

From Models to Realities: Lessons for Nigeria in Multicultural and Multitier Local Government System

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's local government system faces significant challenges in effectively addressing multicultural diversity and promoting grassroots governance. These challenges are deeply rooted in structural and institutional barriers that hinder inclusive and participatory governance. This paper adopts a qualitative comparative approach to explore how international models of multicultural and multitier governance can inform reforms in Nigeria local government system. It assessed the limitations of Nigeria current local government structure and explores adaptable lessons from Canada, Switzerland, and India. The study is anchored on theories of multiculturalism and multilevel governance to propose actionable frameworks for more inclusive and autonomous local governance in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: *Models, Realities, Multicultural, Lessons, Multitier, Local Government System*

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1. INTRODUCTION

People with diverse values and identities, including religion, language, ethnicity, skin colour, culture, and sect, can be found in nearly every nation today. This phenomenon is so prevalent that there are barely any countries with entirely homogeneous populations remaining. Due to factors like colonialism, globalization, and various internal and external migrations, it has become essential for individuals with different identities to coexist. To manage their growing multicultural populations and address the needs of these individuals, nations have gradually shifted toward different practices that evolve over time in line with democratic principles (Brown, 2019).

Multiculturalism is already an established reality in all modern societies, which, due to globalization and the movement of people, consist of groups with diverse racial, religious, historical, and cultural backgrounds (Berry & Ward, 2016). Multiculturalism refers to the fact that individuals living within the same society may vary in aspects such as ethnicity, race, language, religion, culture, and beliefs. In this regard, recognizing diversity and ensuring the

protection of human rights are crucial for reinforcing both democracy and social cohesion, which are essential for development and progress. Specifically, fully respecting the right to cultural diversity is the first step toward achieving peaceful social co-existence. Furthermore, to enhance social connections, it is important to foster a dialogue between culturally diverse groups and encourage meaningful interactions, which is vital for achieving true co-existence and aligns with the principles of any democratic society (Thompson, Dunn, Burnley & Murphy, 2018).

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is characterized by a deeply pluralistic society encompassing over 250 ethnic groups, more than 500 languages, and a mix of religious traditions (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2020). This cultural diversity poses both a challenge and an opportunity for governance, particularly at the local level, where community identity, service delivery, and grassroots democracy intersect. Effective local governance in such a setting must reflect and respond to the heterogeneity of its constituents. However, Nigeria's

local government system remains largely dysfunctional, undermined by constitutional ambiguities, political interference, weak fiscal autonomy, and a lack of institutional capacity (Adah, 2022).

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria outlines a three-tier federal system: federal, state, and local governments, designed to bring governance closer to citizens. However, in reality, local governments function merely as administrative extensions of state governments, lacking true autonomy and decision-making authority (Alao&Osakede, 2015). This structural flaw has hindered the developmental capabilities of local governments, reduced public engagement, and intensified ethnic marginalization, especially in states with dominant majority populations. The absence of genuine autonomy and inclusivity obstructs service delivery and fosters disillusionment with democratic governance at the local level.

Globally, various countries have developed models of multicultural and multitier local government system that recognize and institutionalize diversity while ensuring effective service delivery and accountability. For example, Canada and Switzerland have adopted federal and decentralized approaches that protect minority rights, encourage local autonomy, and promote inclusivity in governance. Similarly, India's Panchayati Raj system embeds local governance within its constitutional framework and incorporates affirmative action mechanisms to enhance the participation of marginalized groups (Ladner, Keuffer & Baldersheim, 2019).

This paper explores how such international models can inform reforms in Nigeria's local government system. It argues that transitioning from models to context-specific realities requires a rethinking of local government structure, with emphasis on decentralization, multicultural inclusion, and institutional capacity. Using theoretical insights from Multilevel Governance (MLG) and Multiculturalism, the study aims to develop actionable frameworks for a more inclusive and autonomous local government system in Nigeria.

1.1. Research Problem

Nigeria's local government system, intended as the third tier of government, has long struggled with fundamental structural and operational deficiencies. Despite its constitutional recognition, local governments in Nigeria lack genuine autonomy, fiscal capacity, and institutional strength to deliver essential services or adequately represent the diverse interests of their communities. These challenges are further compounded by Nigeria's deeply pluralistic society,

which encompasses over 250 ethnic groups, numerous religious traditions, and over 500 languages. Yet, the country's government structures have failed to institutionalize multicultural inclusion at the local level, resulting in political marginalization, ethnic tensions, and declining public trust in democratic processes.

Globally, countries such as Canada, Switzerland, and India have developed decentralized and multicultural models of local government that balance diversity with local autonomy and service delivery. These models offer instructive lessons on integrating minority rights, enhancing local participation, and promoting inclusive development. However, much of the existing literature on Nigeria's local government reform focuses on issues of autonomy, corruption, or service delivery in isolation, without adequately exploring how multicultural and multitier government frameworks can be contextually adapted to Nigeria's unique socio-political landscape. In particular, there is a notable gap in empirical and theoretical research that bridges global best practices in multicultural local governance with the realities of Nigeria's fragmented and politicized local institutions.

This paper addresses that gap by examining how lessons from international models of multicultural and multitier government can inform reforms in Nigeria's local government system. Using insights from Multilevel Governance (MLG) and Multiculturalism theories, the study seeks to develop a practical and context-sensitive framework for a more inclusive, autonomous, and effective local government structure in Nigeria.

1.2. Research Objectives

1. To assess the structural and institutional barriers hindering Nigeria local government system in addressing multicultural diversity and grassroots governance.
2. To analyze international models of multicultural and multitier local government including Canada, Switzerland, India and assess their relevance and adaptability to the Nigerian context.
3. To develop a context-specific framework for reforming Nigeria's local government system that incorporates multicultural inclusion, decentralization, and institutional capacity-building.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Conceptual Review

Conceptual review was organized in subthemes as follow

2.1.1. Overview of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism as a concept and policy framework has gained prominence in political theory and public

administration due to increased global migration, post-colonial diversity, and the rise of identity politics. Scholars such as Nye (2017) and Namik (2019) argue that multiculturalism goes beyond tolerance; it involves recognizing, institutionalizing, and accommodating cultural diversity within a democratic framework. Berry & Ward (2016) noted that multicultural government enhances democratic legitimacy and social cohesion by ensuring all identity groups are represented in decision-making processes.

In the context of governance, multiculturalism calls for inclusive policies, minority rights protections, and cultural representation at all levels of government. However, literature also cautions that without strong institutions, multiculturalism can be co-opted or instrumentalized by dominant groups (Thompson, Dunn, Burnley & Murphy, 2018). For multiculturalism to function effectively in deeply divided societies, it must be paired with inclusive government structures and meaningful decentralization.

2.1.2. Local Government

The concept of local government originates from the belief that governance should be as close to the people as possible and that responsibility should be shared among different government levels for greater efficiency. Although the idea of local government is widely accepted, it lacks a universally agreed-upon definition due to debates about whether it should be described based on its functions or its structure. Scholars such as Mobolaji & Oriakhogba (2015) and Ibietan (2011) have offered definitions emphasizing popular participation, legal recognition, and substantial control over local affairs, including taxation and labour. The International Union of Local Authorities adds that local governments should have constitutionally defined powers and responsibilities and be governed by representatives elected through universal suffrage.

At the heart of local government is the principle of localism, which holds that the structure and operations of local governance should reflect the collective will and needs of the people. This means that for a local government to remain truly local, it must be responsive to the specific environmental, social, and economic conditions of its area. The emphasis on local participation and accountability underscores the importance of grassroots involvement in shaping decisions that affect daily life, thereby strengthening democratic governance at the community level.

2.1.3. Multitier Local Government System

Multitier local government system is where more than two local authorities are responsible for local

government actions and functions within a particular local area. Tiers refer to the levels of local government structure that provides the planning services. In a multi-tier local government system, the planning system or policy making process is designed to be applied by local government and the communities or local authorities (Slack, 2019).

The multi-tier model consists of an upper-tier governing body (usually region, district, metropolitan area) encompassing a fairly large geographic area and lower-tier or area municipalities (including cities, towns, villages, townships etc.). The upper tier provides region-wide services characterized by economies of scale and externalities whereas the lower tiers are responsible for services of a local nature. In this way, multi-tier models help to resolve the conflict among the various criteria for designing government structure- economies of scale, externalities, cultural diversity and redistribution on the one hand and access and accountability on the other (Barlow, 2014).

Most of the literature on multi-tier systems applies to large metropolitan areas. As noted earlier, in remote areas where municipalities are isolated from each other, distances are such that benefits or costs of services provided by one municipality are unlikely to spill over into adjacent municipalities. Similarly, distances between municipalities and their isolation from each other prevents them from benefiting from economies of scale in the provision of services whose costs per unit decline as the number of residents served increases. Hence, the rationale for a two-tier structure at the municipal level in remote areas is somewhat less compelling than it is for larger metropolitan areas (Udenta & Onah, 2023).

2.1.4. Global Models of Multicultural Local Government

Internationally, countries like Canada, Switzerland, and India offer varied models of multicultural and multitier local government system:

1. **Canada:** institutionalizes multiculturalism at the federal level and empower provinces and municipalities to design context-specific policies that support diversity. Municipalities play a key role in integrating immigrants and supporting minority communities through inclusive urban planning and public services (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006).
2. **Switzerland:** operates a highly decentralized federal model with significant powers devolved to cantons and municipalities. The government system accommodates linguistic, religious, and regional diversity through shared rule and local self-rule mechanisms (Vatter, 2009).

3. India's Panchayati Raj system: is constitutionally mandated to provide grassroots government, incorporating reservation policies that ensure representation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women at local levels (Mathew, 2000). While challenges of corruption and elite capture exist, it remains a valuable model for participatory local governance in pluralistic societies.

2.1.5. Challenges and Gaps in Local Governance in Nigeria

In contrast, Nigeria's local government system suffers from a lack of genuine autonomy and institutional capacity. Several studies (Ezeani, 2012; Olasupo&Fayomi, 2012; Aiyede, 2024) have criticized the 1999 Constitution for creating a façade of decentralization, where local governments operate under the tight control of state governors and lack independent funding streams. This undermines democratic representation, hinders effective service delivery, and exacerbates ethnic and regional marginalization.

While research has highlighted issues of corruption, mismanagement, and poor service delivery, few studies comprehensively explore how multiculturalism and multilevel governance principles can be operationalized in the Nigerian context. Most literature on Nigerian local government reform is either prescriptive or focused on fiscal autonomy without addressing deeper issues of identity inclusion and institutional transformation.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted two relevant theories that collectively explain the relationship between Multiculturalism and Multitier Local Government System: Multiculturalism Theory and Multilevel Governance (MLG) Theory.

2.2.1. Multiculturalism Theory

Multiculturalism as a political and social theory has been shaped significantly by scholars such as Will Kymlicka, Bhikhu Parekh, and Charles Taylor. Will Kymlicka (1995) is particularly influential, arguing that liberal democracies must go beyond individual rights and recognize group-differentiated rights to accommodate minorities and indigenous peoples. Bhikhu Parekh (2000) emphasizes the moral imperative of respecting cultural pluralism within a shared political community, advocating for intercultural dialogue and structural inclusion.

Multiculturalism theory asserts that cultural diversity is a permanent and valuable feature of modern societies. It stresses the recognition of minority identities and cultures in public institutions, legal and

political mechanisms that protect and promote cultural pluralism, and the role of inclusive governance in preventing marginalization and conflict.

Nigeria's cultural diversity; over 250 ethnic groups, multiple religions, and hundreds of languages demands a governance system that reflects its pluralistic nature. Multiculturalism theory supports the argument that local government in Nigeria should institutionalize mechanisms for the inclusion of minority voices in local decision-making, create culturally sensitive policies that respect and protect diverse identities, and foster social cohesion by reducing ethnic exclusion at the grassroots level.

2.2.2. Multilevel Governance (MLG) Theory

Multilevel Governance (MLG) theory was formally conceptualized by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks in the early 2000s, particularly in their study of European Union governance structures. Their seminal work (Hooghe& Marks, 2001; 2003) describes how decision-making authority is increasingly dispersed across multiple levels: local, regional, national, and supranational.

MLG challenges the traditional, hierarchical model of government by promoting vertical dispersion of authority (across levels of government), horizontal cooperation between different actors and institutions, inclusive, network-based governance where subnational units are empowered to make decisions.

Nigeria's three-tier federal system (federal, state, and local) suggests the potential for multilevel governance. However, in practice, local governments are politically subordinated and lack autonomy. Applying MLG theory to Nigeria involves strengthening the autonomy of local governments through constitutional reforms, enhancing coordination between federal, state, and local levels to reflect shared authority, and empowering local communities to participate in governance, thereby improving responsiveness and accountability.

Together, Multiculturalism and MLG provide a powerful analytical lens for understanding and reforming Nigeria's local government system. Multiculturalism emphasizes who should be included in governance (diverse cultural groups), while MLG emphasizes how governance should be structured and functionally decentralized across multiple levels.

This study uses both theories to argue that only a truly decentralized and culturally inclusive local government framework can address Nigeria's persistent challenges of ethnic marginalization, poor service delivery, and democratic alienation at the grassroots.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach to explore how multicultural and multitier governance models from other countries can inform local government reforms in Nigeria. The qualitative method is appropriate for understanding the complex socio-political and institutional dynamics involved in governance and diversity. A case study strategy is employed to examine international models, specifically from Canada, Switzerland, and India and draw lessons applicable to Nigeria's context.

Data were collected through both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data include academic literature, legal documents (such as Nigeria's 1999 Constitution), government policy papers, and reports on multicultural governance. These documents helped provide background and structure to the analysis. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including local government officials, scholars, and civil society actors. Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with community members from two culturally diverse Nigerian states (one in the North and one in the South) to understand local perspectives on governance, inclusion, and service delivery.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic content analysis, where patterns and themes are identified based on the research objectives. The study also applied a comparative analysis to evaluate the differences and similarities between Nigeria's system and those of the selected international models. This helped to identify practical elements that can be adapted to Nigeria's local government system, particularly in terms of decentralization, inclusivity, and capacity building. The combination of document review, expert insights, and community voices ensures a well-rounded and contextually grounded approach to understanding and improving Nigeria's local government system.

4. Results and Discussion

This section embodies three sub-themes based on our objectives. The emphasis of our results and discussion is on the three objectives posed for the study and is based on qualitative content analysis of the documents related to the subject matter of the study.

4.1. The structural and institutional barriers hindering Nigeria local government system in addressing multicultural diversity and grassroots governance

Nigeria is characterized by a rich tapestry of ethnic groups, languages, and cultures. However, its local government system has struggled to effectively manage this diversity, leading to issues of marginalization, underrepresentation, and inadequate

service delivery. Structural and institutional barriers, such as centralized control, lack of financial autonomy, and exclusionary practices, impede the capacity of local governments to address the needs of their diverse populations.

At the apex of these structural and institutional barriers in Nigeria local government system is the centralized control and limited autonomy. Nigeria local governments operate under a highly centralized system where substantial authority resides with state and federal governments. This centralization limits the ability of local governments to make decisions that reflect the unique needs of their diverse communities. The Nigeria local government system faces significant challenges due to constitutional ambiguities and political interference. The 1999 Constitution does not explicitly recognize local governments as a third tier of government, rendering them administrative extensions of state governments (Ajisebiyawo&Ilawagbon, 2025). This lack of autonomy undermines democratic representation and service delivery at the grassroots level. Recent developments, such as the Supreme Court ruling affirming the financial autonomy of local governments, offer a glimmer of hope for reform (Olumofe, 2024). However, the practical implementation of this autonomy remains to be seen.

In addition to centralized control and limited autonomy, one of the most significant structural and institutional barriers hindering Nigeria local government system is the issue of financial constraints and fiscal dependence. Local governments in Nigeria are often heavily reliant on allocations from state and federal governments, which make them financially dependent and limit their fiscal autonomy (Adeyemi, 2013). This dependency weakens their capacity to effectively plan and implement developmental programs that address the needs of their diverse, multicultural populations. The lack of internally generated revenue (IGR) stems from poor administrative capacity, limited economic bases, and political interference in local taxation and budgeting (Braimoh&Akinsanya, 2020). Consequently, the ability of local governments to respond proactively to the socio-economic and cultural needs of their communities, particularly marginalized groups is severely restricted.

The third, and equally critical, structural and institutional barrier within Nigeria local government system is the persistence of exclusionary practices and political marginalization. Ethnic and religious affiliations often influence the composition and operation of local government councils, leading to the marginalization of minority groups and

underrepresentation of vulnerable populations (Ajisebiyawo&Ilawagbon, 2025). In many cases, political elites manipulate local structures to serve dominant group interests, thereby reinforcing existing inequalities and eroding trust in public institutions. These practices are not only detrimental to social cohesion but also counterproductive to the ideals of participatory democracy, equity, and multicultural inclusion (Olumofe, 2024). The exclusion of certain groups from decision-making processes limits the responsiveness of local governments to diverse community needs, especially in regions marked by ethnoreligious heterogeneity.

It is clear from the above analysis that the capacity of Nigeria local government system to address multicultural diversity and deliver grassroots governance is severely constrained by centralized control, financial dependency, and exclusionary practices. While constitutional reforms and judicial pronouncements offer potential pathways for change, meaningful progress requires a holistic restructuring of institutional frameworks, empowerment of local councils, and deliberate efforts to promote inclusive government practices. Only by dismantling these barriers can local governments become effective platforms for managing diversity and fostering democratic development at the grassroots level.

4.2. International models of multicultural and multitier local government including Canada, Switzerland, India and their relevance and adaptability to the Nigerian context.

Examining international models of multicultural and multitier local government, specifically from Canada, Switzerland, and India provides valuable insights into governance structures that accommodate cultural diversity. These models offer lessons in decentralization, cultural inclusion, and participatory governance that could inform Nigeria's approach to managing its own ethnic and cultural diversity.

Canada's approach to multiculturalism is enshrined in its Multiculturalism Act and supported by provincial legislation. This framework promotes the recognition and celebration of cultural diversity, aiming to foster social cohesion and equality. Local governments, particularly in provinces like Ontario, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia, implement policies that encourage cultural integration while preserving distinct identities. For instance, multicultural advisory councils advise on policies affecting immigrant communities, and programs are designed to promote civic participation among diverse groups. However, Canada's model faces challenges, such as rising public concern over immigration and its impact on

public services like housing and healthcare. These issues highlight the need for adaptive policies that balance cultural inclusivity with practical governance (Jha, 2023).

Switzerland's governance is characterized by a federal system with a high degree of decentralization. The country is divided into cantons, each with significant autonomy over legal, economic, and social affairs. This structure allows for the accommodation of linguistic and cultural diversity, as cantons can tailor policies to their specific demographic compositions. For example, cantons with French-speaking populations have policies that promote the French language and culture, while German-speaking cantons do the same for German (Wellings, Majumdar, HänggliFricker&Pournaras, 2023). This model of multitier government ensures that local identities are preserved within a unified national framework. The emphasis on subsidiarity decisions being made at the most local level possible enhances democratic participation and responsiveness to community needs.

India's Panchayati Raj system is a decentralized form of governance that empowers rural local bodies through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This system establishes a three-tier structure: Gram Panchayat (village level), Panchayat Samiti (block level), and Zilla Panchayat (district level). It mandates reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, aiming to promote inclusive governance. Additionally, initiatives like Participatory Budgeting in cities such as Pune and Bangalore have allowed citizens to directly influence budget allocations, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability in local governance. The Bhagidari System in Delhi further exemplifies citizen-government partnerships, aiming to improve service delivery through active community involvement (ShodhEco, 2024).

Nigeria ethnic and cultural diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for governance. Models from Canada, Switzerland, and India offer frameworks that Nigeria could adapt to enhance inclusivity and cohesion.

1. Multicultural Policies: Canada's approach to multiculturalism and decentralized governance offers valuable lessons. The country has institutionalized multiculturalism since 1971, promoting policies that support cultural diversity and integration (Financial Times, 2024). Local governments play a crucial role in implementing these policies, ensuring that immigrant communities have access to services and opportunities. Emulating Canada's approach, Nigeria could develop policies that recognize and

celebrate its diverse cultures, promoting social harmony and reducing ethnic tensions.

2. **Decentralized Governance:** Adopting Switzerland's federal model could allow Nigeria local government to have greater autonomy, enabling policies that are more responsive to local cultural contexts. The Switzerland's decentralized structure allows for significant autonomy at the cantonal and municipal levels, fostering local innovation and responsiveness to community needs. Participatory budgeting and data-driven decision-making further enhance legitimacy and citizen engagement in governance.
3. **Participatory Mechanisms:** Implementing systems like India's Panchayati Raj and participatory budgeting could empower local communities, ensuring that governance reflects the needs and aspirations of diverse groups. India system has made strides in promoting inclusive governance. The system mandates reservations for marginalized groups, including women and Scheduled Castes, ensuring their representation in local decision-making processes. Initiatives like decentralized school management and community participation in education have led to increased enrolment and improved educational outcomes.

However, challenges such as entrenched political structures, resource disparities, and inter-ethnic conflicts must be addressed to effectively implement these models. Tailoring these frameworks to Nigeria's unique socio-political landscape, through inclusive dialogue and institutional reforms, is crucial for fostering a cohesive and equitable society.

4.3. Context-specific frameworks for reforming Nigeria's local government system that incorporates multicultural inclusion, decentralization, and institutional capacity-building

Drawing from the analyzed international models, a proposed framework for Nigeria's local governance includes:

1. **Constitutional Reform and Policy Instruments:** Amend the constitution to:
 - Clearly define local governments as a third tier of government with specified powers and responsibilities to ensure autonomy and reduce state interference.
 - Ensure representation, rights, and cultural equity for Nigeria's diverse groups at the local level.
 - Recognize indigenous minority ethnic groups at the local level and guarantee cultural rights and language access in local government areas.
 - Establish Cultural Advisory Councils (CACs) in each local government areas comprising

representatives from major and minority ethnic/religious communities to advice on local policies, conflict mediation, and inclusive service delivery.

- Mandate political parties to reflect local ethnic and religious composition in their nomination of candidates for local elections.
 - Introduce electoral quotas for underrepresented groups (e.g., women, ethnic minorities).
2. **Decentralization of Powers: Empowering Local Autonomy.** Transfer administrative and fiscal responsibilities to local governments, enabling them to address community-specific needs effectively. In other words, deepen fiscal, political, and administrative autonomy of local governments.
 - Grant local governments direct access to federal allocations (e.g., derivation principle) through a reformed revenue sharing formula.
 - Empower local governments to generate and retain more internally generated revenue (IGR).
 - Clearly define local government roles in education, primary healthcare, sanitation, markets, and local infrastructure.
 - Prevent state governments from usurping constitutionally guaranteed local government functions.
 - Establish Local Development Planning Authorities (LDPAs) in each local government area, coordinated by locally elected planning officers, to oversee participatory development plans, budgeting, and project tracking.
 3. **Multicultural Policies: Conflict Management and Intergroup Relations.** Implement policies that recognize and celebrate cultural diversity, ensuring that all ethnic and religious groups have equitable access to services and opportunities. This will Prevent ethnic marginalization and mediate inter-group conflicts.
 - Create independent local government-based Peace and Inclusion Commissions (PICs) for conflict early warning, dialogue facilitation, and dispute resolution.
 - Partner with traditional rulers and religious leaders for legitimacy and outreach.
 - Encourage local governments to adopt voluntary charters that commit communities to coexistence, equity in public employment, and land/resource use agreements.
 4. **Institutional Capacity-Building: Strengthening Governance from Below.** Improve the operational efficiency, transparency, and accountability of local institutions by invest in training and development programmes for local

government officials to enhance their administrative and governance skills.

- Strengthen Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) to oversee recruitment, training, and performance appraisal of local government staff without political interference.
- Incentivize public service excellence through performance-based bonuses and career progression.
- Introduce e-governance platforms for budgeting, procurement, and service delivery at the local government level.
- Mandate annual public audits and budget presentations to citizens.
- Institutionalize quarterly town hall meetings, community scorecards, and participatory budgeting (inspired by India's model).
- Use local radio and digital tools to disseminate local government decisions in local languages

5. Pilot Implementation and Scalability: Test and refine the framework before national rollout.

- Select pilot local governments in diverse states (e.g., Plateau, Benue, Cross River, and Lagos) for phased implementation.
- Monitor performance indicators such as conflict incidence, service delivery outcomes, and citizen trust in governance.
- Use evidence to advocate for legislative and constitutional reforms at the national level.

These context-specific frameworks align local government with democratic ideals, inclusive development, and service delivery excellence. By adopting such a framework, Nigeria can move towards a more inclusive and effective local government system that reflects its diverse population and addresses the unique challenges faced at the grassroots level.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study titled "From Models to Realities: Lessons for Nigeria in Multicultural and Multitier Local Government System" embodied three results based on the three objectives that guided the study. The study reveals that the capacity of Nigeria local government system to address multicultural diversity and deliver grassroots governance is severely constrained by centralized control, financial dependency, and exclusionary practices. International examples from Canada, Switzerland, and India demonstrate that multiculturalism and decentralization are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. Their models highlight how inclusive governance, legal recognition of diversity, and empowered local institutions can work together to promote national unity and effective service delivery which Nigeria

stands to benefit significantly by integrating elements of these models into its local government structure, provided reforms are context-sensitive, participatory, and institutionally grounded. The study also presents a context-specific framework that provides a pragmatic roadmap for transforming Nigeria local government system into an inclusive, responsive, and accountable tier of government. By integrating multicultural inclusion, deep decentralization, and institutional strengthening, the framework aligns with democratic values, reflects Nigeria diverse realities, and addresses grassroots development needs.

In conclusion, Nigeria multicultural reality demands a local government system that is both inclusive and autonomous. International models offer useful lessons, but must be adapted to Nigeria federal structure and historical context. By aligning reforms with multitier and multicultural government principles, Nigeria can strengthen democratic accountability, equity, and development at the grassroots level.

Based on these results and conclusion the study proposes the following policy implementation.

1. The National Assembly, in collaboration with state legislatures, should amend the 1999 Constitution to:
 - A. Recognize local governments as a fully autonomous and constitutionally protected third tier of government.
 - B. Define their fiscal, legislative, and administrative powers independent of state governments.
 - C. Mandate cultural and ethnic representation in local councils, including reserved seats or electoral quotas for minorities and women.
2. Create an Independent Local Government Revenue Commission (ILGRC) tasked with developing and regulating sustainable internal revenue strategies, monitoring fiscal transfers, and enforcing transparency and accountability in local government budgeting and spending.
3. Nigeria should enact a national multiculturalism and local inclusion policy, modeled after Canada's multiculturalism act, which mandates all levels of government especially local governments to recognize, protect, and promote cultural diversity through legally backed programmes and representation mechanisms.
4. Institutionalizing participatory and inclusive government mechanisms at the local level will enhance trust, prevent communal conflicts, and improve service delivery outcomes. Federal and state governments should jointly support the

creation of two key institutions in all local government areas:

- A. Local Development Planning Authorities (LDPAs) to oversee participatory planning, budgeting, and monitoring.
- B. Peace and Inclusion Commissions (PICs) to manage conflict early warning, promote intercultural dialogue, and address local disputes.

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