

Building Social Cohesion through the Single-Tier Multi-Purpose Local Government System in 21st Century Nigeria: Insight and Opinion

Prof. Jude E.O. Udentia¹

Onah, Vitalis Emeka²

Department of Public Administration, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT)
okiruka@yahoo.com¹ Vitico4justice@yahoo.com²

ABSTRACT

The subject of social cohesion is one that is of primary importance in a country like Nigeria with a pluralistic and multicultural society with people of diverse ethnic origins and who identifies with different religions. This study titled “Building Social Cohesion through the Single-Tier Multi-Purpose Local Government System in 21st Century Nigeria: Insight and Opinion” assessed the possibility of building social cohesion in Nigeria, through single-tier multi-purpose local government system. Cross-sectional survey research design was employed in this study. Fieldworks were carried out in six geopolitical region that make-up Nigeria. The study employed quantitative and qualitative mixed approaches. The primary data were presented and analyzed using frequency and percentage guided by the research questions while the hypotheses posed for the study were tested using simple linear regression analysis at 0.05 significant level. Logical argument and content analysis were also used for qualitative data. The finding of the study revealed that equity and social justice could be significantly promoted in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide. The study also revealed that national identity could be advanced to a large extent in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose social government system nationwide. Recommendations include the idea of returning to single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide. Beyond this, the way to begin to build real social cohesion in Nigeria is to manufacture consent and consensus. This requires a return to the foundations of Nigeria itself. We must return to the National Question of Uniformity and address it squarely if we are to

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achieve national unity, identity, and sustainable national integration. The study concluded that social cohesion requires a sense of common purpose and shared destiny. Each member or group of such a society, which may be diverse or heterogeneous, as Nigeria is, brings specific strengths or contributions to the larger mix. One good step towards building a social cohesive Nigeria society is through uniformed laws and structure which bring the single-tier multi-purpose local government system to light.

1. Introduction

The concept of local government as a tier of government has generated exciting debates among scholars in the academic world, practitioners and politicians alike. It has attracted the attention of various scholars across the globe, thereby resulting in various conceptualizations by different scholars. The need to conceptualize what local government is arising because it is the unit of analysis in this study, and different meanings/names are being used in different countries in referring to local government as a tier of government. Local government as a concept that refers to people at the grassroots is as old as the human race itself. Its concept can be traced to when humans lived in communal and feudal settlements. The history of local government administration in Nigeria predicts its existence as an entity and can be traced to the pre-colonial era. Agagu (2011) posited that: Local government administration has undergone a very long and tortuous journey in Nigeria from the diversities of the pre-colonial era, through the colonial experiment and the travails of the military adventurists and the military guided democracy. The local government in Nigeria has developed its peculiarities and forms. Any meaningful attempt to thoroughly study local government in Nigeria will amount to studying the government and politics in Nigeria.

One of the high points of Military rule in Nigeria was the reform of the local government system. The reform, gained root in 1976 under General Olusegun Obasanjo led Military Government. The reform brought about a single-tier multi-purpose uniform local government system nationwide in a bid to create a similarity of government style at all levels of government in the country, thereby leading to a nationwide uniform single-tier multi-purpose structure for local government councils. Before these reforms, local government matters were entirely state affairs and as such, the different states structured their local government systems to suit their local needs (Mobolaji & Oriakhogba, 2015).

Under the single-tier multi-purpose structure, a single local government is responsible for providing the full range of local services and has a geographic boundary that covers the entire urban area. Large single-tier governments have generally been formed by amalgamation (merger of two or more lower-tier municipalities within an existing region), annexation (appropriation of a portion of a municipality by an adjacent municipality) or statutory pronouncements. Since there is only one level of government providing all services, there is no need to allocate expenditures among levels of local government. There is also only one political body to make taxing and spending decisions. One-tier governments could be financed from wide range of services. These could be financed from

a variety of user fees, tax sources that would be levied across the metropolitan area, and grants from states and federal governments.

The main advantages of single-tier multi-purpose local government structure include: better service coordination, clearer accountability, more streamlined decision-making, greater efficiency through trust, solidarity, common purpose, magnetism to the group, and the many interpersonal factors that each person in the group brings to the table, thus minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization. Furthermore, there is funding fairness in the provision of services because there is a wider tax base for sharing the costs of services that benefit taxpayers across the region. The larger taxable capacity of the one-tier government increases its ability to borrow and to recover capital and operating costs from user fees (Uslaner 2018).

It was perhaps upon the strength of single-tier multi-purpose local government structure in building trust, solidarity, national identity, equity and social justice, common purpose, magnetism to the group, and the many interpersonal factors that each person in the group brings to the table that the pioneers of 1976 Local Government Reform in Nigeria anchored the single-tier multi-purpose local government structure introduced nationwide. Economic inequalities, social exclusion, discrimination, marginalization of minorities, disconnection from the social contract, failures in protecting the well-being of the poor and mutual mistrust among social groups in multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria represent the greatest threat to social cohesion in a society (Ihua, 2019). Social cohesion is a common issue in development studies, which when properly studied and projected improves the quality of the societies in which people live and also help to avoid violent conflict with all its attendant ills. A country/society that is united fosters peace and prosperity and gives a sense of belonging and identity to all its citizens irrespective of tribal, religious or other socio-cultural affiliation. Ensuring social cohesion is arguably one of the most fundamental challenges facing Nigeria as a country (Schmeets, 2012).

The realities of local government as a third tier of government in the in the 21st Century (Fourth Republic) are in contradictions with the constitutional provisions of local government and the 1976 local government reform which amongst other things laid the foundation for a uniform single-tier multi-purpose local government structure and democratic local government councils in the country. The ambiguity of the 1999 Constitution viz-a-viz the role of the State Houses of Assembly and State Governors has not helped the possible aim of the single-tier multi-purpose local government structure in Nigeria. It is against this situation that this study on Building social cohesion through the single-tier multi-purpose local government system in 21st Century Nigeria attempt to offer new insight to promote the unity, national identity, equity and social justice, trust and inclusiveness among citizens of Nigeria, particularly of various ethnic groups; increase advocacy of Nigerian citizens' cooperation with each other in order to survive and prosper; as well as proffers some recommendations which may be critical to guarding against perceived marginalization, disunity, ethnic conflict of interest and above all, foster the unity and prosperity of the entity Nigeria through the single-tier multi-purpose local government structure.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. Assess ways of promoting equity and social justice in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide;
2. Examine the extent national identity can be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide;

1.3 Research Questions

1. In what ways can equity and social justice in Nigeria be promoted through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide?
2. To what extent can national identity be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose social government system nationwide?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

1. Equity and social justice could be significantly promoted in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide.
2. National identity could be advanced to a large extent in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose social government system nationwide.

2. Literature Review: Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Social Cohesion

Several operationalized definitions have been ascribed to the concept of social cohesion. For some, social cohesion describes the bonds or relationships that exist between fellow citizens, especially in contexts characterized by ethnic heterogeneity (Schmeets, 2012). For others, more so, it is the quality of these connections between individuals and groups to which they belong that matters (Marc, 2012). Nonetheless, what is common to these definitions of social cohesion is an emphasis on participation and adherence to a common super-arching identity

The concept of social cohesion refers to the willingness of citizens to cooperate and work together towards ensuring the survival and prosperity of the country. Social cohesion is an ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities within a society, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all citizens. Social cohesion is a set of social processes that help instill in individuals the sense of belonging to the same community and the feeling that they are recognized as members of that community. Social cohesion describes where different groups and institutions knit together effectively despite differences. It reflects a high degree of willingness to work together, taking into account diverse needs and priorities.

Social cohesion is the bond between communities of people who co-exist, interact and support each other through material means and by sharing group beliefs, customs and expectations. Social cohesion refers to a situation where everyone has access to establishing basic social relationships in society, such as, work participation, family life, political participation and activities in civil society. European Union Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union states that the tasks of the union included: Maintaining economic and social cohesion and solidarity between all member states of the Union". The objective of social cohesion implies a reconciliation of a system of organization based on market forces, freedom of opportunity and enterprise, with a commitment to the values of solidarity and mutual support which ensures open access to benefit and to provide protection for all members of society (Ritzen, 2016).

2.2 Domains of Social Cohesion

Langer, Stewart, Smedts & Demarest (2016) identified the pillars of social cohesion, what they articulated as the Social Cohesion Triangle: Trust, Inequality and Identity.

Trust: The first component in the social cohesion triangle is extent of trust amongst people generally, and particularly across groups, and in relationship to the state. This is a powerful indicator of how cohesive a society is of the strength of the ‘glue’ that binds people together within a particular society. This element broadly reflects the North American perspective on social cohesion. Where trust across groups is low, conflict is more likely (Gambetta 2018) and economic progress can be impeded. Trust in state institutions is also highly relevant, given the importance of the state both in shaping economic and social relationships, and people’s lives more generally. Lack of trust in state institutions may lead to violent protests and uprisings; and impede Social Cohesion.

Inequality: The second component in the social cohesion is the extent of inequalities both horizontal (group) and vertical (individual). The inclusion of inequalities stems from the European approach. Horizontal (or group) inequalities (HIs) are particularly critical for social cohesion in multi-ethnic societies because it is sharp inequalities between ethnic (or religious or regional) groups that usually fuel political conflict, often leading to violence (Stewart 2018). Relevant here is not only perceived group inequalities, but perceptions of fair or unfair treatment by the government. In addition, vertical inequalities, or inequalities among individuals, (VIs), are also relevant, since high and rising vertical inequality can undermine bonds among people (Uslaner 2018). One would expect less Social Cohesion in highly unequal societies, since the feeling of belonging to a shared national project is likely to be less.

Identity: The third critical element of social cohesion in multi-ethnic societies is the strength of people’s adherence to national identity in relation to their group (or ethnic) identity. This component is important for multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria and other African societies where national boundaries have not developed organically and nations are not natural units, but were created relatively recently by colonial powers. The strength of identities is related to perceive importance of Horizontal Inequalities (HIs), since if group identities are relatively weak HIs may not be perceived at all, or if perceived, not regarded as important. People’s perceptions of their identity are also relevant to social cohesion, because group conflict is more likely if group identities are perceived as strong relative to national ones.

In addition, Eurofund & Stiftung (2014) identified other main domains of social cohesion: Connectedness (which involves Identification, Trust in Institutions, and Perceptions of Fairness); Social Relations (which involves social networks, trust in people, and acceptance of diversity); and Focus on the Common (which involves solidarity and helpfulness, respect for social rules, and civic participation).

Equity and Social Justice: The Equity & Social Justice component reflects the acceptance of and compliance with an established social order. A lack of the social order results in anarchy where societal member’s goals are no longer in harmony with the legitimate approaches of reaching the goals. Social Justice and equity levels on the laws and policies of the government, the perception of fairness and equality amongst different groups in the society, the treatment of individuals and groups by the government and the trust of the people in the government are all the signs of equity that promotes social cohesion in multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria.

Participation and Patriotism: The Participation and Patriotism as a component of social cohesion hinges on the willingness of individuals and groups to work together to ensure the growth of a society or an economy. Social cohesion is “a state of affairs in which a group of people demonstrate an aptitude for collaboration that produces a climate for change that, in the longer run, benefits all”. The interests of individuals to participate in political process for the progress of an economy are part of the questions to be expected when patriotism is discussed.

Worth: Worth is portrayed through the subjective measures of quality of life. The measurement of life satisfaction, individual happiness and future expectation explicitly conveys the aspect of worth as a component of social cohesion. Are citizens satisfied with the present life they live? Is what they currently undergo a sufficient measurement of their happiness?

2.3 Local Government

The idea of local government emerged from the feeling that government should be as close as possible to the people and that functions should be shared among different levels of government for efficiency. However, clear as the idea of local government may appear, it does not enjoy a universally acceptable definition. The difficulty stems from whether it should be defined in terms of its functions or in terms of its composition. That notwithstanding, attempts have been made at defining local government. Local government has been said to be a government in which popular participation both in the choice of decision makers and in decision making process is conducted by local bodies, which while recognizing the supremacy of other levels of government, is able and willing to accept responsibility for its decisions (Mobolaji & Oriakhogba, 2015).

Montague considers local government as government by local bodies freely elected which while subject to the supremacy of state governments, are endowed in some respect with powers, discretion, and responsibility. Ibietan (2011) defines it as a political subdivision of a nation (or of a state in a federal setting) which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the powers to impose tax or exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body for such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected. A definition which reflects the basic features of modern local government is that proffered by the International Union of Local Authorities cited by Mobolaji & Oriakhogba (2015), which sees local government as that level of government with constitutionally defined rights and duties to legislate and manage public affairs which are also constitutionally defined for the exclusive interest of the local people. The rights and duties shall be exercised by individuals that are freely elected on a periodic basis by equal, universal suffrage while its chief executive shall be so elected or appointed with the full participation of the elected body.

Inherent in the idea of local government is the principle of localism and according to Ibietan (2011), the principle implies that the existence and practices of the grassroots administration are rooted in the collective preferences of the local people. Put differently, for a local government to maintain its localness, it must respond adequately to local environmental stimuli by reflecting the aspirations and yearnings of the people in the locality.

Single-Tier Multi-Purpose Local Government System

Single-tier multi-purpose system is where one local government exercises all the powers and performs all the functions and bear responsibilities for providing a range of services to the citizens in a defined area (Abdulhamid & Chima, 2016). Under this model, a single local government is responsible for providing the full range of local services and has a geographic boundary that covers the entire area whether urban or rural. Since there is only one level of local government providing all services, there is no need to allocate expenditures among levels of local government. There is also only one political body to make taxing and spending decisions. Single-tier local governments could be financed from wide range of sources. These could be financed from a variety of user fees, tax sources that would be levied across the metropolitan area, and grants from states and federal governments (Mobolaji & Oriakhogba, 2015).

The main advantages of one-tier governments include: better service coordination, clearer accountability, more streamlined decision-making and greater efficiency.³⁰ Furthermore, there is

funding fairness in the provision of services because there is a wider tax base for sharing the costs of services that benefit taxpayers across the region. The larger taxable capacity of the one-tier government increases its ability to borrow and to recover capital and operating costs from user fees (Slack, 2013).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theory considered suitable in analyzing and understanding the problem under investigation is the Structural Functionalism Theory. In its simplest form, structural-functionalism or in many contexts simply functionalism “sets out to interpret society as a structure with interrelated parts” with each parts performing role functions. The failure of one structure or part leads to dysfunctionality or disorderliness in the entire system, (Fish, 2005). Among the structural-functionalists are Gabriel Almond, Bingham Powell and Herbert Spencer. They posited that for proper understanding of the structures (institutions) in the society, there is need to place them in a meaningful and dynamic historical context.

The structural functionalism is a framework for building a solid administration that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This theory looks at society through a macro level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms. A common analogy popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as organs that work toward the proper functioning of the body as a whole. In the most basic terms, it simply emphasizes the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system (Giddens, 2012).

In relation to the present study, the above postulations have relevant applicability in understanding and analyzing the issue of Building Social Cohesion through the Single-Tier Multi-Purpose Local Government System in 21st Century Nigeria: Insight and Opinion. The uniformity introduced in Nigeria local government by the 1976 reform which includes the area of single tier multi-purpose system nationwide signified unity and national identity and integration. It is therefore pertinent to see from this theory that is abolition or violation by any region or state entails promoting group identity as against national identity and integration. Violation of the single tier multi-purpose system of government is a failure of misfortune that is capable of causing chaos to the unity and national integration of Nigeria.

3. Research Procedure

Cross-sectional survey research design was employed in this study. This is because it is best suited to studies aiming at finding out the prevalence of phenomena or possibility of something happening by taking a cross-section of the population at the time of the study. Fieldworks were carried out in six geopolitical region that make-up Nigeria. The study employed quantitative and qualitative mixed approaches. Open-ended questions were used in case of qualitative data collection while questionnaire were administered to collect quantitative data.

The sample size for the study was 391 and was selected with purposive sampling technique because it provide the most valid or credible results, as it allowed the researcher to select only those with the knowledge of the subject under study. Respondents include government officials, academia, clergy, and traders among other stakeholders in Nigeria government and administration who have the knowledge of the subject. After the collection of the completed questionnaire, it was found that the correct completed copies were 342 and was used for the analysis. The primary data were presented and analyzed using frequency and percentage guided by the research questions, while the

hypotheses posed for the study were tested using simple linear regression analysis at 0.05 significant level. Logical argument and content analysis were also used for qualitative data. This helped to verify if the data from the questionnaire correspond with the views of other scholars on the subject matter.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: In what ways can equity and social justice in Nigeria be promoted through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide?

Table 4. 1: Ways equity and social justice in Nigeria could be promoted through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Acceptance of the single-tier multi-purpose LG system nationwide	184 54%	82 24%	14 4%	34 10%	28 8%	342 100%
Compliance with the single-tier multi-purpose LG system nationwide	193 56%	66 19%	19 5%	43 13%	23 7%	342 100%
Regarding any state that modified the single-tier multi-purpose LG system as a violation of law and social order in Nigeria	136 40%	79 23%	27 8%	63 18%	37 11%	342 100%
Mindful that violation of the single-tier multi-purpose LG system shows that the goals of government are no longer in harmony	199 58%	91 27%	6 2%	28 8%	18 5%	342 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4. 1 revealed the ways equity and social justice in Nigeria could be promoted through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide. The table shows that 184 or 54percent respondents indicated strongly agree on acceptance of the single-tier multi-purpose LG system nationwide, 82 or 24percent respondents indicated agree, 14 or 4percent respondents indicated no idea, 34 or 10percent respondents indicated disagree, and 28 or 8percent respondents indicated strongly disagree.

On Compliance with the single-tier multi-purpose LG system nationwide, 193 or 56percent of the respondents indicated strongly agree, 66 or 19percent respondents indicated agree, 19 or 5percent respondents indicated, no idea, 43 or 13percent respondents indicated disagree and 23 or 7percent respondents indicated strongly disagree.

On regarding any state that modified the single-tier multi-purpose LG system as a violation of law and social order in Nigeria, 136 or 40percent of the respondents indicated strongly agree, 79 or 23percent respondents indicated agree, 27 or 8percent respondents indicated no idea, 63 or 18percent respondents indicated disagree and 37 or 11percent respondents indicated strongly disagree.

As regards mindful that violation of the single-tier multi-purpose LG system shows that the goals of government are no longer in harmony, 199 or 58percent of the respondents indicated strongly agree, 91 or 27percent respondents indicated agree, 6 or 2percent respondents indicated no idea, 28 or 8percent respondents indicated disagree and 18 or 5percent respondents indicated strongly disagree.

The pattern of responses presented and analyzed above shows that acceptance of the single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide, compliance with the single-tier multi-purpose

local government system nationwide, regarding any state that modified the single-tier multi-purpose local government system as a violation of law and social order in Nigeria, mindful that the violation of the single-tier multi-purpose local government system shows that the goals of government are no longer in harmony in Nigeria are some of the ways equity and social justice in Nigeria could be promoted through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide.

Hypothesis One: Equity and social justice could be significantly promoted in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide.

Table 4.2 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.927 ^a	.860	.860	.38499	.150

a. Predictors: (Constant), single-tier multi-purpose local government system

b. Dependent Variable: Equity and social justice

Table 3 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	309.630	1	309.630	2089.027	.000 ^b
	Residual	50.394	341	.148		
	Total	360.023	342			

a. Dependent Variable: Equity and social justice

b. Predictors: (Constant), single-tier multi-purpose local government system

Table 4 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.272	.040		6.860	.000
	single-tier multi-purpose local government system	.946	.021	.927	45.706	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Equity and social justice

R = 0.927

R² = 0.860

F = 2089.027

T = 45.706

DW = 0.150

4.1 Interpretation:

The regression sum of squares (309.630) is greater than the residual sum of squares (50.394), which indicates that more of the variation in the dependent variable is not explained by the model. The significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the variation explained by the model is not due to chance.

R, the correlation coefficient which has a value of 0.927, indicates that there is positive relationship between single-tier multi-purpose local government system and equity and social justice in Nigeria. R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 86.0% of the variation in equity and social justice in Nigeria is explained by the model.

With the linear regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about .38499. The Durbin Watson statistics of 0.150, which is not more than 2, indicates there is no autocorrelation. The single-tier multi-purpose local government system coefficient of 0.927 indicates a positive

significance between single-tier multi-purpose local government system and equity and social justice in Nigeria, which is statistically significant (with $t = 45.706$). Therefore, the null hypothesis should be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. Thus, equity and social justice could be significantly promoted in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide.

Research Question Two: To what extent can national identity be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide?

Table 4.3 : Extent national identity could be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide

Options	Very high extent	High extent	No idea	Low extent	Very low extent	Total
Strengthening the extent of people's adherence to national identity such as the uniformity LG system nationwide	206 60%	91 27%	9 3%	21 6%	15 4%	342 100%
Elimination of the consideration of group identities in relation to national identity in handling law and social order	188 55%	108 32%	6 2%	11 3%	29 8%	342 100%
Group conflicts are more likely to intensify if group identities are perceived as strong relative to national identity in matters like system of government	190 55%	122 36%	8 2%	13 4%	9 3%	342 100%
Uniformity in LG system such as single tier multi-purpose system shows a possession of distinctive identifying characteristics exclusive to group or state	194 57%	97 28%	7 2%	38 11%	6 2%	342 100%
The single tier multi-purpose system of LG nationwide is a typical demonstration of unity and national integration	144 42%	141 41%	15 4%	24 7%	18 6%	342 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.3 revealed the extent national identity could be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide. The table shows that 206 or 60percent of the respondents indicated very high extent on strengthening extent of people's adherence to national identity such as the uniformity LG system nationwide, 91 or 27percent respondents indicated high extent, 9 or 3percent respondents indicated no idea, 21 or 6percent respondents indicated low extent and 15 or 4percent respondents indicated very low extent.

As concerns elimination of the consideration of group identities in relation to national identity in handling law and social order, 188 or 55percent of the respondents indicated very high extent, 108 or 32percent respondents indicated high extent, 6 or 2percent respondents indicated no idea, 11 or 3percent respondents indicated low extent, and 29 or 8percent respondents indicated very low extent.

On group conflicts are more likely to intensify if group identities are perceived as strong relative to national identity in matters like system of government, 190 or 55percent of the respondents indicated very high extent, 122 or 36percent respondents indicated high extent, 8 or 2percent respondents indicated no idea, 13 or 4percent respondents indicated low extent, and 9 or 3percent respondents indicated very low extent.

With reference to uniformity in LG system such as single tier multi-purpose system shows a possession of distinctive identifying characteristics exclusive to group or state, 199 or 58percent of the respondents indicated very high extent, 103 or 30percent respondents indicated high extent., 4 or 1percent respondents indicated no idea, 22 or 6percent respondents indicated low extent, and 14 or 5percent respondents indicated very low extent.

On the single tier multi-purpose system of LG nationwide is a typical demonstration of unity and national integration, 144 or 42percent of the respondents indicated very high extent, 141 or 41percent respondents indicated high extent, 15 or 4percent respondents indicated no idea, 24 or 7percent respondents indicated low extent, and 18 or 6percent respondents indicated very low extent.

The responses presented and analyzed above is an indication that all the items are the extent national identity could be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide.

Hypothesis Two: National identity could be advanced to a large extent in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose social government system nationwide.

Table Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.953 ^a	.908	.907	.31862	.229

a. Predictors: (Constant), single-tier multi-purpose social government system

b. Dependent Variable: National identity

Table 4.10 ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	338.840	1	338.840	3337.661	.000 ^b
	Residual	34.517	341	.102		
	Total	373.357	341			

a. Dependent Variable: National identity

b. Predictors: (Constant), single-tier multi-purpose social government system

Table 4.11 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.131	.033		3.982	.000
	single-tier multi-purpose local government system	.990	.017	.953	57.772	.000

a. Dependent Variable: National identity

R = 0.953

R² = 0.908

F = 3337.661

T = 57.772

DW = 0.299

Interpretation:

The regression sum of squares (338.840) is greater than the residual sum of squares (34.517), which indicates that more of the variation in the dependent variable is not explained by the model. The

significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the variation explained by the model is not due to chance.

R, the correlation coefficient which has a value of 0.953, indicates that there is positive relationship between single-tier multi-purpose social government system and national identity in Nigeria. R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 90.8% of the variation in national identity in Nigeria is explained by the model.

With the linear regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about 31862. The Durbin Watson statistics of 0.299, which is not more than 2, indicates there is no autocorrelation. The single-tier multi-purpose social government system coefficient of 0.953 indicates a positive significance between single-tier multi-purpose social government system and national identity in Nigeria, which is statistically significant (with $t = 57.772$). Therefore, the null hypothesis should be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accordingly accepted. Thus, national identity could be advanced to a large extent in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose social government system nationwide.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

This study assessed the subject of Building Social Cohesion through the Single-Tier Multi-Purpose Local Government System in 21st Century Nigeria: Insight and Opinion. The study aspires to assess ways of promoting equity and social justice in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide; examine the extent national identity can be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose social government system nationwide; and proffers some recommendations which may be critical to guarding against perceived dashed single-tier multi-purpose uniformed local government system instated by the 1976 Reforms.

The finding of the study revealed that equity and social justice could be significantly promoted in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide. It was discovered that acceptance of the single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide, compliance with the single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide, regarding any state that modified the single-tier multi-purpose local government system as a violation of law and social order in Nigeria, mindful that the violation of the single-tier multi-purpose local government system shows that the goals of government are no longer in harmony in Nigeria are some of the ways equity and social justice in Nigeria could be promoted through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide.

The study also revealed that national identity could be advanced to a large extent in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose social government system nationwide. The descriptive analysis show that strengthening the extent of people's adherence to national identity such as the uniformity local government system nationwide, elimination of the consideration of group identities in relation to national identity in handling law and social order, understanding that group conflicts are more likely to intensify if group identities are perceived as strong relative to national identity in matters like system of government, uniformity in local government system such as single tier multi-purpose system shows a possession of distinctive identifying characteristics exclusive to group or state, and that the he single tier multi-purpose system of local government nationwide is a typical demonstration of unity and national integration are the extent national identity could be advanced in Nigeria through single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide.

Drawing from the literature, Nigeria is a pluralistic and multicultural society with people of diverse ethnic origins and who identify with different religions. The country grapples with the twin evils of high levels of poverty and unemployment. It has also had to grapple with social upheavals that have threatened the existence of the Nigerian nation as we know it. These social upheavals have been manifested in the creation of several regional interest groups each protesting against perceived marginalization and agitating for self-actualization and self-government. This includes creation of such groups as IPOB, MASSOB, Niger Delta Avengers, OPC, Egbesu Boys, Arewa Youths etc. many of which emerged in the late 90s and most of which claim to be aimed at fighting the menace of injustice of marginalization, disparity and the many ills which they perceive to be against their collective will. The religious divide in the country has also been seen to cause tensions between Christians and Muslims, the two major religions in the country. Religious crises have often rocked parts of the country and have over the years placed significant strain on social cohesion to the point of near collapse (Africa Polling Institute, 2019).

Aghedo (2007) has argued that at the core of the social upheavals in Nigeria are lopsided powers sharing formula, discriminatory access to public service and political appointments, and ethnic minorities' phobia for marginalization by large ethnic blocks. Marginalization and agitations for self-existence is rooted in ethnicity and the major cause of ethnic rivalry is sentimental attachment to the differences in languages and cultures among members of different ethnic groups. This sentimental attachment and feeling of loyalty towards ones ethnic group is what makes citizens put their ethnic interests first and above national interests. Suffice it to say that social cohesion in the context of any nation cannot thrive where there is the lack of a unifying sense of national identity and a superseding pursuit of the national interest.

Although there are a lot of fault lines that we must bridge to achieve higher rates of social cohesion in Nigeria. Drawing from the literature reviewed above the unifying sense of national identity and interest envisaged by the founding pioneers of the 'single-tier multi-purpose' unified local government system nationwide was dashed in 21st century. Apart from recognizing the existing LGCs in Nigeria, section 7 of the 1999 Constitution empowers the State governments to make laws providing for their structure. The effect of this is that as it stands in this 21st century, the social cohesion targeted in the unified structure has been dashed and states operated different structure of local government in the country thereby is exacerbating the already bloated fault lines in achieving social cohesion in Nigeria.

Hence, 'single-tier multi-purpose' is a genuine attention towards building national identity and oneness as the panacea to achieving a socially cohesive Nigerian society. This is because this requires a deliberate strategy to build a free society where people can pursue common goals irrespective of their ethnic, religious and cultural beliefs. The Nigeria government needs to put in more effort towards promoting a more unify and inclusive society and can start by restoring the uniformed single-tier multi-purpose local government system. The failure of the government to promote policies that strengthen cohesion at all time may be exacerbated by the abolishment of the existing laws such as single-tier local government structure that provide unifying sense of national identity.

It must be noted that the uniform system introduced by the 1976 reforms is no longer retained under most local government laws in the country with states like Lagos state operating two-tier local government system. Thus, the LGCs are governed by a Chairman who heads the executive councils assisted by the Vice-Chairman, the Secretary to the council and Supervisory councilors. While the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected the others are appointed (Oriakhogba, 2007 cited in

Mobolaji & Oriakhogba, 2015). Many others states have yet operated and some still operating development centre, rural administrative unity among others. This variation in structure of local government across some state violates the unified single-tier multi-purpose system and I among the fault lines that we must bridge to achieve higher rates of social cohesion in Nigeria.

4.3 Conclusion

The fault line this study identified above involving the ruined uniformed single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide is not impossible to overcome. The most important fault line in any quest for social cohesion is that the very idea of Nigeria is a hotly contested one. Many Nigerians today no longer believe in their country. That's because Nigeria as a notion has let them down. They cannot be happy campers in a country that made little progress in moving from being a geographical state-itself increasingly under security threats- to a nation in which they feel a sense of belonging, worth, social justice, participation and acceptance. Social cohesion requires a sense of common purpose and shared destiny. Each member or group of such a society, which may be diverse or heterogeneous, as Nigeria is, brings specific strengths or contributions to the larger mix. One good step towards building a social cohesive Nigeria society is through uniformed laws and structure which bring the single-tier multi-purpose local government system to light.

What is Nigeria? How is our country structured and governed, by who, and has it all worked out for us as Nigerians regardless of where we come from or how we worship? What does Nigeria mean to each and every one of us? How can we turn our diversity into a strength (seeing that it might not be a practical idea to break up the country into its 3 or 250 ethnic groups) by building trust across prior sectarian divides? The answers to these questions call for an honest national conversation, not just the tired mantra of non-negotiability of the Nigerian union and hypocritical talk of unity by leaders who do not walk their talk. There is a difference between the peace of the graveyard and true social cohesion. The dashed uniformed local government system instituted by the founding pioneers of the 1976 local government reforms is of former than later.

We can base first, on a correct diagnosis. Beyond this, the first way to begin to build real social cohesion in Nigeria is to manufacture consent and consensus. This requires a return to the foundations of Nigeria itself. We must return to the National Question of Uniformity and address it squarely if we are to achieve national unity and from there, social cohesion. Prioritizing inclusiveness, uniformity in governance without sacrificing merit, transparency and fairness is the path to unifying Nigeria and improving our cohesion as a society. In a diverse country such as ours, this will require a constitution return to real federalism, but with implementation timeframes and modalities that carry all parts of the country along in a uniformed and unified manner nationwide. Every part of Nigeria can and should be a winner in this process. I believe that this should include the idea of returning to single-tier multi-purpose local government system nationwide that will restore the uniformity in Nigeria Local Government system again. This would be an honest recognition of our unique features as a country, and avoid the specter of ethnic or religious domination which led to our original national consensus around federalism, on which principle we became independent in 1960 and a republic in 1963.

We do not have to go far beyond the results of the Africa Polling Institute's 2021 National Social Cohesion Index. That survey rated Nigeria's level of social cohesion at 44.2% less than the threshold of 50%. In the 2022 NSCI, this has declined to 39.6%. So, obviously, Nigeria is not a cohesive society. It is deeply gratifying to see that in the 2022 National Social Cohesion Index, 60% of Nigerians believe that the future of the country will be better than it is today. Socially cohesive

societies do not drop from the sky. They are consciously built. That is cause for hope. A cohesive society is the basis of real development. It requires real work. Let us begin.

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