and implemented by community members using community resources which can be supported by external assistance in terms of materials and personnel where local resources are not adequately available (Wahab, 2014). Thus, community development does not rest on self-help projects initiated and executed by communities alone, nor projects initiated by governments and their agencies alone but rather an effective combination of community efforts and government efforts directed at improving the economic, social and cultural well-being of the people in their communities.

The interdependence of the local government apparatus proves to be one of the biggest subjects of the new literature. Olaniyan (2023) observes that governing the community informally is

used in filling the gaps of formal systems of local governments in Ibadan, Nigeria and that it was found that the communities formed various kinds of governance when the formal institutions failed to meet their demands. Based on his discussion, good local governance must be rooted in the knowledge of the formal and informal governing systems.

Local Governance

The first tier of the democratic government that involves the principles of subsidiarity and participatory democracy is the local government, which forms part of the overall government. Research has indicated that effective local government does not just exist in the form of administrative decentralisation, but it entails the vast institutional frameworks that allow people to mingle, responsive service delivery, and responsible leadership within the local government sphere.

According to Abe and Omotoso (2020), the local governance in Nigeria has to be placed within the framework of post-colonial reconstruction of states and the traditional ways of governance provide the much-needed legitimacy that the formal institutions tend to fail to provide. They discover that successful mechanisms of local governance have integrated native models of governance with the up to date frameworks of democracy, in order to produce the hybrid structures that are agreeable to the locals without jeopardizing constitutionality. This perception is a critique towards the traditional Western-centric perception of the local government reform in Africa.

Empirically, Otinche (2023) demonstrates that it is the quality of the local institutions that determine the effectiveness of decentralisation and not just transfer of functions by the central government. In his local government analysis, he discovered that the disparity in performance

of localities is greatly linked to the institutional capacity, caliber of leadership and the degree of community publication. In his opinion, the strategy of decentralisation can be achieved only through having an investment in institutional formation and human capital formation on the local level at the same time.

The conceptualisation of local governance has been very different since the 1990s democratisation wave in Africa. Kwarkye (2021) traces this trend in Ghana, in the way that the traditional forms of organisation are the drivers of local government and provides evidence that it was the Ghanaian system of integrating the modern and traditional system of governance that had a higher probability of contributing to a more sustainable institutional development. In his analysis, he says that, more acceptable and competent arrangements of governance are realised by the systematic appreciation of powers which are traditionally in place, and the formal democratically instituted institutions (Shiyanbade, & Esan-Atanda, 2024).

Recent studies bring out the principles of corporate governance that can make the local governance more efficient. The authors of the article, Coleman and Wu (2020) discuss the issue of governance in Nigeria and Ghana and discover that good governance institutions and accountability is a positive factor in the overall performance of governance. In their view, the local governance institutions should improve the overseeing mechanisms and systems of performance management to address the current day governance challenges.

Community

Community is the fundamental structure of social interaction through which the local government operates and the object and subject of democratic participation in the development processes. Current African scholarship perceives community differently across geographical

boundaries to factor in social networks, shared identities, and formation of action that may go beyond classical conceptualisation of space.

Arisukwu et al., (2020) propose an appreciation of the community as a key aspect of community organisation in its African contexts in which community responsibility and shared participation are important aspects of a community. Their analysis on the community involvement in crime prevention and control in rural Nigeria reveals that, projects of crime prevention and control that are anchored in local collective action are more likely to succeed compared to projects that are anchored in an external intervention. This school of thought challenges the elite approaches of community development that do not consider social infrastructures within the community and the indigenous ability.

It is revealed that heterogeneity of communities becomes one of the determinants in the outcomes of community development. Eyisi, Lee and Trees (2020) in their research on the evolution of tourism in South-Eastern Nigeria demonstrate that internal differentiation of various social factors significantly affects the pattern of participation in developmental activities. They also declare that sound community development must be founded on a clear comprehension of the relation of power and diversity within localities, and not on homogeneous interests and skills.

Communities in modern Africa are altering the boundaries of their communities and their interactions to one another connectivity. Agalga, Alatinga, and Abihiro (2022) explain how community involvement is relevant to the Community-based Health Planning and Services programme in Ghana and also reflect on some of the enablers and discouraging factors of the successful community engagement process. They examine how communities can develop collective action capacity through enhancing coordination and information exchange, and how conventional divisions can damage community unity.

The concept of community resiliency is required amidst different threats like global warming, economic and political insecurity. Kretchy et al., (2022), and Shiyanbade, Adegoke, Bamidele, and Adenopo, (2024) accumulate the body of knowledge on participatory research projects that are geared toward community health in Ghana and focus on the adaptive capacity, local knowledge, and institutional flexibility as the key factors. Their general analysis indicates that powerful communities can merge the traditional systems of knowledge with contemporary systems and thus form hybrid systems of resilience.

The traditional structures have also remained significant in the current structure of African communities. Kwarkye (2021) in his work, dwells on the evolution of customary structures in Ghana communities and finds that the traditional institutions have much legitimacy and power in organising communities. He opines that the development of sustainable communities would involve positive engagement with the traditional authorities as opposed to their marginalisation by the modern state apparatus.

Education governance is one of the areas in which the community engagement patterns are evolving. Shibuya (2020) indicates in a study about school management in the Akatsi South District in Ghana that community participation based on relational trust is what drives the outcome of education. It is explained that one possible source of beneficial collective action and institutional empowerment could be local participation in the education governance.

Community-based development strategies are becoming of interest as models of participatory development change. Chen, Xu, Tackie, and Ahakwa (2024) present the strategies of community development relying on asset-based community development to alleviate rural poverty in Ghana and conclude that community ownership of development operations enhances the outcome

and sustainability. In their opinion, development strategies based on a community-based approach should be assured by the institutions and technical assistance to be effectively implemented.

Community health initiatives are another considerable area of overlap of community organisation and service delivery. Agalga, Alatinga, and Abihiro (2022) discuss the possibilities and benefits of community involvement in health planning services in Ghana and conclude that community involvement can be potentially improved to enhance healthcare outcomes and institutional competence when specific communities are well-supported and have well-established roles in the provision of health services.

Community Participation

Community involvement is the content of democratic governance and sustainable development, and portrays the principle of having the affected populations take part in decision-making and action to be taken, which will impact them. The recent past of African scholarship demonstrates the complexities of the processes of involvement that go against naive assumptions of the involvement of communities in all their activities and highlights the inventive means of enhancing the value of meaningful involvement.

Ngunjiri (2023) forms a critical argument on the citizen involvement in local politics in Africa and observes that the systems of participation are not normally structured to accommodate different voices and interests of the society. Comparative case studies indicate that the high participation of marginalised groups is not enabled by elite capture, institutional constraint and cultural limits. He insists that authentic participation implies transformation of official arrangements in addition to off-the-record social networks of coercion that perpetuate exclusion.

The externalisation of community in the hands of external actors becomes a matter of concern of contemporary scholarship. Examining how the civil society organisations promote the participatory strategies in Nigeria and Ghana, Ajulor (2021) finds that the needs of external forces can constrain the real local ownership and freedom of choice. After conducting a comparative analysis, he concludes that the participatory methodologies can become transformed into technocratic mechanisms that can serve to justify a set of already-decided conclusions rather than allow the communities to self-determine their development priorities.

Community engagement has opportunities and challenges in the engagement of health sectors. Agalga, Alatinga, and Abiuro (2022) discuss the notion of community participation within the framework of the Community-based Health Planning and Services programme in Ghana and discover that to participate in meaningful participation, one should pay attention to a number of enablers and inhibitors. Their analysis demonstrates that the successful engagement of the community must be facilitated by institutions, capacity building and agreements on benefits.

Sustainability of communal involvement has become a topic of academic concern (communities are experiencing participation exhaustion as a result of too many overlapping programs). Kretchy et al., (2022) write about the sustainability of involvement in community health research projects in Ghana, where over-consultation that necessitates no benefits to be obtained can lead to the community ceasing to be involved in participatory processes. They propose joint methods of conducting activities without violating the ability of the people and ensuring real control over the outcomes.

Much is to be learnt about participation dynamics in educational governance. Shibuya (2020),

through his study, concludes that community involvement based on the concept of relational trust can enhance school management in Ghana, and that could have a positive impact on the industry. In his discussion, he puts forward that the community and the formal institutions have to build trust relations in order to participate in educational governance in a meaningful way.

Engagement of the communities in the economic development process is an emerging area of concern. Thus, Shiyanbade, Makinde, and Ogunbela, (2023) investigate the notion of participatory approaches to poverty alleviation in Ghana and prove that when the community has the right to safety and is provided with technical solutions, the community can improve its economic and social cohesion. They conclude that institutional support and good benefit-sharing arrangements are the determinants of the effectiveness of participation. The other aspect of considering the dynamics of participation is through tourism development. Eyisi, Lee, and Trees (2020) study the community engagement in the Nigerian South-Eastern region tourism development and arrive at the conclusion that effective community engagement is the balance of power and equal distribution of benefits among the community members.

Role of Government in Community Participation in Nigeria and Ghana

Government role to enable, coordinate and promote community involvement is one of the main determinants of good governance in democracy and development in Nigeria and Ghana. The recent studies reveal that there exists a division in the direction between these countries, along with the distinguishing of common problems in building the enabling conditions where meaningful community involvement can take place.

Government participation in community engagement is based on constitutional and legal systems. Otinche (2023) in the article talks about the decentralisation and local government system in Nigeria and exposes how the constitution has paved the way to participatory governance. In his analysis, he reveals that the federal system of government in Nigeria brings about multiple levels of government authority that may or may not allow community participation depending on the alignment of the efforts of the various governments. He proposes that decentralisation must be well enforced in such a way that the roles and responsibilities of the government at different levels can be explained to facilitate the process of community participation (Shiyanbade, Igbokwe, & Taiwo, 2025).

The institutional arrangements are important in the capacity of the government to enable community participation. Aderogba and Aderogba (2023) study the definition of functional local government autonomy in Nigeria and discover that the key changes that need to be made in major institutions are the key to effective community participation. In their analysis, they demonstrate that current arrangements are more prone to limit the capacity of local government in responding to the community's requirements. They propose a community participation model that enhances the efficiency of the local government in enabling community participation.

Service delivery is one of the testing points of government encouragement of community participation through water and sanitation services, healthcare delivery, education, roads, recreation centres, among others in the country. Samuel, Agbola, and Olojede (2021) argues that the successful engagement of communities in the delivery of services is limited by inadequate capacity among their governments. They conclude that their discussion shows that substantive community participation in service delivery

requires more government technical and financial resources.

One of the major contributions of the government to the community is legislative control. Mohammed (2023) examines the question of whether the lawmakers in the local governments of Nigeria can intervene and concludes that the proper legislative regulation can assist in making the lawmakers more responsible and attentive to the requirements of the locals. In his analysis, he demonstrates that good governance requires interactions with the community processes through participative interactions with the legislative processes.

The community participation in the delivery of government support is peculiar to urban governance. Resnick (2020), in her research, focuses on the politics of urban governance in sub-Saharan Africa and arrives at the conclusion that rapid urbanisation presents fresh challenges to participatory governance that require novel government solutions. According to the discussion, the urban environment needs alternative forms of community engagement that will consider the population density and diversity in the locality.

Another aspects is effective governmental support of community involvement is governance coordination at several levels i.e. multi-level governance in the implementation of global policies in Africa and find that the success of different levels of government in organising their activities can have a strong effect on the effectiveness of community involvement. In their discussion, they demonstrate that effective community engagement is one where there are effective roles and coordination mechanisms at the government level (Croese, Oloko, Simon, & Valencia, 2021).

The agendas of sustainable development place new demands on governmental support in community engagement. Adebayo, Ackers, Erin, and Adegboye (2025) consider the question of

the level of governance and sustainable development in Africa and mention that to achieve the goals of sustainable development, the government must build capacity to enable the community to engage. In the analysis, they affirm that good participatory governance mechanisms are pre-requisites to sustainable development.

The community development methods are incapable of working without government support in the long term. Awoonor (2025) talks about the concept of empowering local governance through the engagement of the community in rural development initiatives in Nigeria, and concludes that the community should have an active role in the projects, mainly through capacity building and supplying resources to the community to participate in the project. This discussion has concluded that community involvement should be sustainable, which implies that the government should be committed in the long run and invest in it.

Community Development Associations in Nigeria and Ghana

The Community Development Associations (CDAs) have indeed come into the scene as the perfect players within the rural and grassroots government in Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana in the broader context. They are the best resource mobilization tools, community mobilization and tools of delivery of basic social services. In Nigeria, Community Development Associations (CDA) are important institutions that enhance community development in rural areas, grassroots, and urban areas by carrying out community activities. In a research that was conducted on Apete community in Ibadan, Oyo State, Osu and Yakubu (2021) found out that CDAs contributed significantly towards mobilizing rural development schemes like road repair and clean-up campaigns. However the research went a step further to state that all these programs remained incomplete due to the

issues like improper funding, misappropriation of funds, absence of participation of the members and failure of the government to support them. The study has observed that although CDAs are used to address the gaps in governance structures, their effectiveness is compromised by the structural lapses, which is a pointer of the acute institutional support.

In fact, Kehinde and Alabi (2025) examined the motivation behind individuals being drawn to community-based organizations, such as CDAs, in the Osun State even more vehemently. Their study by following econometric frameworks showed that the size of farms, access to credit and education levels had great impacts on membership and participation. They determined that the association of membership in CDAs with the well-being of the household was positive and was used to reduce poverty as long as the associations were transparent. It means that CDAs can be powerful poverty reduction tools, especially when the mechanisms of its governance are not defective.

Moreover, Adeyemi and Akinola (2022) examined the issue of CDAs in Lagos peri-urban neighborhoods and discovered that they were involved in security projects, waste collection, and borehole supply. They however pointed out that elite capture tended to undermine inclusiveness because the richer members took over the decision-making processes. The authors of the study found that until there are mechanisms to guarantee equal participation, CDAs will be prone to strengthen social inequality rather than to decrease it. This is an indicator of a wider predicament of governance in voluntary community organizations.

Nevertheless, there are empirical evidences of Ghana that indicates a related but slightly different dynamic. Community-based organizations, such as CDAs, which are initially associated with district assemblies are a part of Ghana

decentralization. In his comparative study on the communities of Northern Ghana, Abubakar (2023) discovered that, using CDAs, social infrastructure such as schools and water systems improved tremendously. However, it was found that the sustainability of these projects was largely determined by the integration of CDAs in blueprints of districts. Projects which were weak in terms of linkages with formal local governments tended to fail because proper maintenance was not done. This underscores the need of institutional synergy between the community associations and government agencies.

Boateng and Lawal (2022) provided a comparative analysis of the Community Development Associations (CDAs) in Nigeria and Ghana and outlined some of the similarities and differences between the two countries. Nigerian CDAs became more autonomous and self-sufficient, because in most instances they are based on voluntary contributions. Ghanaian CDAs were more institutionalized concerning formal systems of governments. Such an institutionalization of Ghana rendered the projects sustainable but there were times when this institutionalization stifled grass-root autonomy. In Nigeria, though, autonomy was valued leading to the promotion of innovation and resource shortages were left to CDAs. The research eventually arrived at a conclusion of the optimal solution to be a balance between the autonomy and institutional incorporation that would guarantee participation and sustainability.

Based on the empirical evidences, three empirical insights are outstanding. To begin with, CDAs are crucial drivers of grassroots development in Nigeria and Ghana, yet transparency, inclusivity, and good leadership determine their performance and inclusion (Mensah & Osei, 2024; Kehinde & Alabi, 2025). Moreover, the community projects need to be sustainable

based on the linkages with formal governance systems projects that are not related to the municipal or district systems are likely to deteriorate with time (Abubakar, 2023). The issue of elite capture and decreasing youth involvement poses a threat to the inclusiveness of CDAs, and thus indicating that the reform is necessary to improve the accountability and draw more people into the community (Adeyemi & Akinola, 2022; Boateng & Lawal, 2022). The CDAs in Nigeria and Ghana are necessary yet not enough. They thrive with clear leadership, socio-economic inclusiveness and close connection with formal government structures.

Community Participation towards Integrated Development Planning

Participation in development planning in Nigeria has often been hampered by weak institutional frameworks and political interference. According to Nwachukwu and Olaleye (2021), on the study of community planning in Anambra State, Nigeria revealed that only a small fraction of community members were actively engaged in needs assessments and monitoring of local projects. The study determined that the planning processes were dominated by political elites, and therefore, there was a mismatch between the output of the project and the actual needs of the community. The authors reiterated the truth that in the absence of genuinely participatory institutions, integrated development planning is unable to become collaborative planning but rather ends up being top-down planning.

Owusu and Amoako (2022) examined to what extent the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) has been implemented in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area. They established that community consultations did make a difference in the alignment of district development plans with local aspirations. They also captured some of the challenges, such as low turnout at planning

meetings and gender disparities in representation. This means that although participation is fostered in Ghana's institutional arrangement, there are still deeper socio-cultural issues that must be solved.

Also, Adeyemi and Mensah's research (2024) illuminates the Nigerian and Ghanaian experience with some intriguing tendencies. They found that Ghana's mandate for Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to hold community consultations made IDP processes much more participatory. Contrarily, Nigeria's planning system was extremely fragmented with little clear mechanism of community participation. Their study revealed that integrated development planning was effective in the Ghanaian districts where not only was participation encouraged but also was monitored, whereas ad hoc consultations were employed in the Nigerian local governments.

Technology has emerged as an essential partner in boosting IDP participation. Akinyemi (2025) recorded this in the study conducted on the application of digital platforms for planning urban development in Abuja. The research indicated that online forums played an important role in youth and women's participation in policy discourse. It has demonstrated that online engagement closed the logistical gap of face-to-face meetings, although challenges such as internet availability and literacy issues continued to cause barriers to internet coverage across the world. Similarly, Asare and Boateng (2023) examined how Ghana is leveraging online questionnaires within district assemblies and discovered these instruments enhanced responsiveness to the local population, particularly in cities.

Despite all the advancements, there remain issues to be addressed in both cases. Eze and Mohammed (2022) described how in Northern Nigeria, elite capture and absence of feedback systems were obstacles to community participa-

tion in planning. The communities tended to be convened to discuss plans in the first case, but were closed off from monitoring and evaluation. Whereas, in Ghana, Ampofo and Owusu (2021) revealed that while community forums were well attended, final development priorities were sometimes determined by political appointees rather than by consensus. This undermined trust in the process and discouraged participation in subsequent cycles.

Taken together, these findings highlight several crucial insights. Firstly, integrated development planning is more effective when communities are genuinely involved throughout the process from needs assessment to implementation and monitoring (Nwachukwu & Olaleye, 2021; Owusu & Amoako, 2022). Secondly, while Ghana has made more progress than Nigeria due to stronger decentralization laws, both countries continue to struggle with elite dominance and low inclusivity of marginalized groups (Adeyemi & Mensah, 2024). Thirdly, the acceptance of digital platforms offers new opportunities to expand participation, but attention must be paid to bridging digital divides (Akinyemi, 2025; Asare & Boateng, 2023).

Challenges Associated with Community Participation in Nigeria and Ghana

Empirical research in Nigeria and Ghana demonstrates continuously that even though community involvement is a key pillar of better local governance and development, structural, socio-political and operational obstacles persist to the effective implementation of community involvement. The first and widespread obstacle is a bad institutional design and a lack of legal backing on the participation requirements. In Ghana, research studies note that even with the legislative frameworks (Act provisions and local governance laws) which require formal participation of people, participatory requirements are disparate and are often purely symbolic.

Empirical studies in the municipalities of Ghana indicate poor attendance of meetings and poor follow-through on community contributions imply that consultations do not usually result in a firm decision on a plan or a budget (Owusu et al., 2022; research on citizen participation in Ghana, 2025). In Nigeria, however, such gaps have been observed: the local government frameworks exist to be consulted with, but the mandates are weak and poorly implemented, letting the officials take the consultation as an advisory issue instead of binding, which actually erodes the trust of the citizens.

The second significant obstacle is financial issues and uncertain resources. Various empirical evaluations conducted in Nigeria indicate that despite meaningful community participation in the planning process, unpredictable funding can result in the inability to implement plans; projects that are defined based on participatory process is often postponed, half-implemented or even abandoned as the funds fail to show up (International Policy Briefs; local governance case studies 20212024). The identical dynamic is manifested in Ghana whereby the district assemblies in some cases fail to align community priorities to budgets available causing frustrations and lessening the desire to engage in future cycles (Owusu & Amoako, 2022; Asare & Boateng, 2023).

Third, the inclusiveness of participation occurs over and over again when elite capture and political influence is involved. In both nations, evidences of empiricism reveal that often consultations are dominated by local elites, politically linked actors or powerful interest groups that bias project selection and distribution of resources in favor of their limited interests (research in Lagos, Enugu, and Accra peri-urban areas; 202023). In Nigeria it manifests itself through patronage-based project lists and politically based constitutions selections, whereas in

Ghana researchers have seen political appointees reshape the community choices towards partisan interests (Ampofo & Owusu, 2021; Eze and Mohammed, 2022). The overall outcome is that women, youth, migrants, ethnic minorities and so on usually lack representation, or rather are underrepresented, which curtails equity and legitimacy.

Moreover, another problem that is closely interrelated is the problem of social exclusion and unequal participation. The results of the empirical surveys and qualitative studies indicate that participation is highly dependent on gender, age, class, and migratory status. Cultural issues and meeting time, as well as targeted outreach, under-represent women and the younger generation in most consultation forums (Bridging the Gender Gap research; Mensah and Larbi 2022 insights). In Ghanaian and Nigerian districts, it has been found that, unless participation programs actively eliminate obstacles (childcare, timing, travel costs, literacy), the invitees will be dominated by the reinforcing rather than the reducing inequalities already-empowered.

The other limitation is the question of information asymmetry and poor feedback. Research shows that communities usually do not get sufficient information prior to the consultations and usually get insufficient or no feedback on the way their contributions were utilized (Nwachukwu and Olaleye). This obscurity is a source of contempt and diminishes future interaction. In cases where scholars studied digital or hybrid forms of participation, researchers indicate that the reach has been improved, but they also take the precaution to mention that because of digital divides (connectivity, digital literacy), these methods cannot be used to guarantee inclusive participation (Akinyemi, 2025; Asare and Boateng, 2023).

Lastly, socio-political and socio-economic conditions like insecurity, conflict, and civil strife especially in some regions of northern Nigeria, limit sustainable and safe community interactions. Research found that where the rule of law, displacement, and fear of violence is high, documents are risky to secure opportunities of collective decision-making and, thus, in conflict-affected regions, participatory planning is impracticable until basic security and trust is reestablished (local governance & peacebuilding studies 20232025). Collectively these empirical researchers, suggest a systemic of interrelated challenges; poor institutional enforcement, unpredictable funding, elite capture, social exclusion, lack of information, poor technical capacity, and unfavorable contextual conditions.

The solution to these problems involves multi-pronged reforms, namely, tightening legal requirements and enforcement of participation, predictable and transparent funding of community-identified projects, initiating mechanisms of elite capture (quota systems, social audits), developing facilitation and planning capacity at community levels, bridging digital divides, and creating mechanisms of participation that are sensitive to conflicts.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was employed in this study to provide in-depth descriptions of the characteristics of people and situations without relying on numerical measurements and a case study research design was used. This paper is pure conceptual in nature which involved a broad literature review from various scholarly sources, document analysis, newspapers, text books, and policy analysis within the framework of the subject matter.

Theoretical Framework (Governance Theory)

Conventionally, the government is linked with governance issues around the world.

According to Rhodes (1996), a new process of governing the society has come in the form of governance. According to Pierre and Peters (2000) governance is the ability of the government to make and to act on the policy with a consideration of guiding the society. General exercise of authority is defined as the term governance when it is applied to public administration (Schulman et al., 1999; Grindle, 1997). Kjaer (2011) differentiates between old and new governance. According to Kjaer (2011), old governance is an idea of governing by the national governments at the upper level, and it refers to the extent of control that the government can impose on social and economic processes. On the other hand, new governance is more concerned with the interaction of governments with the society. Kjaer (2011) goes on further to state that the governance theory is more concerned with institutional change and it is a human agency. Thus, the governance theory brings about aspects of transformation that are not common in institutionalism.

As Stoker (2002) argues, the governance approach is the adoption of more active participation of the private sector and other voluntary organisations in service delivery as well as making strategic decisions. Therefore, this resulted in sharing of government responsibilities. This should be a duty that one should engage in and can be enhanced to imply good governance (Davids et al., 2005). Good governance is therefore key to establish and maintain an enabling environment upon which development can take place and the quality services are rendered in a participative, equitable and transparent way (Binza, 2009). According to Ismail et al., (1997), good governance will demand the authorities to consult with communities since it is the nearest governmental sphere to communities before making any decisions that could impact their sustainable livelihoods.

Therefore, good governance fosters and enhances PPPs and it is necessary in the practice of sustaining PPPs (Bult-Spiering & Dewulf, 2006; UNECE, 2008). Good governance is trying to do more than to manage economic and financial resources or a specific service delivered to the population in a way that is efficient through PPP (Binza, 2009). It is a wide scale reform agenda to empower the institutions of civil society, to open up and transparent governments of all levels; to make them responsive, accountable and democratic (Hughes, 2003). It is also clear that the PPPs survival is anchored on all the attributes of good governance. Therefore, it means that the theory of governance is needed in PPPs practice to ensure that success is achieved in the long term.

Concluding Remarks

It is evident that recentralization and further weakening of local governments are likely to continue in both countries and much of Africa because the initial path that was created to benefit central government officers (politicians and bureaucrats) rather for effective and efficient local governance in both countries. The paper concludes that the demands of good governance and modern local governance is to enable conduit for effective and efficient local governance for better development for the citizenry.

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Conflict of interest

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest among the authors.

Contributor statement

All the authors contributed actively and meaningfully to the manuscript.

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AI Generation Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI, version GPT-4) to assist with language refinement and structural editing. The use of this tool was limited to improving the readability and organization of text, and the final content, and theoretical framing remained entirely the responsibility of the human authors. All outputs generated by the AI tool were carefully reviewed, edited and validated for accuracy and scholarly integrity before inclusion.

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