



ELITISM, LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study examines the relationship among elitism, local governance and development in Nigeria. The general objective of the study therefore is to examine the effect of elitism on local governance and development in the country. The theoretical framework of the study is the elite theory. Relying on secondary sources of data for analyses therefore, the work adopts logical argumentation as methodology. Local governance is operationalized in the study as what local governments do. Hence, the paper is additionally an interrogation of the local government tendencies in the Nigerian nation state. The relationship among the three variables (elitism, local governance and development in Nigeria) was indeed found to be debilitating. The occasioning incapacities accordingly, accentuated the effect of the sapping scenario of poverty and underdevelopment in the rural local government areas of the country (in particular). On the way forward, the study recommends an urgent purging of local governance in the country, of all the encumbering elitist seizures, beginning with the promotion of what the paper underscores as egalitarian gender tolerance.*

Keywords: *Elitism, Elite Theory, Local Governance, Development.*

INTRODUCTION

Enormous change and innovation in governmental practices are occurring throughout the world. Local governance, in particular, has become a concern in many countries (Wilson, 2000, p.52). This study is fundamentally framed on the supposition that local governance in Nigeria is profoundly influenced by elitist tendencies. It is further hypothesized in the study that this elitist influence is detrimental to development in the country. The general objective of the study therefore is to examine the impact of elitism on local governance and development in the country. In the meantime, Odubajo & Alabi (2014, p.138) have posited that the reality to be established (in order words accepted) is that the elite is the dominant actor in political power-dynamics in Nigeria. Then the central research question of this study borders on why this dominance may be extended to the local governance setting and consequently the implications of such overarching domination to self-evident development in the country. The theoretical framework of the paper is the elite theory. The work adopts logical argumentation as methodology.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Elite theory, explains Higley & Pakulski (2012, p.7) draws on the distinction between elites and non-elites to advance explanatory constructs that can be assessed empirically for accuracy or at least plausibly. But because theories are always aspectual, continues Higley & Pakulski, they (theories) explain particular aspects of a configuration or process, hence elite theory is actually a constellation of theories. Some of them cluster around the seminal works of Pareto, Mosca, Weber and other pioneers of the elite perspective; others address relatively specific phenomena such as patterns of elite circulation, networks, opinions and recruitment (Higley & Pakulski, 2012, p.7). Citing Daloz (2010) Vergara (2013, P.32) highlights:

An élite is a selected and small group of citizens and/or organizations that controls a large amount of power. Based on the social distinction with regard to other groups of lower strata most of these selected groups are constantly searching differentiation as well as separation from the rest of society. Normally the concept of élite is used to analyze the groups that either control or are situated at the top of societies. The creation of an élite is also the result of their evolution throughout the history of humanity.

The elite phenomenon is indeed a feature of all recognizable polities. According to Gulyaeva (2012) in Diah (2017, p.33) for example, in every country in Europe and Asia, political elites exercise power and participate in all regional institutions. They exercise their power at the top of the institutions in their country. Diah (2017, p.36) further adds that elite figures exist in every community group, where they enjoy a higher position vis-à-vis other members of the community. They are a phenomenon of social life and usually comprise a small group of people who play significant roles in the society. Their roles are recognized and accepted within society because sometimes they are required for leading and dominating social and political life (Diah, 2017, p.36). The core of elite theory accordingly relies in explaining elite behavior, elite interaction, elite transformation and, ultimately, the connection between those instances and state outcomes (Lopez, 2013, p.1).

Diah (2017, p.33) cites Barr (2005) and (DFID, 2011) to highlight that the elites then become a core group of people who occupy key positions of power and influence and set the direction for the whole society and country. And even though most of the elites emerged through democratic political processes, elites are often portrayed as 'lacking political will' that is, lacking attention or the willingness to fight for a common good, instead focusing on their own interests. We further highlight that despite its mainstream relevance in social science investigation, the elite theoretical framework is not without its own share of critics. Higley & Pakulski, (2012, p.7) therefore argue that it is not the case, however, that elite theories build on each other and progress in a coherent, cumulative way; that as we live in a time when 'theorizing' means innovating, not cumulating, and when research follows imperatives for speedy results that attract grants for further research, elite theory has continued to remain extant.

CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION

Elitism

In further amplification of the theoretical framework of the study, we focus in this section of the paper on the specific variable of elitism, which as Higley & Pakulski (2012, p.5) highlight has no agreed meaning (inside or outside social science). One of its meanings of course is the belief in or the practice of rule by elites, which implies focusing on them as the key political and social actors (Higley & Pakulski, 2012, p.5). Furthermore, the emergence of elitism is rooted in capitalism - an ideology that promotes class-distinctions in societies (Odubajo & Alabi, 2014, p.123). According to Odubajo & Alabi (2014, p.125):

A most fundamental image of elitism is that which throws to the fore the salient relationship between politics and economics, and nowhere else is this fact celebrated than in the writings of both the classical and contemporary elite theorists. It is a creation of the political-economy dynamics of any society, derived through the very political dynamics and abilities that drive any social formation. Pareto, Mosca, Michels, Mills and Hunter have in different ways contended in their theory of the elite that leadership issues in societies do not thrive on pluralism, but more importantly that the stratification paradigm holds the key to harmony within societies.

But essentially, discourses on political elitism raise two important questions: hierarchy and inequality (Albert, 2005, p.79). Citing Welsh (1979), Albert (2005, p.79) further posit:

Hierarchy has to do with the vertical ranking of people in the society into two categories, namely, those at the top and those occupying the lowest positions. Those at the bottom are assumed to be less important than those on top. These social hierarchies are assumed to be pyramidal in nature. There are more people at the bottom of the hierarchy than those on top. The latter are the *crème du sac* of the society and are responsible for the exercise of social, economic and political powers. Their powers consist largely in their ability to

articulate ideas, to persuade, to cajole and coerce, to mobilize, to embody and advance symbols to which large numbers of people respond.

It is in respect of this point, Albert (2005, p.79) continues, that the notion of political elite is associated with inequality. Hence, the political elites simply organize themselves in a manner that makes them superior to the rest of their society. Elitism in governance therefore pays no heed to the real needs of the governed. It promotes the interests of the elite to the apparent disregard of the welfare of the subaltern constituents of the political space. Invariably also it considers the needs or even the greed of a few people (the elite) to be more important than the desires of the majority. Elitism as political leadership and other managerial considerations is accordingly imbued with pejorative tendencies. As leadership propensity elitism at the local governance level negates everything that is desirable at this level of governance.

Local Governance

How does local governance relate with local government? According to Shah & Shah (2006, p.1) local government refers to specific institutions or entities created by national constitutions (Brazil, Denmark, France, India, Italy, Japan, Sweden), by state constitutions (Australia, the United States), by ordinary legislation of a higher level of central government (New Zealand, the United Kingdom, most countries), by provincial or state legislation (Canada, Pakistan), or by executive order (China) to deliver a range of specified services to a relatively small geographically delineated area. While on the other hand, Local governance is a broader concept and is defined as the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level. Thus, it encompasses the direct and indirect roles of formal institutions of local government and government hierarchies, as well as the roles of informal norms, networks, community organizations, and neighborhood associations in pursuing collective action by defining the framework for citizen-citizen and citizen-state interactions, collective decision making, and delivery of local public services (Shah & Shah, 2006, p.1).

Local governance could also stand for the opposite of governance at the international setting. But in this study, we shall play down on this possible connotation of the concept of local governance. We highlight that governance has come to be used as a normative proposition (Wilson, 2000, p.52). The concept of local governance accordingly seeks to establish standards for citizen-citizen and citizen-state interactions, collective decision making, and delivery of local public services (Shah & Shah, 2006, p.1). Everything about it is therefore antithetical to elitism. According to Wilson (2000, p.52):

Governance has gained great currency during the last decade. The concept emerged in a specific historical context but is now utilized for a multitude of purposes. The evolution in the approach to development among the major international organizations set the context in which governance would become prominent. A commonly accepted focus on institutional development gave way to management development in the 1980s. This view continued to rely on a largely state-led strategy of development, but the concern with the management of governmental organizations represented an important change in view.

Governance therefore cannot successfully be divorced from what governments do or what they are expected to do. Principally also, the concept of local governance in this study derives from what local governments do. Scholars also define the term local government according to the context in which they operate (Diah, 2017, p. 42). Citing Wilson and Game (1998), Pratchett (1999), Howard (2012, p. 48) and Rondinelli et al., (1983), Diah (2017, p.43) further sees local government as follows:

- (1) The governing institutions which are elected through democracy, along with their bureaucratic organizations, which portray a sub-national level of governance.
- (2) Formal institutions of a government that function at the local level, the extension of central government authority to the local level, in order to provide services to its local citizens.
- (3) Government bodies drawing their authority from the central government, serving local interests by effectively implementing policies with greater autonomy in the political, administrative and financial sectors.
- (4) An effective communication medium between local citizens and the central government - effectively representing the central government at the local level (Diah, 2017, p.43).

Local governance therefore accordingly continues to relate positively with what local governments do. Furthermore, although the concept of local governance is as old as the history of humanity, only recently has it entered the broad discourse in the academic and practice literature (Shah & Shah, 2006, p.2). Then according to Wilson (2000, p.52) discussions of broader issues of management meant that the political and social context of state-led development received attention. And in addition, the confluence of decentralization, as one element of structural adjustment policies, and of demands for redemocratization in many countries forced a shift in focus from government itself to the means by which government manages and utilizes resources. It is thus this means by which government manages and utilizes resources that is also denotable as governance and in the local setting describable as local governance.

According to McKinlay (2005, p. 8), in the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in what is often referred to as "good governance". Typically, he argues, this includes a focus on the role of the governing body of an organization - the directors, the trustees, the elected members depending on the nature of the organization. It encompasses their responsibility for ensuring effective management. In the public sector, it has often been associated with sound public management and as one of the themes of public sector reform.

But local governance, McKinlay posits is much more than this. It is concerned with the different influences which; taken together, set a community's direction. It draws part of its rationale from the concept of subsidiarity -- which holds that decisions should be taken as close as possible to the level of impact. More importantly, it recognizes that a number of different influences operate within any community and that the best outcomes are achieved when these influences are aligned one with another rather than working at cross purposes. It further includes what is often referred to as "social capital" - the received understandings and the networks which influence how people interact with each other at a local level. It also recognizes that governance is not just a function of the formal institutions of government (McKinlay, 2005, p. 8). Yet, pivotal to all of the foregoing is the coordinating essence of local government.

CONCEPTUALIZING DEVELOPMENT

The concept of development has been used interchangeably with modernization, growth, change, innovation and transformation (Odo, 2015, p.3). This accordingly makes it difficult for scholars to arrive at a universally acceptable idea of development. To conceptualize development thus entails some entrenched accommodation of heterogeneity. Soares & Quintella (2008, p.104) therefore, further highlights that the development process covers a complexity of relationships. Rapley (2007, p.1) describes development as both an enterprise and a scholarly discipline. Furthermore, there is even a strand of development-thinking which believes that the accumulation of wealth by the rich is good for the poor since some of the increased wealth of the rich trickles down to the poor (Aghion & Bolton, 1997, p.151). Lawal & Oluwatoyin (2011, p.237) accordingly posit that development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism.

But despite the seeming conceptual diffusion, development is something we must continuously interrogate, understand and catalyze where it is either non-existent, insufficient or where its critical processes are known to be deficient. Fayemi (2009) in Odo (2015 P. 3) thus posits that development denotes the process of transforming a state of being into a better one and it entails the process of expanding and adapting capacity of the society in satisfying the material and cultural needs designed to achieve among others, increased productivity within a balanced economic system, the eradication of poverty and disease, and the liberation of the individual from their constraints. The process necessarily involves individual freedom and social security, cultural buoyancy, educational and economic liberation, self-reliance and sustainable socio-political order (Fayemi, 2009; Odo, 2015 P. 3).

According to Mundi (2008) in Oye (2014, p.52) development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. It is also referred to as the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into a national economy; it is a socio-economic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society. Development is accordingly an improvement in the quality of life in both quantitative and qualitative terms (Odo, 2015. P.3). Local governance is therefore critical in engendering development in any nation state.

HOW THE ELITE DOMINATE LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA?

As noted by Kotter (2010) in Diah (2017, p.33) the main issue with research on elites relates to identifying them and how their power and influence operate in a country. In this section of the study, we focus on how

the power and influence of the Nigerian elite operate in the local governance setting. The following scenarios are accordingly highlighted.

The Caretaker Committee Culture

The political dimension of governance could be addressed through a focus on the process by which authority is exercised and a focus on the capacity of institutions (Wilson, 2000, p.52). What then represents the process by which authority is prevalently exercised in the local governance system in Nigeria? What best depicts the capacities of the relevant local councils in the country, as political institutions? We highlight that Nigeria's subsisting 1999 Constitution places the power to provide the legal framework for the administration of local councils on state governments (Ojo & Ihemeje, 2014, p.214). In place of ensuring that democratically elected governments are instituted in these council areas however, the state governors have found it expedient to continuously appoint caretaker committees for these places. Then whereas the Constitution expressly provides for local governments, what these committees translate to are rather local administrations (Ezeani, 2012).

In Ananti, Onyekwelu & Madubueze (2015, p.34) the Caretaker Committee System is seen as a way in which a sitting government especially a state government selects and appoints individuals, in most cases of the same political parties, to manage the affairs of the local government. These individuals are also in most cases, the elite members of such political parties. This of course leads to the continuity of elite domination even in the local government areas, as the governors who make the appointments predominantly bring their political-elite associates into these positions. The committee members owe total allegiance to the governor (Ezeani, 2012). But local governance presupposes major grassroots participation (and control) not domination by some committee members who usually belong to the elite class.

Through the Results of Fraudulent Elections

Nigerian elections have never been marked by stellar performances. The results are usually disputed. The disputes are usually the functions of generic fraudulent tendencies on the part of the political elite. In a nutshell, Nigerian elections are usually characterized by fraud. According to Human Rights Watch (2007, p.9), therefore, unrestrained by any real accountability to the electorate, many of the elected officials who came to power in fraudulent elections in Nigeria have committed abuses against their constituents and engaged in the large-scale looting of public resources. This state of affairs is also applicable to the local governance setting. The elite manipulators of the electoral processes (and their outcomes) in the country do not usually spare the process of local government elections. For instance, during the 2004 local government elections in the country, in addition to the usual violence, election observers reported widespread rigging of election results (Human Rights Watch, 2004, p.10). Hence, against the backdrop of the Nigerian nation's experience with military authoritarianism, Baadom (2004) in Nyewusira & Nweke (2012, p.171) opine:

Threats to democracy in the local government system have not come from members of the armed forces who have nothing but contempt for democracy, but rather from professional politicians and groups in the various political parties, who engage in criminal manipulation of the electoral process, in order to win elections at the local levels, take power and then manipulate the mechanism of democracy to destroy democracy at the grassroots.

In this study, these professional politicians and groups in the various political parties also stand for the country's political elite. They engage in criminal manipulation of the electoral process, in order to win elections at the local levels, so they could extend their elite networks to the local (rural) level. Their aim is usually to take power and ensure that what obtains at this level is only seen to be democracy on the face of it but sheer elite greed in practical terms. Gambo (2015) also demonstrates that election in Nigeria is often marred with irregularities, especially the one conducted at the state levels, to the extent that the outcome usually reflects the wishes of the political party vis-a-vis governors that formed government at the state levels. In other words, the outcome of such elections usually reflects the self-centered wishes of the political elite at the state level. From these state levels also elitism is easily extended to the local governance level.

Further Expansion of Elite Networks

As soon as these elite figures are selected as caretaker committee members or their positions are brought about by fraudulent elections manipulated by the other elites at the state government level, they come with their friends and associates to the local governance setting and begin to display political abracadabra. Wilson (2000, p.52) argues that the direct interaction among citizens and government is most visible at the local level. But it is not when the local level is tainted by elite domination. Adedire (2014, p.100) further adds that a local government is expected to play the role of promoting the democratic ideals of a society and co-ordinating development program at the local level. It is also expected to serve as the basis of socio-economic development in the locality. In place of these ideals however what the elite sojourners at the local governance setting come to do is to provide the veritable platform for the expansion of the elite network for sharing the booties that have been assumed to exist in all spheres of the Nigerian public sector.

While each regime lasts (the caretaker committee or fraudulently elected types) the career public servants in the local government council would wait patiently in obedience because it is also through the good offices of the elite-offenders that monthly salaries would come, whenever the elite-network decides that the workers may get any part of the salaries (which are in most cases, in arrears by many months). But the friends and associates of the proper office holders must find something to do, even if it entails instigating and overseeing the arrest of some commercial bus conductors and dragging them to the Divisional Police Headquarters, for allowing their silly behinds to protrude through the bus windows, while the vehicles were in motion. For the poor local creatures to regain their freedom, they would have to part with money meant for the maintenance of elite tastes and fantasies.

Non-Residency in their Local Government Areas of Governance

When the tenure of office of the elite governors end they usually return to the cities they came from. There is therefore an obvious ethical issue in a situation whereby a certain elite personality has never resided among a people, does not intend to live among them, either during his tenure of office or thereafter, yet he chooses either by election or dubious appointment to be in charge of local governance in such area. Elitism in this case introduces the element of eccentricity in local governance. The local political elite and the natives he putatively leads accordingly become strangers to each other. We highlight that Nigeria's 774 local government areas are predominantly rural. These are the constitutionally entrenched jurisdictions for local governance and the resultant development. But the affairs of these countryside habitations are usually presided over by urban-based elites. The rulers may be from these places by birth but they do not maintain residences there. Outside political orders, they do not commune with the people. They periodically attend funeral ceremonies in such places but such attendances are tailored towards the garnering of votes for future elections (at higher realms) when the subsisting elite exploitation of the people is formally over.

Consequently, the actual needs of the locals could be the provision of security, which would insulate them from various attacks by sundry invaders but the foreign-elite-rulers would elect to give them a certain borehole that only magically produced water on the day of its commissioning. Meanwhile the people have their village stream which naturally serves as source of great spring water. The entire villages are furthermore surrounded by rivers and tributaries of other larger waters. But why would the elite governance-personnel see security issues as priorities when they do not ordinarily reside in such locations? The phantom borehole is important because of the invented contracts awarded for its dubious drilling and launch. Invariably, elitism begins to measure development by the number and class of the automobiles which attended the commissioning of the ghostlike water project.

The Illogic of Resultant Investments Emanating from Elite Loots

Because the elite local-governors do not reside in their supposed constituencies they take their loot outside the local government areas of official duty to invest same in other locations. The occasioning incapacitation of the people accordingly accentuates the scenario of poverty and underdevelopment in the rural local government areas. Exploring the theme of united and disunited elites, Odubajo & Alabi (2014) and Diah (2017) have tended to classify the Nigerian elite as the disunited type. It is however held in this study that the Nigerian elite are totally united by repellent greed. They do not usually thieve and leave evidence in form of investments in the source of the thievery. They travel to faraway lands such as Dubai in the United Arab Emirates to hide such war booties.

In the case of the local governance elite, those of them that are yet to reach such distant destinations as Dubai test the waters of such acts by investing in the property market in Abuja, the seat of Nigeria's central government. But it is incongruous to pillage these funds and take them to the federal capital territory. The same elite character at the local level continues to orchestrate some politically correct agitations, such as strong fiscal federalism and restructuring of the federation. The primary schedule of duties for this elite element is local governance but his operational focus would rather shift to where his loots are invested.

POSITIONING THE DEVELOPMENT (UNDERDEVELOPMENT) NEXUS

Local governance is operationalized in this study as what local governments do. A classless society it is acknowledged could be considered utopian in current times. The elite factor may accordingly remain considerable in local governance. But the brand of elites that may engender development at the local level must of necessity evolve from the specific locations, the elite figures would consequently live among the people and their activities could further catalyze development in these regions. In the areas of this study on the other hand, developmental hemorrhages were precipitated by elite activities. According to Wilson (2000 p.52) the World Bank offered a definition of governance as the exercise of political power in the management of a country's affairs. In a later publication, the emphasis on the term governance continued to be placed on the management of a country's economic and social resources for purposes of development (World Bank, 1992, p. 3). When political power is exercised for the management of elite affairs, particularly under local scenarios, what it leads to may be anything but certainly not development. In very specific terms, such elitist tendencies may only lead to underdevelopment.

According to Atkinson (2002, p.2) government is an institution. An institution, in turn, is a set of internal roles and relationships, rights and obligations, responsibilities and functions. An institution consists of people assigned specific positions, functions and roles within an organized structure. A development-oriented government, therefore, is one that has designed its internal relationships in such a way that specific developmental goals are achieved (Atkinson, 2002, p.2). In the absence of such specificities and achievement of developmental goals what is in place could be anything but government. The elite at the local government level in Nigeria have accordingly engendered anything but government on the average. McKinlay (2005, p. 8) highlights:

Good local governance is not just about being inclusive in the sense of ensuring that all of the significant players are engaged or at least given the opportunity for engagement. It is also about building capability. The skills of governance do not descend like manna from heaven on people who put themselves forward for involvement; they are developed through experience. Good local government is likely to be present in communities where there is extensive involvement in local governance so that people have the opportunity to learn the skills of governance and gain the satisfaction which comes from being effective in helping the community, or the part in which they are most interested, set and achieve the goals that matter for it.

Furthermore, Atkinson (2002, p.2) opines that governance refers more broadly to the environment in which government functions and to government's relationships with outside stakeholders. A system of governance refers to government's relationships with the electorate, the public, the consumers of services, and non-state actors. A development-oriented system of governance, therefore, is an institutional environment in which government creates the types of relationships with outside stakeholders that encourage those stakeholders to launch and sustain developmental initiatives (Atkinson, 2002, p.2). The local government elite in Nigeria have largely failed to catalyze the model of governance that would guarantee the sustainability of developmental initiatives. The caretaker committee syndrome in their emergence has also added to the causative issues of this incongruity.

Local governance, therefore, includes the diverse objectives of vibrant, living, working, and environmentally preserved self-governing communities. Good local governance is not just about providing a range of local services but also about preserving the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development, and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents (Shah & Shah, 2006, p.2). Then, even if we refute the market-led trajectory of this contention, our thesis is that the Nigerian elite have ensured that the other local governance ideals fail to materialize in their country and what this translates to as, elitism, local governance and development nexus is underdevelopment.

THE WAY FORWARD

According to Higley, in Diah (2017, p.36) elites emerged in the absence of any robust collective or common interest (Higley, 2010). This study therefore proposes as a robust collective agendum the promotion of egalitarian gender tolerance in local governance in Nigeria. Ihemeje (2013) has already demonstrated that the level of women participation in local governance in Nigeria is abysmally low. To minimize the level of elitism in the system incidentally requires gender toleration. We note that women could be as elitist as men. Therefore, the gender tolerance that this study advocates must accordingly safeguard against the elite among the womenfolk taking over from the elite-male gender. Consequently, it is already manifest in this work that the focus of the study is the rural area. Hence, the ability of the rural female leader is also under focus. She has led her peers and others to record great achievements in the funding of numerous projects. They mobilize these funds and deliver them to the male folk who may or may not use such monies judiciously.

It is now time to elevate the status of such women in the Nigerian local governance system. In profound historical terms, the leader of the market women in some of these locations is indeed a very important administrator. The Aba Market Women Revolt of 1929 is instructive at this point. It classically exemplifies the organizational abilities and the developmental spirits of such women, even in their illiteracies (Van Allen, 1975; Falola & Paddock, 2011; Matera, Bastian & Kent, 2012). It remains therefore ironical that nearly a century after, similar caliber of female leadership geniuses is being completely relegated to the background of developmental and organizational initiatives by their offspring and grandchildren, who parade the corridors of elite local governance as leaders. Therefore, if for instance there must be caretaker committees anywhere as interim administration, such women should be members of such committees. Local governance in these local jurisdictions must become synonymous with local self-governance. We do not have to continue to bring the elite from the urban centers to dictate to the market women in the rural areas how to run their stalls.

We do not need to emphasize that the hitherto, rural men had rather found ways of establishing elite linkages with the urban-male elite-invaders, in an unsavory cycle of elitism. The new women local governors (whose mandates and legitimacies are rooted in the people) will for instance understand the need for having functional maternities in their locations more than the mindless elite males from the cities, who had dominated the local governance system. The rural female leaders are likely to ensure (more than others) that such facilities as functional maternity centers and operational primary educational institutions are provided for the people among whom they have always lived anyway.

CONCLUSION

Improvement in local government remains a high priority in most countries, but unless the relationship between citizens and government is more fully developed, the actions of local government will not necessarily lead to improvement in the conditions of people's lives (Wilson, 2000, p.52). Elitism must not therefore obstruct the relationship between citizens and government in local governance. Elite dominance has persisted in the country and has also remained extended to the local governance setting because the domination has remained unchallenged. This study has underscored the possibility of the critically desirable challenge being catalyzed by market women. The study further emphasized that the currently excruciating elite domination negates the dreams of self-evident development in the country, using the local governance mechanism. Furthermore, local government is created to ensure meaningful development of the grassroots through participatory approach (Fatile & Okewale, 2013, p.140). Local governance (principally what local governments do) is accordingly antithetical to elitism. And until this elitism is effectively challenged in the country the processes of generic development that incorporates the local governance trajectory may continue to seem profoundly complicated.

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