



Local Government Administration and Rural Development in Nasarawa state, Nigeria

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Abstract

In spite of the huge revenue that accrues to the local government councils in Nigeria, the rural dwellers or communities are still facing the challenges of development. This research work examined the role of local government councils in rural transformation in Nasarawa state of Nigeria between the periods of 2014 – 2020, with specific focus on Agricultural development. The study utilises the qualitative research method where the purposive sampling technique was used and a total of twenty (20) persons were selected as respondents and the ATLAS ti 8 software was used to analyse the data that was collected. The research findings show that the 9 local government councils in Nasarawa state have not really enhanced rural development as expected. The study further indicates that the rural areas of Nasarawa state in Nigeria are faced with the challenges of lack of fertilizer, lack of insecticides, lack of good feeder roads to transport farm produce home and the constant clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers among others have hindered the development of the rural areas in the state. Therefore, the study recommended that the local government councils should provide adequate fertilizer to the rural farmers, provide insecticides, construct feeder roads and put in place good measures to prevent the unending conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the state.

Keywords: Local Government, Development, Rural development, Nasarawa state, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria operates a federal system of government where the governmental powers are constitutionally shared among the three tiers of government that exist, which are the federal, state, and the local government. Among the three arms of government, it is the local government councils that are the third-tier level of government and are the closer level of government to the grass root. Local government administration and rural transformation are synonymous in conception and approach; they are all aimed at realizing the same goals. Local government councils have the duty of

carrying out the job of providing very high quality of important services to the rural communities in their jurisdiction, for this aim to be achieved an operational local government system is requisite (Sutopo, Wulandari, & Adiati, 2017). The local government administration is a machinery for the provision of critical services (amenities) to the rural areas (Chidiebere & Ndaguba, 2018). This indicates how significant local government administration is to grass root and national development. Local government refers to the level of government that is close to the people and mandated with some powers to exercise

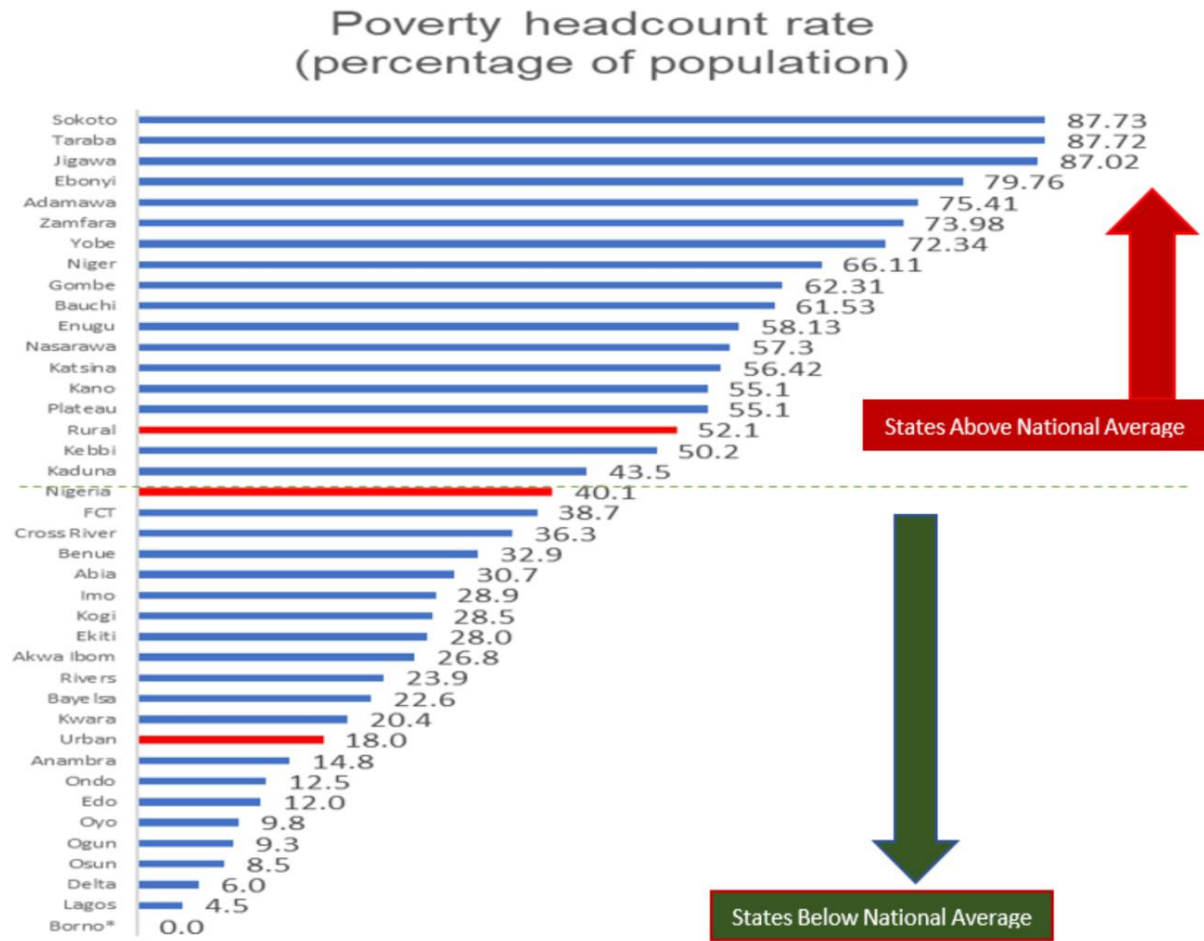


control on the affairs or activities of the people in that area and is expected to carry out the responsibility of promoting democratic ideals of the localities and coordinating transformation programs as while as serving as the basis of economic development of the rural areas (Imhanlahimi, 2011). Egwu & Obiorah, (2017) opine that the essence of local government administration in Nigeria is to bring the government closer to the people and to facilitate grass root development. Huge finances have been allocated to the local government councils in Nigeria but they are still confronted with several setbacks that have prevented them from developing the rural areas as expected (Nwogwugwu, 2015).

1.1 Statement of problem

There is a relationship that exist between government at the grass root level and rural development or transformation which is the key reason why local government councils are established all over the world. It is equally for this reason that local government councils were created in Nasarawa state of Nigeria so that they will be able to transform

the rural areas and by extension improving the living standard or condition of the rural dwellers in the state. But over the years this goal has not really been achieved and the rural communities in the state are living a life that is characterized by poverty and underdevelopment. According to Tadele, (2020) the rural dwellers continue to remain underserved when compared to the urban cities and are confronted with different kinds of problems across the world, for instance, in China they are faced with environmental crisis, in India, it is the serious agrarian crisis, where as in Africa it is the severe shortage of jobs and poverty for the majority of the people and the gulf is increasing resulting to the high level of migration from the rural areas to the urban centre's. Aderinoye-abdulwahab & Nwachukwu, (2015) asserted also that the rural areas in Nigeria is characterized by agrarian livelihood and has a higher poverty level when compared to the urban cities. The health services and other amenities in Nigeria is structured to the disadvantage of the rural population (Koller & Ababa, 2019).



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, (2019)

Despite developmental potentials that the state has the rural communities or dwellers are still facing different kinds of social as well as political isolation in their respective local government areas. The local governments councils which were established to provide the social amenities that will improve standard of living of the rural people has not been able to do so there by failing to justify the essence of their establishment in the state despite several reforms. As shown in the above figure, Nasarawa state is ranked among the states that fall above national average on poverty line with 57.3% which has call for a great or serious concern.

Most of the scholars that have written on this subject matter in the past have always looked at the entire variables of rural development at the same time thereby making it difficult to actually proffer a way out because rural development is a broad field, hence this study has approached it differently by limiting it scope to Agricultural development only.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the study.

The aims and objectives of this study are as follows:

- (a) To examine the extent of how local government councils in Nasarawa state have contributed to rural development in the area of Agriculture.



(b) To investigate the factors that are responsible for the underdevelopment of the rural areas in Nasarawa state in the area of Agriculture.

(c) To proffer solutions on the way forward on how the rural areas of Nasarawa state can better be transformed or developed in terms of Agriculture.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for this study:

(a) How has the local government councils in Nasarawa state contributed to rural development in terms of Agriculture?

(b) What are the factors responsible for the underdevelopment of the rural areas of Nasarawa state in terms of Agriculture?

(c) What are the ways forward on how the rural areas of Nasarawa state can better be developed in terms of Agriculture?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual clarifications

The federal, state and local governments are the three tiers of government in Nigeria. Both of them derived their powers from the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended.

The federal government has the sole responsibility in the constitution to legislate on matters in the exclusive legislative list which include areas like currency, foreign affairs defence among others.

The state government derives their power or function from concurrent legislative list. Although both the federal and state government can legislate on matters in the concurrence list. These include agriculture, education, health works and housing, Transportation among others.

While the local government derives their power and function from the residual list. There are areas that are restricted for local

government alone. Such matters in the residual lists included chieftaincy matters, local government markets etc.

2.2 Local Government System

The term local government is difficult to conceptualized just like several social science concepts, the concept of local government has been perceived and conceived in several ways depending on the scholar's orientation (Fatil, J.O, Fajoyomi, S.O, Adejuwon, 2017). Michael, (2013) on his part posited that it is not easy to really conceptualize local government just like many concepts in social sciences, having a universally acceptable meaning of the term has always been problematic. The exact meaning of local government varies from one nation to another and in most cases the purpose for which local governments are created is been used to define it.

Marcellus, (2018) averted that Local government system comprises the logical commitment to participate in democratic process as well as the governing process at the local level, this suggests administrative and legal decentralization of power, authority and personnel by the central government to a community that has its own will, carrying out specific responsibilities in relation to the needs and aspiration of the citizens at the local level. Local government administration is the third tier of government that is closer to the people and recognized the needs of the citizens like, social needs, development factors as well as their challenges (Samsudin S, Shireen H, 2018). Ibietan, J. & Ikeanyibe, (2017) on their part added their voice to the subject matter of local government administration by stating that a local government system must be autonomous, representative to a reasonable extend, it must be functional and must also be economically and technically viable. It must be representative because all the



policies that are made by it, has to reflect the wishes and aspirations of the citizens and to mobilize the grass root people for self-development.

Boris, (2015) opined that all political systems in the world pursue the realization of efficient and effective delivery of services at the rural areas this is as a result of the fact that the delivery of services by local government administration in any part of the globe certainly affects the daily activities of the people at the local level, therefore, whichever is the type of government, local government has always been fundamentally viewed as path to, and originator of national integration, development and administration. The effective delivery of public services such as Agriculture, schools, health care, electricity, roads among others in a community is largely depended on a proficient local government system which is operated by capable officials (Todes, A & Turok, 2018). The administrative activities in all local government levels is targeted at guaranteeing the effective development of the rural areas of a country (Prysiashniuk, O. Plotnikova, M & Buluy, 2018). The delivery of service to the rural areas is the crux of governance for all the local government administration (Makinde & Olaiya, 2016).

2.3 Rural Development

Tadele, (2020) asserted that rural development in the recent time has appeared in the global politics and there is no single definition that is universally acceptable for rural development or rural areas because it is broadly recognised in several literatures that it is a disputed idea be it in theory, policy, or practice, the concept seems to vary from one country to another because different nations use different criteria to identify the rural areas from the urban centres. Nevertheless, in several nations of the globe the places that

are usually called “rural” share many common characteristics that differentiate them from the urban centres and they include population size, labour market, population density and occupations. Rural transformation or development can be seen as an effort which are social and economic in nature and are aimed at encouraging the concepts of expansion and growth in the areas that are outside the urban towns, which includes enhancing the qualities of life of the rural dwellers (Atkinson, 2020).Machado, (2010) on his part stated that the persistence of underdevelopment and poverty at the rural areas has resulted in a situation where the rural dwellers continue to live a life that is full of sympathy as a result of the bad policies, programmes or projects that are supposed to be for the rural poor.

One shared feature of the rural areas in Africa and Nigeria in particular is that it comprises of individuals characterised by very low level of education and poverty (Olorunfemi, 2020). Mabogunje cited in Hamza, M & Muhammad, (2019) asserted that the concern of rural development is the improvement of the standard of living of the low income individuals who reside in the rural areas on a self-sustaining basis by changing the socio- spatial structures of the productive activities of the rural dwellers. This means that a comprehensive based restructuring and deployment of the rural people to manage efficiently with day to day responsibilities of their lives as while as with the changes resulting from this. Olorunfemi, (2020) averted again that it is important to note that the rural areas have become the centre for the production of food and also the place where the raw materials required by industries are produced. The Nigerian government over the years have made some effort towards developing the



rural areas, however, there is still a big gap between the formulation of policies and execution as well as the reality of the development level of the rural people (Egbe, 2014). Danaan, (2018) asserted that one of the greatest threat to rural development and the people in general in Nigeria is the issue of poverty. Maku, (2019) supported this view when he asserted that poverty in Nigeria is likely going to be worsening because the gap between the poor and the rich keep getting wider.

2.4 Theoretical frame work:

This research work utilises the Social contract theory. The theory is associated with scholars like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. The notion of the Social contract theory emphasise that man lived in the state of nature in the beginning where they do not have any form of government and they were not regulated by any form of law. There were oppression and all kinds of hardship on the society where life was considered to be solitary, nasty, brutish and short. Hence the people sought for the protection their lives as well as properties (Elahi, 2014). Because of this, a society was formed were people agreed to respect one another and to live a peaceful and harmonious life. The people also coming together in unity decided to pledge and obey a constituted authority (Government) and to also surrender part or the whole of their rights and freedom to the authority (Elahi, 2014). Nweke & Nkwede, (2019) on their part stressed that the social contract theory was basically to ensure the collective security and the social welfare of the general people in the society.

This theory was adopted as a theoretical frame work of this study because of the relevance of the theory to the research work. The theory is relevant to this research work because it emphasised the fact that the people in the society surrendered their rights

and freedom to the government and it is the responsibility of the government in turn to ensure the protection of their lives and properties and to also ensure the development of the society in order to enhance the standard of living of the people. Nweke & Nkwede, (2019) supported this view where they stated that the primary responsibility of any government is the security and welfare of the citizens and that is why modern states or nations of the world have adopted this as a cardinal point of their social contract to the citizens.

3. Methodology

This research work adopted the qualitative research method. A qualitative research method can be referred to as a holistic method which involves discovery. A qualitative research can equally be describe as an unfolding model which takes place in a natural setting which allows the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the real experience (Canie, 2007).

Method of data collection:

This research work utilises both the primary and secondary data.

Primary data referred to the original research which is obtained through first-hand investigation. Primary data in this study will be information collected from interviews which will be recorded in audio with the permission of the interviewee. It is the first-hand information collected specifically for the purpose of the investigation which is being carried out. While the secondary data were derived from text books, journals and other materials that are relevant to the study.

Population of the study

The population of the study is the entire 13 local government councils in Nasarawa state.

For the purpose of this study, a total of nine (9) local governments were selected out of



the thirteen (13) local government areas in the state and the Nasarawa state ministry of local government and rural development. It comprises of three (3) local government areas from each of the three (3) Senatorial zones of the state namely Nasarawa South, Nasarawa North and Nasarawa West senatorial zones. The population of study in this research included the officials of the local government in 9 councils' of Nasarawa state, the officials of the Nasarawa state ministry of local government and rural development, and the officials of the Community Development Associations in the 9 local government areas.

Sampling Technique

A sampling method is a procedure for selecting sample members from a population. In other words, it is referred to as the target population that is the total group of individuals from which the sample might be drawn. In line with the above the maximum variation purposive sampling method was adopted in this study. This sampling strategy was adopted to ensure that data collected from persons that have the

requisite knowledge and experience to authoritatively speak concerning the subject under investigation. A total of 19 participants are selected for this study as the sample size.

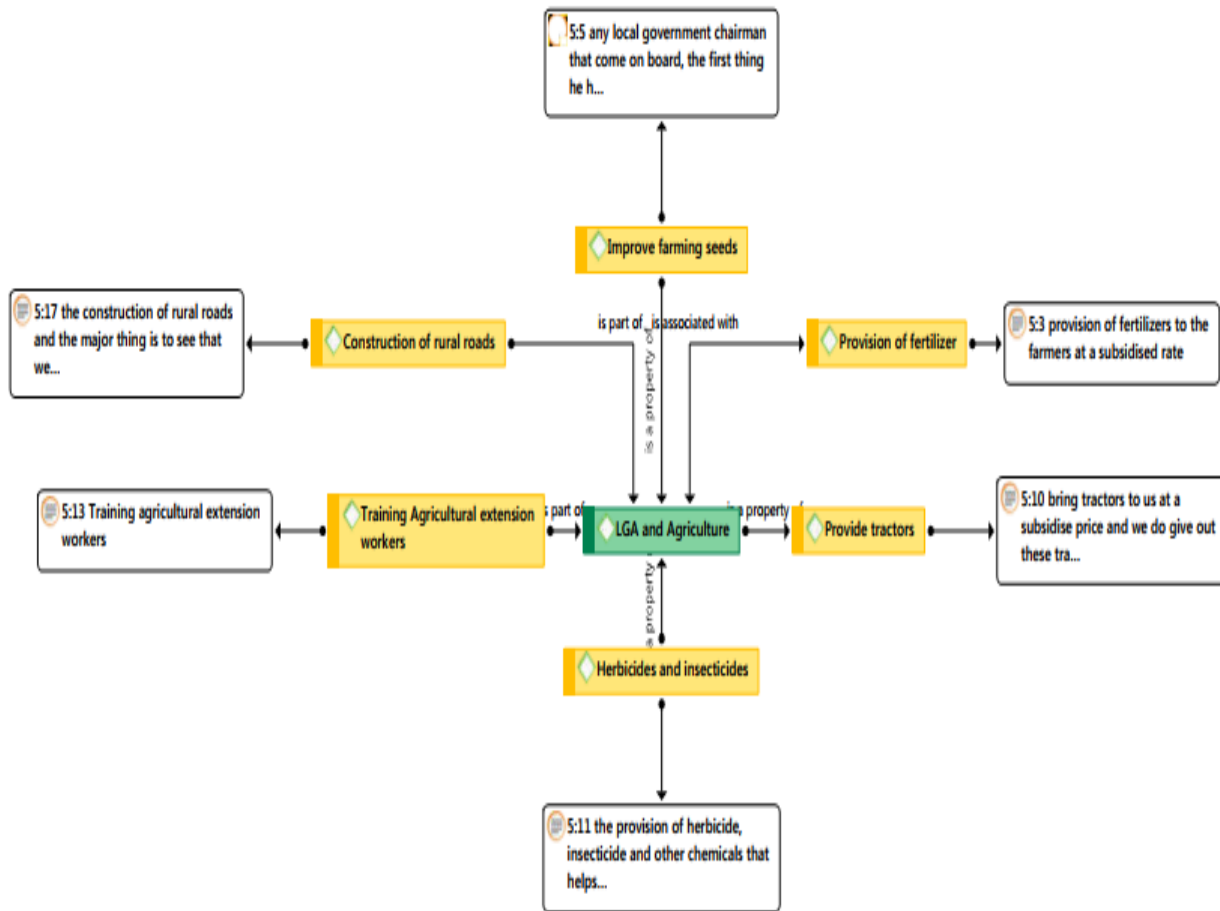
Data Analysis

The basic objective of data analysis is to be able to develop themes that represent the views of persons interviewed for this research who comprises of the Nasarawa state local government officials and that of the state ministry of local government and rural development as well as the views of the leaders of the Community Development Associations on why the local governments in the state have fail to develop and improve the living condition of the rural people in the state. In other to develop and analyse the themes, we used the ATLAS ti 8 which is software for qualitative analysis in running the analysis.

Result and discussion

The finding in this study is presented below including a figure to express views of the respondents during the interview.

Figure 2: The contribution of local government councils on Agricultural development



Source: field work, (2021)

The figure above represents the network analysis visualizing the theme, sub-themes and quotations related to the contribution of local government councils to rural development during the thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti.8 to established code groups (theme), codes (sub-themes), and quotes (quotations). As shown in the above figure LGA and Agriculture represent the theme for the first objective with the green colour box in the middle of the figure. The sub-themes include provision of fertilizer, provision of improve farm seeds, provision of tractors, herbicides and insecticides, training agricultural extension workers and construction of roads. Sub-themes represent the codes in yellow colour boxes signifying

properties associated with the contribution of local government councils in Agricultural development.

Despite the said contributions of the local government council's in Nasarawa state to rural development which happens to be the views of most of the executive chairmen of the local government councils in the state, the rural people who are at the receiving end of the services provided claimed otherwise by saying that they have not really seen or felt the impact of the services that the local government councils claimed they have provided overtime. The below quotations captures the claim:

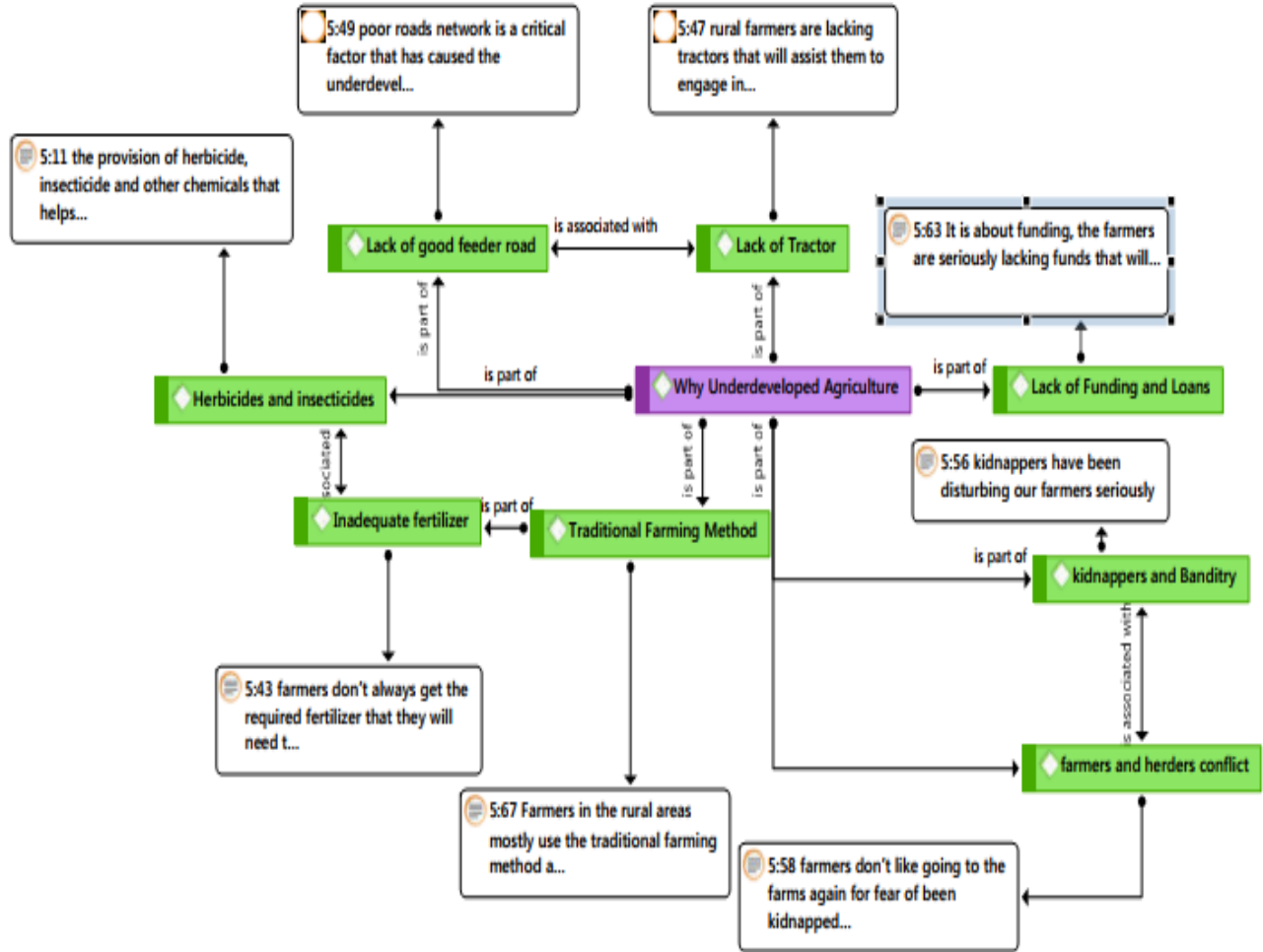
“Hmmmmm, most of the services that the local government said they have been

providing for us are just on newspapers and televisions but we in the rural areas don't see anything of such”

“we only hear in the televisions or media that the local governments are

doing a lot for us in the rural areas but the reality is that they are not doing as they claim, we are totally neglected and abandon in the rural areas”

Figure 3: Why rural areas are underdeveloped in terms of Agriculture



Source: field work, (2021)

The figure above represents the network analysis visualizing the theme, sub-themes and quotations related to why the rural areas are underdeveloped in terms of Agriculture during the thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti.8 to established code groups (theme), codes (sub-themes), and quotes

(quotations). As shown in the above figure why rural areas are underdeveloped in terms of Agriculture represent the theme for this second objective with the pink colour box in the middle of the figure. The sub-themes include lack of fertilizer, lack of improve farm seeds, lack of tractors, herbicides and



insecticides, farmers and herders conflict, banditry and kidnapping, lack of good feeder roads, inadequate funding and loans. Sub-themes represent the codes in green colour boxes signifying properties associated with why the rural areas are underdeveloped in terms of Agriculture.

Summary of Findings:

The findings of this study reveals that the local government councils in Nasarawa state have not actually done well in providing services that will improve the living standard of the rural dwellers most especially as it relates to Agricultural development. The rural dwellers of the state are neglected and left alone to fend for themselves without the local government coming to their aid. The claim by the local government council's officials that they are doing a lot in terms of the provision of services to boast agricultural development is not actually reflected in the living condition of the rural people.

Additional findings reveal that the rural dwellers in Nasarawa state are underdeveloped in term of Agricultural development for the following reasons:

Lack of fertilizer: Nasarawa state been an agrarian state is expected that the local government councils will give adequate attention to the provision of fertilizer for the rural farmers so as to enhance their agricultural productivity, but the rural farmers are left on their own by the local government councils.

Lack of tractors: The findings reveal that the rural farmers are in dare need tractors so as to have a better yield by moving from the current traditional mode of farming to the modern or mechanized farming but they are not getting the support from the local government councils.

Lack of insecticides and herbicides: The rural farmers are lacking insecticides and

herbicides which usually affect their crop yields negatively.

Lack of loans facility: More findings reveal that the rural farmers in Nasarawa state are lacking access to loan facilities which could have help in boasting their agricultural produce.

Fulani herdsmen and farmer's conflicts/ Banditry: Another finding in the study reveal that the constant conflicts between farmers and the Fulani herdsmen where the farmers crops are always being destroyed by the herdsmen resulting in constant fight or clash by the two groups has negatively affected agricultural development because most farmers are now scared of going to cultivate their land for fear of been killed by the Fulani herdsmen or they could be kidnapped by the bandits who are mostly Fulani men.

Lack of good feeder roads: Additional findings reveal that one of the causes of agricultural underdevelopment in Nasarawa state is as a result of the bad road network in the rural areas. This has negatively affected the economy of the rural farmers because even after they have harvested their crops, they cannot easily transport them to their homes or the market so as to sell.

Conclusion:

The role that the local government is expected to play in the development or transformation of the rural areas cannot be over emphasized as they are the tier of government that are closer to the grass root and that put them in a better position to understand the challenges that are confronting the rural areas more than any other tier of government. The rural areas of Nasarawa state are currently in dare need or support of the local government councils in the state most especially in terms of agriculture so that it will help in improving



their farm yields thereby improving their standard of living.

The study recommends that the local government councils in the state should make effort by providing the rural farmers the needed fertilizer as at when due in order to boost their farm produce as their lands are no longer fertile. Insecticides and herbicides should also be provided to the rural farmers in good time to enable them control the weeds and pests that do destroy their crops. The local government council's officials should link up with good agricultural research institutes to acquire and provide to the rural farmers improved farm seeds so as to increase their farm produce. The local government councils in the state can liaise with banks to provide loans facility to the farmers where the local government administration stands as the guarantor for the farmers. Good feeder roads should be provided in the rural areas to enable easier transportation of farm produce to the market or homes. The local government councils should adopt adequate measures that will bring an end to the constant fight between the farmers and the herdsmen, this study suggest that the government should look into the idea of ranching as a way forward in ending the clash. More security personnel should be deployed to the rural areas and to work in conjunction with the local vigilante groups in such areas to address the situations where farmers are kidnapped from their farms by bandits and forcing them to pay ransom before they are release otherwise they will be killed.

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