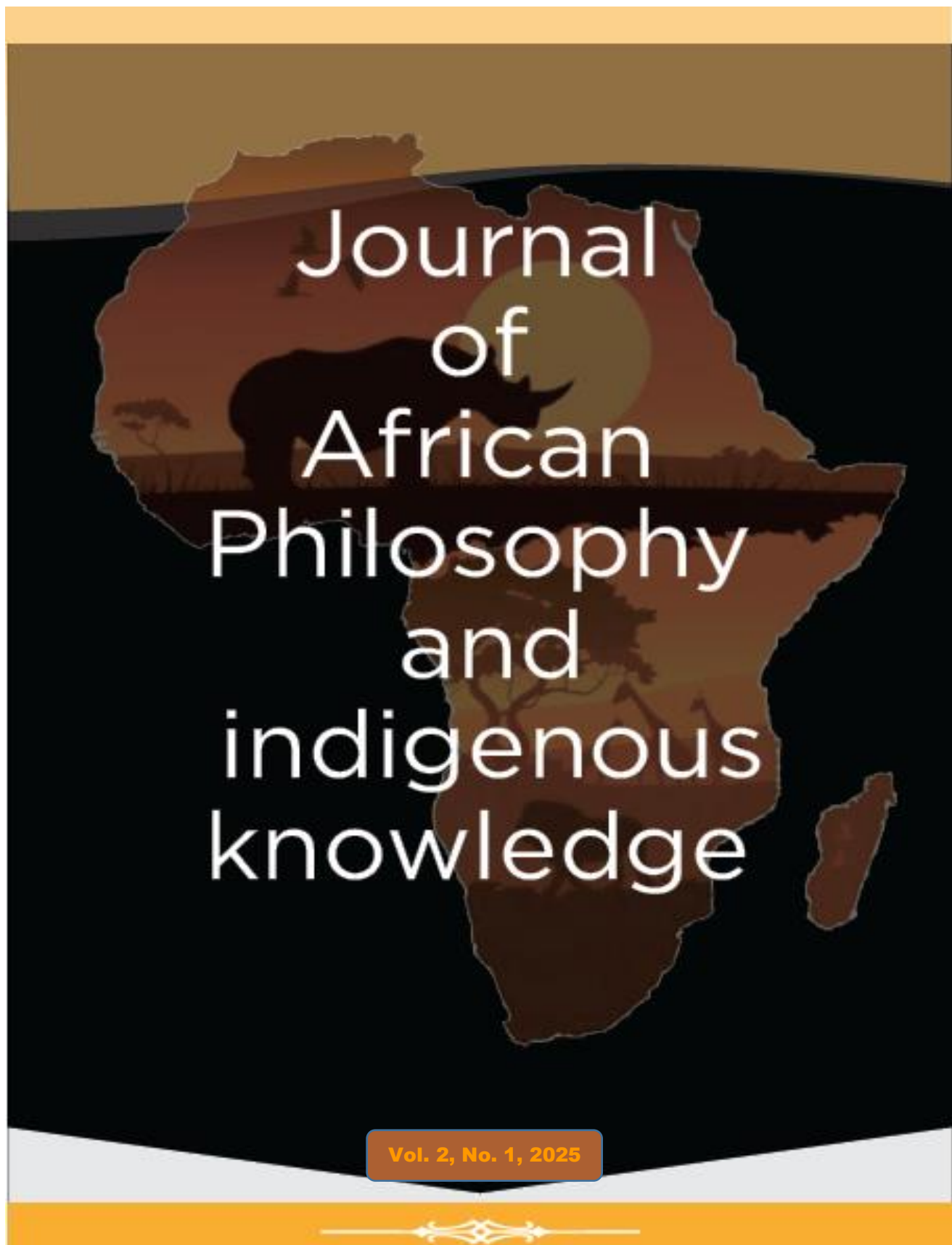




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Editorial Note

This issue of the *Journal of African Philosophy and Indigenous Knowledge* presents a diverse yet intellectually unified collection of papers that examine African realities through indigenous epistemologies, philosophical analysis, institutional inquiry, and socio-cultural critique. Collectively, these contributions reaffirm the journal's commitment to centering African knowledge systems while engaging with contemporary debates in health, education, governance, technology, morality, religion, and development.

Several papers in this issue critically examine the relevance of indigenous epistemologies in addressing enduring social challenges. For example, the paper titled *Indigenous Epistemologies and the Reconfiguration of Mental Health in Urban Lagos State, Nigeria*, interrogates the dominance of Western biomedical paradigms in African mental health discourse. Drawing on qualitative interviews with indigenous practitioners, including *Babaláwo* and *Oníṣẹ̀gùn*, the study demonstrates that mental distress is locally understood as a relational and communal condition shaped by spiritual balance, moral conduct, and ancestral continuity. The paper argues for a pluralistic mental health framework that meaningfully integrates indigenous knowledge into urban mental health policy and practice in Nigeria.

Closely aligned with this epistemic revaluation is the paper on poverty amidst plenty in Nigeria, which interrogates the paradox of persistent poverty despite the country's abundant natural and human resources. Challenging Western-led development paradigms, the study examines African Indigenous Knowledge Systems as adaptive and pragmatic tools for alleviating poverty. By examining indigenous agriculture, informal economic networks, community governance, and traditional healthcare, the paper argues that indigenous knowledge constitutes a living system capable of complementing formal development policies. It advocates for hybrid development models that integrate indigenous practices into education, finance, and governance structures.

The issue also addresses questions of gender, education, and institutional transformation. The study on shifting gender dynamics at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe presents a longitudinal analysis of graduation trends from 2017 to 2023. Using a mixed-methods approach, the paper examines the decline in male graduation rates alongside increased female participation, situating this shift within broader socio-cultural, economic, and policy contexts. The findings link changing gender patterns to affirmative action policies and inclusive education initiatives, contributing to ongoing debates on gender equity and the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive education.

Institutional roles in development are further explored in the paper on religious institutions and grassroots development in Nigeria. Conceptualising religious institutions as faith-based, non-state actors, the study examines their contributions to welfare provision, humanitarian services, healthcare, education, and socio-economic justice, particularly in contexts where local government presence is weak. While acknowledging concerns about abuse and extremist tendencies, the paper highlights the complementary role of religious institutions in grassroots governance and recommends regulatory frameworks, including whistle-blowing mechanisms, to safeguard development outcomes.

Technology and institutional efficiency form the focus of the study on office automation in Oyo State-owned polytechnics. Employing a descriptive survey design and quantitative analysis, the paper demonstrates a significant positive relationship between office automation and job performance among office managers. The findings underscore the importance of technological transformation in public institutions and recommend upgrading work environments to enhance productivity and administrative efficiency.

Another key thematic strand in this issue concerns the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge in the digital age. The paper on digital preservation and documentation of indigenous knowledge in Africa explores how digital technologies, including databases and machine learning tools, can support the safeguarding of Africa's knowledge heritage. Drawing on case studies from Kenya, Nigeria, and Southern Africa, the study highlights both the opportunities and ethical challenges of digital preservation, emphasising community ownership, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable partnerships as critical to success.

Finally, the paper on contemporary African culture and religion interrogates their influence on the continent's socio-economic development. Using historical and phenomenological approaches, the study attributes Africa's developmental challenges to cultural practices and religious orientations that, in the author's analysis, perpetuate corruption, injustice, and social fragmentation. The paper calls for a critical restructuring of cultural and religious frameworks in alignment with global best practices to enable sustainable development.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue demonstrate the continued relevance of African philosophy and indigenous knowledge in addressing contemporary African challenges. By engaging indigenous epistemologies alongside institutional, ethical, and technological analyses, this volume advances critical conversations on how Africa can draw on its intellectual traditions while navigating modern transformations. The editorial team acknowledges the authors, reviewers, and contributors whose scholarship has made this issue possible and looks forward to continued engagement with rigorous, context-sensitive, and transformative African scholarship. You are invited to enjoy the intellectual content of this issue.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN FACILITATING GRASSROOT DEVELOPMENT FOR EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Religious institutions are usually agents of human capital development and often serve as instrument of transformation particularly at the grassroots level and so religious institutions are faith based organizations who are non state actors that have a central religious or faith core to their philosophy, membership or approach. However, while some are skeptical because of some dangerous antecedents of propagating abnormal ideologies, indoctrination, violent extremism, radicalization, mass hypnotism, as well as abuse of fiduciary relationships, others admit that religious institutions have been in the forefront of delivering social services and pressurizing the government particularly at the indigenous level to push for developmental and poverty alleviation projects at the grassroots. In the light of this, the paper conceptualized religious institutions as well as local governance stating the theory adopted. Qualitative technique was employed and the findings from this paper revealed that religious institutions have made significant and complementary impact in providing services to the rural areas particularly where the local government presence is not felt. Some of which include welfare assistance, humanitarian services, pushing for socio-economic justice, providing health care needs for the elderly and educational sponsorship for the less privileged all of which contributes in enhancing grassroots development. It therefore concludes and recommends that Policy frameworks should be established wherein structures should be put in place where all religious institutions will have a whistle blowing mechanism in which the followers and staff can report sermons or activities encouraging criminality, religious genocide, violence, corruption and other illegal and exploitative actions capable of destroying the prospects of grassroots development.

Key words: Fiduciary Relationships; Grassroots Underdevelopment; Human Capital Development; Indigenous Development; Local Governance; Religious Institutions

Introduction

Religious institutions are increasingly emerging as key actors in grassroots development (Olarinmoye,2011).Thus, this research study reflects on the increasing roles played by religious institutions in the contribution to grassroots development. Be that as it may, local governments often assume a constitutional and legally binding role in the production and provision of social services particularly at the grassroots levels since they are governmental agencies anchored on the philosophy of bringing government close to the people at the indigenous level (Olojede,2022).However, with

the increasing challenges and complexities of local governance, the local governments cannot provide grassroots development to the people autonomously, they often require the support and intervention of religious institutions who therefore act as a complementary support system in facilitating grassroots development for effective local governance (Musekiwa and Musekiwa,2023).Thus, faith based organizations are religious affiliated institutions that focuses on human development and so religious institutions have been in the development field for long due to their close proximity with the local people. However, while

some are skeptical because of some dangerous antecedents of propagating abnormal ideologies, indoctrination, violent extremism, radicalization, mass hypnotism, as well as abuse of fiduciary relationships, sexual exploitation, money laundering, human sacrifice amongst other forms of corruption (Aina-Pelemo and Olujobi, 2024) ,others admit that religious institutions have been in the forefront of delivering social services and pressurizing the government particularly at the indigenous level to push for developmental and poverty alleviation projects at the grassroots. This reveals that religious institutions even though are institutions for worship and other religious activities, they are basically development inclined that range from education, health, economic and social development. Beyond that, they are also involved in encouraging activism, political participation and electoral administration at the grassroots by acting as agents of political education and socialization through voter education, election monitoring, and electioneering campaign programmes. Again, they provide economic support for vulnerable members of the community as well as unemployed youths through soft loans, technical assistance, job creation, cottage industries, farm projects, loans to farmers and small scale businesses (Ogbe, 2017)

Education is another huge area where religious institutions facilitate grassroots development. Many of Nigeria's leaders, academicians, researchers and intellectuals have been trained from mission schools. Thus, religious institutions complement the local governments by constructing classroom blocks, community schools, provision of instruction materials, training of teachers and contributing to the educational curriculum. Girl child education is another area many religious institutions are investing in. For example, the mission of the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria educates Muslim women and make positive impact on national issues. Similarly, religious institutions also have established universities across Nigeria such as Covenant

University, Landmark University, Ajayi Crowther University, Kings University, Anchor University, Benson Idahosa University ,Babcock University, Bowen University, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Madonna University, Alhikmah University, Crescent University, Catholic University of Nigeria, Crawford University ,Wesley University of Science and Technology ,Adeleke University, Mountain Top University, Redeemer's University of Nigeria ,Fountain University ,Al-Qalam University, Aminu Kano College of Islamic Legal Studies, Summit University etc. .Thus, the presence of these universities has led to the speedy development of small communities, expanded small businesses in rural areas and has led to infrastructural development in many local communities (Ogbe, 2017).

Objectives of the Study

1. Identify roles played by religious institutions in facilitating grassroots development for local governance in Nigeria
2. Examine challenges faced by religious institutions in the task of facilitating grassroots development for local governance in Nigeria
3. Suggest better alternatives for religious institutions towards better facilitation of grassroots development for local governance in Nigeria

Conceptual clarification

Concept of Religious Institutions

Religious institutions are usually agents of human capital development and often serve as instrument of transformation particularly at the grassroots level and so religious institutions are faith based organizations who are non state actors that have a central religious or faith core to their philosophy, membership or approach. This implies that religious institutions derive inspiration and guidance from the teachings and principles from a particular school of thought within the faith. Hence, religious institutions

derive their origin and practice based on its doctrines and perception established by affiliated congregation in their community (Habibu,2019).Hence, religious institutions are faith based organizations that offer human services and incorporates a religious component into it (Ohazulike,2023) and so, religious institutions in the context of this study refers to the institutions associated with the three major religious faith perspectives in Nigeria namely Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (Ojewunmi and Oluwaunsi,2021).Therefore, religious institutions are religious oriented missions connected with an organized faith community either in the form of a particular belief system or ideology drawing from a particular denomination (Olarinmoye,2011).Therefore, generally speaking, religious institutions are formal and organized structures that has its foundation, existence, operation and tenets from its various religious books, philosophy and doctrines within a community. Examples of religious institutions include churches, mosques, temples, shrines and other places of congregation that support and administer religious practices (Babalola,2020).Thus, religious institutions by their evolution, philosophy, essence and character are faith based institutions established to provide indigenous solutions to grassroots problems that affect governance (Bamgbose,2020).In essence, religious institutions extend their functions beyond worship and prayer to include activities such as humanitarian services, peace building, crisis prevention, conflict resolution, job creation and community development (,Jarikre, Asala and Okoli,2024).

Concept of Grassroots Development

The totality of citizen initiated activities aimed at enhancing many facets of local communities could be simply referred to as grassroots development or rural building. Therefore,grassroot development involves empowering the indigenous people and groups by giving them the knowledge and abilities

necessary to bring about change in their local communities .This implies that grassroots development refers to a group of principles and methods that are important in eradicating poverty and disadvantage by tying democracy to the grassroots(Ohazulike,2023).Hence, grassroots development is a critical aspect of a nation's socio-economic growth that focuses on empowering local communities through effective local governance, resource allocation and participatory decision making processes (Nwaoburu,2024). Hence, grassroots development entails the provision of basic social services such as access to good roads, clean pipe borne water, rural and urban electrification, sustaining and supporting household livelihoods through the provision of credit facilities for agriculture, arts, crafts and small scale businesses, encouraging the formation of cooperative societies and other economic groupings at the indigenous level. This therefore suggests that grassroots development entails the political, economic and administrative utilization of human capital resources for the transformation of grassroots areas in ways that ensure that local communities identify and address their own needs and that interventions are woven to specific cultural and contextual realities (Oboite, 2024). It is on basis we can allude that grassroots development connotes the advancement in the living condition of the people at the rural areas. It also involves the overall improvement in all aspect of their lives. Basically, grassroots development implies positive change or progress in the overall outlook of rural areas and so it denotes significant and sustainable improvements in all ramification of rural areas and this enhancement brings with it overall improvements in the living standard of the rural dwellers (Nwoba, Ibeogu and Nwokwu,2021).

Grassroots development is a process of socio-economic change involving the transformation of an agrarian society in order to achieve a common set of development goals based on the capacities and needs of the people. Therefore, grassroots development is a strategy for bringing about desirable socio-economic,

cultural, institutional and technological changes for developing human and natural resources and for the upliftment of the standards of living of all indigenous people at the grassroots. Hence, grassroots development is a process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for the improvements and transformation of the lot of the grassroots populace and so it is the process of ensuring that the poor section of the people has some share in the fruits of economic activity. This reveals that grassroots development is concerned with the improvement of the living standards of the low income people living in poor communities on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-economic structures of the productive activities. It implies a broad based reorganization and mobilization of the indigenous masses and resources so as to enhance the capacity of the local populace to cope effectively with the daily tasks of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this (Anikeze, 2011).

Concept of Local Governance

The concept of local governance has continued to generate adrenaline within the academia and government parastatals. These dopamine has not been unconnected with the increasing importance of local government as one of the paraphernalia of federalism (Ajisegiri, 2011). Therefore, throughout the world, local governance issues have become increasingly crucial in recent years. Thus local governance has emerged as a situation of central importance in a lot of countries across the globe particularly in Nigeria. This is because local government is the closest tier of government to the people in Nigeria yet the resident population in it is denied the benefits of its existence. Hence, the inability of the grassroots people to experience local governance has made the concept of local governance a timely and cardinal issue (Oni, Adejuwon and Aliu (2011).

In the light of this, local governance is the ability of local government agencies to engage in indigenous self organizing networks characterized by interdependence, resource

exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state (Adeyeye, 2016). This implies that local governance is consensually regarded as the capacity of local government as a governmental unit to administer the grassroots effectively by acting as agents of local service delivery, mobilizers of community based human and material resources and organizers of local initiatives in responding to a wide variety of local needs and aspirations and so Local governance is the capacity of local governments to provide basic structure and conditions for grassroots participation in the democratic process (Aransi, 2017). Hence, local governance is the capability of local government institutions as a viable instrument for the delivery of social services to efficiently facilitate grassroots development in the most cost effective, indigenous and speedy manner. In other words, local governance is the ability of local government to pragmatically mobilize the human and material resources at the grassroots level for effective rural development (Anikeze, 2014). This reveals that local governance is the efficacy of local government to provide enhanced, effective and responsive service delivery, democratically indigenous self-government and effective utilization of human resources and provision at the grassroots level. Consequent on the foregoing, local governance essentially encapsulates the ability of local governments to provide an enabling environment at the grassroots for participatory democracy, administrative efficiency, resource mobilization and efficient service delivery (Ajisegiri, 2011).

Literature Review

A number of scholarly reviews examined religious institutions as a reflection of identity and social worldviews in contributing to grassroots development. This is so because it is a well-established fact that religious institutions contribute to human capital development and mobilization of human resources for indigenous development in a number of ways such as group solidarity and social cohesion via funding of educational projects, businesses and refugee

programmes. This was revealed by Hashimu, Jarikre, Asala and Okoli (2024) who noted that religious institutions have been in the fore front of educational advancement, provision and modernization of health care practices, agriculture and raised awareness in the rising case of maternal and child mortality, human trafficking as well as drug crimes in the local communities. While Wachukwu (2025) opined that religious institution has contributed to national stability by being a unifying force in maintaining peace and national unity in a highly pluralized, divided and politically volatile ecosystem. This is so because religion has encouraged shared values, responsibilities, marriages and community projects even in a tense or heated ethnic and sectarian landscape. Conversely, Ajayi and Oluwafemi (2014) argued that religious institutions are like two sides of a coin which can either make or mar a nation's political, administrative or economic institutions depending on how they are used or managed. They extended this discuss by revealing that the economy of a nation can be positively and negatively affected by religion and so when positively affected, it leads to the development of all the structures within the system and the effect will be felt by an upward increase in the living standard of the majority of the people. On the other hand, the negative effect of religion can be seen in the fundamentalist attack of the state. The Boko-Haram insurgence in Nigeria today is as a result of the malicious and twisted use of religion. Thus, the Northern Nigeria and almost every part of Nigeria have been totally devastated economically by the wanton violence and destruction of this group. Investors are frightened and uninterested in doing business or investments in Nigeria because of the consistent terror and insurgence going on in Nigeria particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria hence thwarting all forms of opportunities for development Nigeria should be enjoying and by extension creating more room for poverty, unemployment, infrastructural decay, underdevelopment, insecurity and violent crimes of all sorts.

Olunlade (2025) on the other hand admonishes that if religious institutions positively harness religion, it can lead to grassroots development because it is a source of social capital network that can facilitate collective actions for the provision of political education, political mobilization, humanitarian services, good governance, infrastructural development, curbing of illiteracy, powerlessness, deprivation, voicelessness, inequality, food insecurity, lack of access to basic infrastructure, communal violence and peace building due to the fact that development and prosperity thrives in an environment of peace.

Theoretical Framework

Social Bond Theory

This study is hinged on the social bond theory propounded by Travis Hirschi in 1960. Thus, this theory argued that the current rise in delinquency, violent crimes and poverty contributing to grassroots underdevelopment is as a result of limited or nonexistent ties that bind people to social organizations like family groups, school, community and religious institutions. This implies that youths have the propensity to commit crimes and activities capable of destroying communities and facilitating community underdevelopment but all of these tendencies are kept under control by their relationships with socialization agents like family, guardians, mentors and religious leaders. Hence, these agents serve as a protective edge or guide using religious tenets and activities in checkmating individuals from engaging in activities that contribute to communal underdevelopment (Kassabri, Cohen, Ajzenstadt and Loulou, 2023). Similarly, this school of thought was reiterated by Arokoyo, Atoyebi, Yunusa and Mejiyan (2024) who noted that an individual who has a weak stake or connection with their community and who does not have any contribution or social attachment as far as religious institutions is concerned is more likely going to engage in social vices and activities antithetical to community development. However, those who have strong bonds with religious institutions

will be more self-disciplined and socially inhibited. This is because individuals who are in an interconnected social network like religious institutions in which family, friends, colleagues, peers, associates and community members are involved and in whom they have ties with can have a great influence on their lives by virtue of them being socialization agents who are capable of influencing them into being wholesome citizens who contribute to grassroots development. In the light of this, this theory is relevant to this study because it emphasized on the interconnected ties the religious institutions plays in impacting individuals and grooming them into becoming holistic citizens capable of using their skills and knowledge in contributing to indigenous community development in health care, education, rehabilitation and other forms of services that facilitate grassroots development.

Methodology

The study adopted library research technique to gather data for the study. Hence, the information sources were derived from previous literature. In the light of this, secondary sources were employed to generate data. Thus, the data was gotten from text books, academic journals, inaugural lecture materials and published internet articles.

Challenges of Local governments in

Enhancing Effective Grassroots Development

According to (Ajisegiri, 2011; Anikeze, 2014; Ugwu, 2003) there are various challenges of local government. Some of which will be addressed below. One of the greatest problems of local governments in Nigeria militating against grassroots development is corruption. Corruption takes many forms ranging from individual corruption to misuse of office by public servants. Thus, corruption is the abuse of public office for private profit. Corruption manifests in various forms such as inflation of contracts, extortion, nepotism, Contractocracy, over invoicing and gratification. For instance, some public servants use their public offices for extortion, awarding of contracts to unqualified

people and gratification in order to perform their legitimate duties. Nepotism is another form of corrupt practices that may take effect when employment is offered to people who do not merit that responsibility either because they have money to give out or they are related to top public office holders. Therefore, corruption in the local government that affects grassroots development manifests as heavy economic costs, distortion in the operation of free market, slow economic development, infrastructural underdevelopment, destruction of institutions and bureaucracies that deliver services which propel grassroots development practices thereby keeping the grassroots underdeveloped and stunted (Ajisegiri, 2011).

Unfortunately the local government officials are not loyal to the indigenous people neither are the electorate politically educated or empowered enough to fight against corruption in the local government and this happens because right from the way the local governments are structured, their fiscal affairs are not meant for public consumption. In parts of Nigeria where the traditional institution is rife, some certain local government areas are carved out either in the name of a prominent traditional ruler or created for his political convenience. The local government is such that the traditional ruler is stronger and will install his surrogates to be at the helm of affairs of the local government. The effect of the above anomaly is that the interest of the masses is relegated to the background and sacrificed on the altar of Godfatherism, political patronage and corruption. Therefore, this enables the local government officials who are often times than not political puppets get away with corrupt practices thereby keeping the grassroots underdeveloped and stunted (Ugwu, 2003)

Another factor that has propelled the challenges of local government as it affects grassroots development is that many local governments in Nigeria are rural based and as expected, the level of participation by the citizenry is highly limited. Both local and international indicators are to the effects that the level of illiteracy in the

country is quite high. The same goes for the poverty rate. Apart from not having the capacity to participate meaningfully in the affairs of the local government, it is important to note that as a result of military rule, the citizens have lost every participatory culture in governance. Military rule thrives in isolationism and exclusivity. This has affected the psyche of the civil society in Nigeria especially at the local levels. In addition, there is a dearth of laws that encourage civil society participation in governance. There are no laws that will provide access to information and participation. The civil society no matter how vibrant and enlightened cannot achieve much in the absence of enabling laws and a friendly environment. This has contributed to the brazen political impunity and lawlessness which has led to the breakdown of local governments and consequently grassroots underdevelopment (Anikeze, 2014).

A problem of local government propelling grassroots underdevelopment is inadequate finance to carry out its statutory responsibilities. Local governments do not possess viable sources of generating funds especially the rural based ones. They therefore, depend heavily on the allocation from the federation account for purposes of carrying out their basic responsibilities. Some of the local governments are very poor to the extent that they cannot pay monthly emoluments of their staff without receiving the monthly federation account allocation. Internally generated revenue is equally very low. This greatly affects the effectiveness and performance of the local government in ensuring grassroots development (Aluko, 2006).

The Role of Religious Institutions in facilitating Grassroots Development

There has been a shift in the development field regarding the role of religion particularly in grassroots transformation (Islam, 2018). Thus, religious institutions for a long time have emerged to reduce the burden of the public sector and local government agencies in many rural communities. For example, religious institutions

particularly in Nigeria has provided educational/scholarship support to its followers within the local communities, economic empowerment, food, mentorship as well as providing justice for the oppressed and victimized. Thus, in Nigeria, the existence of religious institutions in facilitating grassroots development has become pertinent because of the close proximity they have with the rural communities as well as their fiduciary relationships with the grassroots and so the religious institutions has served as a supportive system to the local governments particularly in rural communities by providing primary health care in the core grassroots areas. Thus, on health care, Ogbe (2017) noted that the Christian Health Association of Nigeria provides forty percent of health care services to rural communities in Nigeria. This reveals that the religious institutions have made significant and complementary impact in providing services to the rural areas particularly where the local government presence is not felt. In addition to that, some prominent specialists hospitals are owned by religious institutions some of which include Still Waters owned by Redeemed Christian Church of God, Jalingo United Methodist Hospital owned by Methodist Church, Babcock University Teaching Hospital owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Saint John Anglican Church Hospital owned by the Anglican Church, Sacred Heart Hospital owned by the Catholic Church, Gilead Medical Centre owned by the Living Faith Church, El-Dunamis Medical Centre Clinics and Maternity owned by the Dunamis church and NASFAT Ikorodu Health Centre owned by the Nasru-Lahi Fathi in a bid to cushion the burden of local governments. Hence, they provide vaccines, subsidized medical services and drugs in rural and under privileged communities, organize public health sensitization and social development programmes like family planning, HIV/AIDS awareness, domestic abuse as well and sexual abuse and child labour awareness. For Ohalize (2023) religious institutions have played fundamental roles in informal local governance by providing an array of services to the

indigenous people such as providing welfare assistance, humanitarian services, pushing for socio-economic justice, providing health care needs for the elderly and educational sponsorship for the less privileged all of which contributes in enhancing grassroots development. Furthermore, the religious institutions have made significant contribution in the growth of the local communities by reducing the spike in rural unemployment through employing qualified personnels in nursery, primary and tertiary institutions built by them. Some of which include teachers, administrators, cooks, drivers, janitors, farmers, security officers, lecturers, auditors, journalists, painters, carpenters, bricklayers, ICT experts, researchers, broadcasters, fashion designers, lawyers, construction workers, child minders, nannies, brand managers, party planners, medical staff, clerks, caterers, messengers, information resource experts, therapists, mechanics, hospitality professionals, hair stylists, makeup artists, book traders, food vendors, photographers, event organizers etc. All of which has significantly enhanced grassroots development.

Furthermore, aside curbing rural unemployment, religious institutions have contributed to human capital development at the grassroots in no small measure since they are at the fore front of indigenous care and assistance that meet the peculiar needs of the grassroots. Some of which include financial support of rural cooperatives, health care research, establishment of adult literacy programmes, alternative technology dissemination, village nutrition advancement and clinical management particularly for those with special needs, nursing mothers and the elderly. Similarly, religious institutions also facilitate grassroots development while still acknowledging the legal role of the local governments by provision alternative youth development initiatives (aside that of the local governments) that targets ex-convicts, drug addicts or youths in prison. This is done by providing counseling services, palliatives and education with the aim of repentance and transformation in order to create a safe space for adjustment back into the society in order to be a

full participant of contributing to the economic development of their local communities (Ohazulike, 2023).

Lastly, religious institutions have played visible roles in facilitating grassroots development by engaging in indigenous conflict management before, during and after conflict situations. Hashimu, Jaikre, Asala and Okoli (2024) opined that local conflict management encompasses conflict prevention, dispute resolution, conflict settlement and peace processes at the indigenous level and the religious institutions facilitate peace that creates an environment for grassroots development by mediation, negotiation and arbitration in an ongoing conflict process in such a way that contains or checkmates conflicts that snowball into violent crisis or escalates into war as well as discouraging the use of weapons that usually triggers violent conflicts that turn peaceful local communities into theaters of war. Again, religious institutions usually act as conduits for peace building in local communities thereby making room for grassroots development through their sermons and counsel to local communities by encouraging seminars, social events and religious programmes that facilitate inter religious and interfaith dialogues, communal fellowship, interaction, friendships and healthy communal relationships in order to mediate and reconcile ethnic clashes and tension at the elementary stage as well as stem the tide of brewing religious conflicts. For example, the Muslim Corps Association of Nigeria collaborates with the Kaduna State Youth Corps members to build cooperative peace building projects that foster interfaith harmony at the grassroots level. Similarly, The Sisters Da'awah Group is a women's council that mediates disputes and encourages interfaith conversation between Muslim and Christian women particularly at the local communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Even though the state and religion are separate entities, religious institutions have become an inevitable non state actor and stake holder as far as governance and grassroots development is concerned. Thus, the culture and practice of

using religious institutions for political, personal agendas and aggrandizement need to stop in order not to contaminate the social and political systems that propel grassroots development. In the light of this, therefore, this study recommends that Bills should be passed at the state house of assembly where stiffer and punitive measures are made for religious institutions guilty of either implicitly or explicitly propagating fanaticism, hatred, religious tension and division capable of destroying the fabrics of grassroots development. Secondly, more stringent policies should be made at the state house of assembly to prosecute religious leaders or members who use religious manipulation, antics, schemes or abuse fiduciary relationships to engage in fraud, money laundering or human trafficking. This is because when religious institutions are centralized or left unregulated, some religious leaders can exploit that power to engage in illegal dealings without fear of consequences. Thirdly, Policy frameworks and structures should be put in place where all religious institutions will have a whistle blowing mechanism in which the followers and staff can report sermons or activities encouraging criminality, religious genocide, violence, corruption and other illegal and exploitative actions anonymously without fear of intimidation or harassment. Again, policies should be made wherein religious leaders must partake in leadership mentorship at their local communities.

This is because an antecedent of service to the community will help expose and rid out charlatans. Furthermore, when corruption is discovered in any religious institution or among adherents, the board of directors, elders, members and religious leaders should address cases of unethical or criminal conduct speedily by reporting to the law enforcement agents because when corruption is swept under the carpet under the guise of religion or fiduciary relationship, it grows and leads to impunity and chaos and subsequently stifles grassroots development and lastly, it is expedient that religious institutions need to emphasize and encourage sermons that advocate a culture of critical thinking, discernment, humility, contentment, service to the community and integrity as opposed to excessive propagation of prosperity, speedy wealthy without source, materialism and avarice because these are virtues that help to keep the grassroots peaceful and developed.

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