

# International Journal of Public Policy and Administration Research

2021 Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 21-37.

ISSN(e): 2312-6515

ISSN(p): 2313-0423

DOI: 10.18488/journal.74.2021.82.21.37

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## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE CONUNDRUM OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA: WHAT POLICY IMPLICATIONS?

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### ABSTRACT

#### Article History

Received: 27 May 2021

Revised: 29 June 2021

Accepted: 19 July 2021

Published: 4 August 2021

#### Keywords

Autonomy  
Corruption  
Governance  
Grass root  
Local government  
Poor planning  
Service delivery.

#### JEL Classification:

H75.

Local governments, the world over, in a bid to fulfil their role in delivering essential goods and services, are faced with enormous challenges and contend with allocating resources to meet up with increasing demands for public service. Adopting a multistage sampling method, the study sampled 400 respondents selected from 3 Local Council development Areas [LCDAs] covering 10 communities in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Findings from the study indicated that lack of autonomy, corruption, and poor planning are the major challenges confronting local governments in service delivery in Nigeria. It also concludes that the challenges of service delivery by local governments are not restricted to rural areas alone, rather, local governments in urban areas suffer the same fate. The study, therefore, made policy recommendations which include the setting up of a Community Education System (CES) to sensitize the local government residents on the role of local governments in service delivery; setting up of Community Feedback Monitoring System (CFMS) to promote transparency, accountability and probity and the formation of Community Anti-Corruption Volunteers' Group (CACVG) for campaigning against corruption at the local government level.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study contributes to the existing literature on local government administration and service delivery in Nigeria using primary data from an urban area. It proffers practicable solutions to the conundrum through the setting up of: Community Education System (CES); Community Feedback Monitoring System (CFMS); and Community Anti-Corruption Volunteers' Group (CACVG).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria operates a federal system of government consisting of a central government, thirty-six (36) states, and seven hundred and seventy-four (774) local governments (Salaam, 2016). Unarguably, the government's continued existence is hinged on its ability to provide life-changing and life easing services. Government strives to ensure the provision of public goods to its citizens, especially at the local level. Hence, the creation of local governments to drive local administration and rural development (Agba, Akwara, & Idu, 2013). Local government activities affect citizens directly; on a day-to-day basis. Due to its proximity to the people, the local government is better suited to engender national integration, stimulate rural development, develop the local environment and promote service delivery. To be sure, the domain of government that is better positioned to fulfil the government's primary responsibility in the provision of public services is the local government (Salaam, 2016).

The fourth schedule 1 of the Nigerian 1999 constitution (as amended) spells out the following exclusive functions of local governments:

- a. The consideration and the making of recommendations to a State Commission on Economic Planning or any similar body on:
  - i. The economic development of the State, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the Council of the State are affected.
  - ii. Proposal made by the said Commission.
- b. Collection of rates, radio and television licenses.
- c. Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds, and homes for the destitute or infirm.
- d. Licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheelbarrows, and carts.
- e. Establishment, maintenance, and regulation of slaughterhouses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks, and public conveniences.
- f. Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains, and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of a State.
- g. Naming of roads and streets, and numbering of houses.
- h. Provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal.
- i. registration of all birth, death, and marriages.
- j. assessment of privately owned houses or tenements to levy such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State.
- k. Control and regulation of movement and keeping of pets of all descriptions, outdoor advertising and hoarding, shops kiosks, restaurants, bakeries, and other places for the sale of food to the public, laundries, and licensing for the sale of liquor.

In addition to the above and as contained in section 2 of the Fourth Schedule of the Nigerian 1999 constitution, local governments in Nigeria are also saddled with concurrent functions which it performs in conjunction with the state and federal governments, respectively. These functions are:

- a. The Provision and maintenance of primary, adult, and vocational education.
- b. The development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals.
- c. The provision and maintenance of health services.
- d. Such other functions may be conferred on a Local Government Council by the House of Assembly of the State.

A cursory look at the above statutory responsibilities vis-à-vis what is obtainable in the country shows that service delivery in Nigeria is a far cry. There is no gainsaying that the provision and delivery of social services in Nigeria is an illusion. For instance, concerning providing public conveniences, sewage, and refuse disposal (see "h" above), Nigeria is still heavily challenged. As [Obiezu \(2019\)](#) notes, surpassing India, Nigeria tops the list of countries where open defecation is practised with more than 47 million Nigerians (i.e. 25 per cent of the total population) lacking access to toilet facilities. Even though the practice is more prevalent in the north including Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, only 14 out of the 774 local governments [LGs] in Nigeria are free from the menace.

According to [Adebawale \(2018\)](#), coupled with the challenge of sanitation and hygiene practices, about 40 per cent of households translating into 69 million Nigerians lack access to safe drinking water while circa 19 million are forced to walk long distances to get water. The implication is that children without access to safe drinking water are more likely to die in infancy and throughout childhood from water-borne diseases. These children also run the risk of stunted growth which causes them to be shorter than genetically allowed and impedes their mental latency. As [UNICEF \(2018\)](#) observes, "the use of contaminated drinking water and poor sanitary conditions result in

increased vulnerability to water-borne diseases. Only 26.5 per cent of the Nigerian population use improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities.”

Indeed, markets are not spared of the gory sights of sanitation and hygiene practices in Lagos state. As [Bassey \(2020\)](#) posits, over 1,500 of about 2,000 markets that operate in Lagos states are illegally sited, and contribute heavily to spill-over dirt in the state. More disturbingly, these illegal markets are mostly found along major roads thus obstructing vehicular flow and contributing to traffic congestion. These markets serve as a huge source of waste generation, contributing over 12 metric tonnes of waste daily.

Concerning sewage and refuse disposal, [Alemma-Ozioruva \(2017\)](#) submits that while waste collection and disposal grows at an arithmetical progression, waste increases geometrically in Nigeria. This is evidenced in the number of dumps made by households in streets, uncompleted or abandoned buildings, markets, highways, waterways, and even places of residence. A waste dump is noticeable in every nook and cranny of both rural and urban areas, without recourse to public health or environmental safeguard. However, this has been blamed on several factors ranging from poor waste disposal management, poor planning, low data management, uncontrolled urbanization and lack of political will – among others. According to [Sieff \(2017\)](#) the Olusosun dumpsite at Ojota, Lagos is the largest in Africa (see [Figure 1](#)), occupying over 100 acres of land. As the city grows, slums and dumps continue to increase and have found a way to the centre of the city and homes.

Regarding the role of LGs in education, despite their contribution to the funding of primary education; either solely or in conjunction with the state government, state governments hiding under the aegis of Universal Basic Education (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and Local Government Education Authority (LGEA), had hijacked primary education from the LGs; even though the latter bears a larger chunk of the expenses (benefits, pension, allowances, and salaries). In cases where developmental projects are carried out in schools using funds sourced from the LGs' purse, state governments end up taking the glory ([Odewale, 2019](#)).

As contained in their stipulated functions, LGs are expected to drive the development of agriculture through the sustenance of farming extension services and agro-allied industries, as well as the mobilization of farmers at the grassroots level for rural transformation. However, despite the vast human resources at their disposal, LGs are still challenged in developing the agricultural sector. This is not far-fetched from the institutional and structural imbalance between urban and rural areas, lack of indigenous knowledge technologies, informal research, lack of commitment to self-sufficiency, and lack of visionary leadership. To be very sure, LGs' involvement in agricultural activities has the potential to facilitate extension activities effectively ([Nwalieji & Igobokwe, 2011](#)).

Local governments in Nigeria are also responsible for primary health care (PHC) delivery. They are positioned to budget finances, implement, monitor, and evaluate programmes of primary health care in a given local government council or area. Stemming from the country's health care system, the focus of primary health care is majorly on: maternal and child health, including family planning, health education, prevention and control of disease, immunization, provision of essential drugs, adequate water supply and sanitation, food supply and nutrition and treatment of minor ailments. Despite its accomplishments over the years, PHC in Nigeria is plagued by funding, bad leadership, poor governance, understaffing, poor management, inadequate medical personnel, inaccessibility by rural dwellers, and dwindling resources ([Fajioibi, 2010; Udenta & Udenta, 2019](#)).

From the foregoing, it is deducible that LGs in Nigeria are lagging in their responsibilities of service delivery especially as it relates to provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal; provision and maintenance of primary, adult, and vocational education; development of agriculture and maintenance of health services. It is in response to this, that this study seeks to assess the challenges faced by LGs in the delivery [or attempt to] of these services. Meanwhile, numerous factors have been fingered as the challenges impeding efficient service delivery in Nigeria by LGs, as expounded above. Authors such as [Agba et al. \(2013\); Shamsuddin and SiddigBalal \(2014\); Nwoba \(2015\); Salaam \(2016\)](#) and [Udenta and Udenta \(2019\)](#) identified issues such as widespread corruption, poor budgetary allocation, lack of autonomy and interference, lack of transparency and

accountability, administrative inefficiency, poor planning, a paucity of funds, bad leadership, lack of provision of basic social amenities, lack of political will and poor attitude to work as the major challenges confronting local governments in service delivery in Nigeria.

Although, a plethora of studies have been carried out on the role of local governments in service delivery in Nigeria; either using a qualitative (Agba et al., 2013; Nwoba, 2015; Salaam, 2016; Udetta & Udetta, 2019) or quantitative approach (Ochala & Ruslan, 2018; Ayotunde David Odewale & Badejo, 2018; Okafor & Ijeoma, 2019; Salihu, 2018). However, most of these studies are usually carried out in the rural areas of Nigeria, believing that service delivery in urban areas is more efficient (Nwoba, 2015; Okafor & Ijeoma, 2019). It is in response to this specious belief that this study seeks to assess the challenges faced by local governments in service delivery in Nigeria, using an urban area of Lagos State as the unit of analysis. Meanwhile, the objectives of the study are:

- (i) To examine whether lack of autonomy affects service delivery of local government.
- (ii) To assess the extent to which corruption has strained local governments' effectiveness in service delivery.
- (iii) To evaluate the role of poor planning in undermining local governments' effectiveness in service delivery.
- (iv) To examine possible solutions to the challenges.



**Figure-1.** Collage of pictures showing open defecation, waste along the street and Olusosun dumpsite (all in Lagos State).  
Source: Ibekwe (2018) & Sieff (2017).

### 1.1. Concepts

**Local government** – Udetta and Udetta (2019) define local government as the government established for local governance to draw the people closer to the government and to respond to their atypical expectations and challenges. It is meant to mobilize the grassroots populace towards active involvement in industrial and socio-economic development. Mu'azu, Ibrahim, Kabir, and Haruna (2017) define local government as the third layer of

government in Nigeria which is closest to the people and creates a platform for grooming future representatives in the political administration of the various states and federal government alike. According to [Majekodunmi \(2012\)](#), local government is a legal institution that allows inhabitants of a defined geographical area to provide services of mutual interest. It is also a democratic establishment, governed by an elected body accountable to the populace and to which they can address their collective worries. It is an instrument that residents can potentially use to influence positive change and development in their local community. [Fajiobi \(2010\)](#) describes local government as an attempt towards engendering self-government using local talents to provide essential services and participate in community projects whilst creating an avenue for political education in preparation for contribution to national development.

[Nigeria \(1976\)](#) defines local government as:

*Government at the local level is exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within a defined area. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and determine activities of state and federal government in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils and the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (p. 1).*

To this end, local government can be seen as the government occupying a distinct sphere in Nigeria's administrative structure and is responsible for providing essential services to the people, involve them in local governance as well as create avenues for rural industrial development.

**Service delivery** – [Angahar \(2013\)](#) describes service delivery as the provision of social or public goods intended to improve the living standard of the people, enhance their wellbeing and promote socio-economic welfare. This is usually in the form of public amenities, economic development projects, enforcement of the law, security, health, etc. Service delivery refers to an array of services that improve personal security, and for which the state is responsible. These services are targeted at improving citizens' life and wellbeing and is geared towards securing public interest. Such services include healthcare, water, education, security, public transport, and energy. Service delivery quantifies how well a government meets the expectations of its citizens and not just what is offered ([Carlson, Davis, & Leach, 2005](#); [Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 2006](#)). In other words, service delivery efficiency can be captured in how citizens perceive the government's response to their expectations and needs. It is not just what is offered, rather, what is delivered in comparison with their expectations. However, for a service to be adjudged as satisfactory and efficient, such service must be proactive in responding to the needs of the populace, free of corruption in any form, well planned, prompt in delivery, involve the establishment of standard public infrastructural facilities, and not averse to improvement based on citizens' feedback ([Ajibade & Ibietan, 2016](#); [Yayale, 2004](#)).

From the foregoing, service delivery thus, is the satisfactory provision of essential goods by the government to its populace to facilitate an improved standard of living and promote economic wellbeing.

## **1.2. Study Area**

Below is the map depicting Ikeja Local Government Area selected as the study area for this research.



**Figure-2.** Map of Ikeja Local Government Area (Study Area).

The study was carried out in Ikeja Local Government Area [LGA] of Lagos State for two major reasons (i) Ikeja is - undoubtedly – an urban area (ii) Ikeja is the administrative capital of Lagos State and is home to the state's secretariat as well as the Governor's house (Figure 2). Located in the northern part of the state, Ikeja LGA shares a boundary with Ogun state, Oshodi-Isolo LGA, Ifako-Ijaiye LGA, and Kosofe then Mushin LGA and Alimosho LGA to the north, south, east, and west, respectively.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

According to the Lagos Bureau of Statistics (2018) Ikeja Local Government Area has 49.92 area sq. km land size with a population of 917, 348 persons; wherein 51% are male and 49% female. Applying the Taro Yamane sample size formula, the following was arrived at as the sample for the study:

N = Population of the study.

K = Constant(1).

e = degree of error expected.

n = sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{K + N(e)^2}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{917348}{1 + 917348(0.05)^2} \\ & \frac{917348}{1 + 917348(0.0025)} \\ & \frac{917348}{1 + 2293.37} \\ & = 400 \end{aligned}$$

The authors adopted the multistage sampling method and divided Ikeja LGA into three (3) Local Council development Areas [LCDAs]; Ikeja, Ojodu, and Onigbongbo LCDAs and further placed the various districts within the LCDAs into clusters. Under Ikeja LCDA, the districts identified are Alausa, Government Reserved Area [GRA] Ikeja, and Anifowoshe. Under Ojodu LCDA, Agidingbi, Akiode, Ogba, and Ojodu districts were noted, while in Onigbongbo LCDA, Magodo, Maryland, and Opebi districts were identified. This gave a total of ten (10) districts under the three (3) LCDAs in Ikeja LGA. The authors then proceeded to apply a simple random sampling technique to select forty (40) respondents from each of the districts to give a total of four hundred (400) participants. Although only adults were given preference, the participants were however selected without prejudice to gender.

The study adopted a structured, albeit, self-administered questionnaire to elicit data from the respondents. The instrument was divided into two parts; Sections A & B. Section A contained items on the demographic data of the respondents while Section B contained items based on the research questions and hypotheses aimed at assessing challenges of confronting local governments in service delivery in Nigeria.

### **3. FINDINGS**

#### *3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

**Table-1.** Gender distribution of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Males	200	50
Females	200	50
Total	400	100

#### *3.2. Interpretation*

Table 1 reveals that 200 respondents (50%) are male while 200 respondents (50%) are female. This shows that there is an equal representation of respondents in the study.

**Table-2.** Age distribution of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-29 years	140	35
30-39 years	192	48
40 years and above	68	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

#### *3.3. Interpretation*

Concerning the age distribution of respondents, Table 2 demonstrates that 140 respondents (35%) are within the age bracket of 20-29 years, 192 respondents (48%) falls within 30-39 years while 68 respondents (17%) are within the age bracket of 40 years and above. Therefore, the majority of the respondents are within the age bracket 30-39 years.

**Table-3.** Employment status of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed	164	41
Unemployed	236	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

#### *3.4. Interpretation*

Concerning the employment status of the respondents, Table 3 shows that 164 respondents (41%) are employed while 236 (59%) are unemployed. In other words, the majority of the respondents are unemployed.

**Table-4.** Educational status of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary/Secondary	124	31
Post-Secondary	88	22
Tertiary	188	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.5. Interpretation

The result as presented in **Table 4** shows that 124 respondents (31%) have either primary or secondary educational qualifications, 88 respondents (22%) have post-secondary qualifications while 188 respondents (47%) have tertiary education. By implication, the majority of the respondents have tertiary education and are therefore well suited to respond to the issues raised in the research.

### 3.6. Analysis of Research Questions

#### 3.6.1. Research Question (RQ) One

#### 3.6.2. Can Lack of Autonomy be Blamed for Poor Service Delivery of Local Governments?

**Table-5.** Analysis of RQ One.

SN	Items	Agree Freq.	Disagree Freq.	Total Freq.
1	State governments' undue interference has incapacitated local government from functioning effectively	276 69	124 31	400 100
2	Local governments wait for directives from states government before embarking on developmental projects.	228 57	172 43	400 100
3	Local governments are treated as mere outposts and extensions of the state.	248 62	152 38	400 100
4	Funds meant for local governments can be withdrawn or suspended by state governors	212 53	188 47	400 100
5	Local governments in Lagos state are majorly accountable to the state government and not the people	268 67	132 33	400 100

### 3.7. Interpretation

Results obtained from the questionnaire and presented in **Table 5** shows that in response to the question "State governments' undue interference has incapacitated local government from functioning effectively", 69% of the respondents agreed while 31% disagreed which meant that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that state governments' undue interference has incapacitated local government from functioning effectively.

In response to the second statement which read "Local governments wait for directives from states government before embarking developmental projects", 57% agreed as against 43% that disagreed which meant that the majority (57%) of the respondents agreed that local governments wait for directives from states government before embarking on developmental projects.

The third statement said, "Local governments are treated as mere outposts and extension of the state". To this statement, 62% of the respondents agreed and the remaining 38% disagreed to give the conclusion that local governments are treated as mere outposts and extensions of the state.

In reacting to the fourth statement of the RQ which said "Funds meant for local governments can be withdrawn or suspended by state governors", 53% agreed and 47% disagreed meaning that the majority (53%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that funds meant for local governments can be withdrawn or suspended by state governors.

The fifth statement of the Research Question had it that "Local governments in Lagos state are majorly accountable to the state government and not the people" and the responses to this showed that 67% of the

respondents are in concert with the statement as against 33% who disagree with it. Thus, local governments in Lagos state are majorly accountable to the state government and not the people. Hence, it can be concluded that lack of autonomy impedes the service delivery of local governments.

### 3.8. Research Question (RQ) Two

#### 3.8.1. To What Extent Has Corruption Strained The Service Delivery of Local Governments?

**Table-6.** Analysis of RQ Two.

SN	Items	Agree Freq. (%)	Disagree Freq. (%)	Total Freq. (%)
1	Corruption not only leads to poor service delivery but the loss of lives.	240 60	160 40	400 100
2	Local government administrators usually demand kickbacks from clients before awarding projects	312 78	88 22	400 100
3	Local government administrators often front cronies and affiliated companies to bid for projects	256 64	144 36	400 100
4	Local governments are not transparent with their finances; both income and expenditure	308 77	92 23	400 100
5	Local governments are characterized by a lack of accountability and weakness of oversight institutions to monitor their financial activities	240 60	160 40	400 100

### 3.9. Interpretation

Results obtained from the questionnaire and presented in **Table 6** showed that in response to the question “Corruption not only leads to poor service delivery but the loss of lives”, 60% of the respondents agreed while 40% disagreed which meant that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that corruption not only leads to poor service delivery but the loss of lives.

In response to the second statement which read “Local government administrators usually demand kickbacks from clients before awarding projects”, 78% agreed as against 22% that disagreed which meant that the majority (78%) of the respondents agreed that local government administrators usually demand kickbacks from clients before awarding projects.

The third statement said, “Local government administrators often front cronies and affiliated companies to bid for projects”. To this statement, 64% of the respondents agreed and the remaining 36% disagreed to give the conclusion that of a truth, local government administrators often front cronies and affiliated companies to bid for projects.

In reacting to the fourth statement of RQ Two which said “Local governments are not transparent with their finances; both income and expenditure”, 77% agreed and 23% disagreed meaning that the majority (77%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that local governments are not transparent with their finances; both income and expenditure.

The fifth statement of the Research Question had it that “Local governments are characterized by lack of accountability and weakness of oversight institutions to monitor its financial activities” and the responses to this showed that 60% of the respondents are in concert with the statement as against 40% who disagree with it. Thus, undoubtedly, local governments are characterized by a lack of accountability and weakness of oversight institutions to monitor their financial activities. Hence, it can be concluded that corruption has strained local governments’ effectiveness in service delivery.

**3.10. Research Question (RQ) Three****3.10.1. How has Poor Planning Impeded Local Government's Effectiveness in Service Delivery?****Table-7.** Analysis of RQ Three.

SN	Items	AGREE Freq. (%)	DISAGREE Freq. (%)	TOTAL Freq. (%)
1	There is no systematic planning framework for local governments to ensure that adequate data and research is carried out.	212 53	188 47	400 100
2	The majority of local government projects are non-inclusive and does not capture the needs of the people	232 58	168 42	400 100
3	Virtually all the local governments in Lagos State lack a good information system.	248 62	152 38	400 100
4	To enhance local government administration and service delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and tracking of results must be incorporated.	292 73	108 27	400 100
5	Due to poor planning, there are lots of local government abandoned projects across Lagos State.	324 81	76 19	400 100

**3.11. Interpretation**

Results obtained from the questionnaire and presented in **Table 7** showed that in response to the question “There is no systematic planning framework for local governments to ensure that adequate data and research is carried out”, 53% of the respondents agreed while 47% disagreed which meant that there is no systematic planning framework for many local governments to ensure that adequate data and research is carried.

In response to the second statement which read “Majority of local government projects are non-inclusive, and does not capture the needs of the people”, 58% agreed as against 42% that disagreed which meant that the majority (58%) of the respondents agreed that majority of local government projects are non-inclusive, and does not capture the needs of the people.

The third statement said, “Virtually all the local governments in Lagos State lack good information system”. To this statement, 62% of the respondents agreed and the remaining 38% disagreed to give the conclusion that virtually all the local governments in Lagos State lack a good information system.

In reacting to the fourth statement of the RQ which said “To enhance local government administration and service delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and tracking of results must be incorporated”, 73% agreed and 27% disagreed meaning that the majority (73%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that to enhance local government administration and service delivery, monitoring, evaluation and tracking of results must be incorporated.

The fifth statement of the Research Question had it that “Due to poor planning, there are lots of local government abandoned projects across Lagos State” and the responses to this showed that 81% of the respondents are in concert with the statement as against 19% who disagree with it. Thus, due to poor planning, there are lots of local government abandoned projects across Lagos State. Hence, it can be concluded that poor planning has impeded the local government's effectiveness in service delivery in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State.

**3.12. Test of Hypotheses****3.12.1. Hypothesis One**

*H<sub>0</sub>. There is no significant relationship between lack of autonomy and poor service delivery of local governments.*

*H<sub>a</sub>. There is a significant relationship between lack of autonomy and poor service delivery of local governments.*

**Table-8.** Showing analysis of RH One.**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.110 <sup>a</sup>	3	0.042
Likelihood Ratio	5.011	3	0.059
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.376	1	0.539
N of Valid Cases	400		

**3.13. Interpretation**

As revealed in **Table 8**, chi-square was conducted to determine the relationship between lack of autonomy and poor service delivery of local governments. The result is statistically significant with chi-square at 5.110 with a p-value of .042 which is lower than the standard alpha value (0.05). In other words, the null hypothesis is rejected while the research or alternative hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant relationship between lack of autonomy and poor service delivery of local governments.

**3.14. Hypothesis Two**

*H<sub>0</sub>. There is no significant relationship between corruption and poor service delivery of local governments.*

*H<sub>1</sub>. There is a significant relationship between corruption and poor service delivery of local governments.*

**Table-9.** Showing analysis of RH Two.**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.052 <sup>a</sup>	3	0.016
Likelihood Ratio	9.049	3	0.550
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.954	1	0.329
N of Valid Cases	400		

**3.15. Interpretation**

As depicted in **Table 9**, chi-square was conducted to determine the relationship between corruption and poor service delivery of local governments. The result is statistically significant with a chi-square at 11.052 with a p-value of .016 which is less than the standard alpha value (0.05). In other words, the null hypothesis is rejected while the research or alternative hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant relationship between corruption and poor service delivery of local governments.

**3.16. Hypothesis Three**

*H<sub>0</sub>. There is no significant relationship between poor planning and ineffective service delivery of local governments.*

*H<sub>1</sub>. There is a significant relationship between poor planning and ineffective service delivery of local governments.*

**Table-10.** Analysis of RH Three.**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.168 <sup>a</sup>	3	0.002
Likelihood Ratio	1.049	3	0.550
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.954	1	0.329
N of Valid Cases	400		

### 3.17. Interpretation

As demonstrated in [Table 10](#), chi-square was conducted to determine the relationship between poor planning and ineffective service delivery. The result is statistically significant with a chi-square at 2.168 with a p-value of .002 which is less than the standard alpha value (0.05). In other words, the null hypothesis is rejected while the research or alternative hypothesis is accepted. There is a relationship between poor planning and ineffective service delivery of local governments.

Having analyzed the data gathered from the respondents using inferential and chi-square statistics, the results reveal that lack of autonomy, corruption, and poor planning are the bane of service delivery by local governments.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are consistent with the submissions made by other authors. This study found out that lack of autonomy is a bane of local governments in their effort towards service delivery. This was buttressed by [Salaam \(2016\)](#) that local governments in Nigeria writhe from lack of autonomy and political interference. State governments not only control the finances of local governments, but they also exercise undeserved prerogative over the lower government by delaying the conduct of elections into the local council and rule the council with an appointed caretaker committee or administrators who in often cases, are tied to the apron strings of the state governor and are treated as errand aides. This anomaly has become a standard among state governors, who, when coming into power, move swiftly to dissolve existing elected council members without due process.

As seen in [Table 11](#), as of June 2019, 15 out of 36 state governors had either sacked their states' local government chairman, delayed election or installed a caretaker committee in the place of the elected officers.

Although, this aberration has generated quite several heated debates so much so that the highest court of the land had to mediate. According to [Daily Trust \(2020\)](#) the Supreme Court of Nigeria in a judgment delivered on December 11, 2019, declared illegitimate the actions of state governments in appointing caretaker chairmen. In a unanimous judgment delivered by a five-man panel, the court ruled that forthwith, 'the act giving legislative powers to state Assembly members to undertake the process of sacking elected local government chairmen is null and void.' Although, whether this will be upheld is yet to be seen, considering the political arrogance with which Nigerian political leaders flout court orders.

This study also reveals that corruption is a delimiting factor that incapacitates local governments in service delivery. To be very sure, corruption is not just a local government affair in Nigeria, rather, it is widespread. [Transparency International \(2020\)](#) reports that Nigeria ranks 146 out of 180 countries on the 2019 corruption index (and a pitiable overall score of 20/100) indicating a fall by two steps from its position in 2018. The global corruption barometer also reveals that 44% of public service users in Nigeria paid a bribe between 2018 and 2019.

As this study has revealed, corruption in Nigeria is endemic and does not spare the local governments. [Adeyemi \(2012\)](#) stresses this when he asserts that corruption is usually perpetrated by local governments through awarding of bogus contracts; ghost workers; paying solicited funds to political godfathers; overestimating of cost of projects and inflation of prices of items bought.

More so, the [UNODC \(2019\)](#) states that:

...one out of every two bribes (45 per cent) are paid to speed up or finalize an administrative procedure.

*The fact that the majority of bribes are requested by public officials and are paid in advance of service is a strong indication that such bribes are paid by citizens in exchange for a service that the public official is duty-bound to provide for free. This may be because they have been informed, either implicitly or explicitly, that their request will not be processed without the payment of a kickback to the corrupt official* (p. 35).

Table-11. States without elected local government officers.

State	Governing party	Previous election	Most recent election	Remark
Anambra	APGA	11-Jan-14		Local governments are run by Caretaker Committees.
Adamawa	APC	24-Nov-12		Caretaker Committee appointed to head the administration after the end of elected Chairmen's tenure.
Abia	PDP		21-Dec-16	The elected Chairmen have completed their tenure and the governor has appointed Transition Committee Chairmen.
Bauchi	PDP		20-Jun-20	Governor sacked all Caretaker Committee, Director of Administration in each LGA is expected to take over the administration.
Borno	APC		13-Jun-20	Local government run by Caretaker Committees.
Ekiti	APC	19-Dec-15	23-Dec-17	The Chairmen were suspended and Governor Fayemi appointed Coordinating Directors to control the affairs of the LGA.
Gombe	APC	23-Feb-13	25-Feb-17	Governor Yahaya dissolves Council Chairmen and directed Council Secretaries to take over the administration.
Imo	PDP		25-Aug-18	All local government chairmen are suspended, and Deputy Chairmen are Acting Chairmen.
Katsina	APC	2-Aug-14		Local government run by Caretaker Committees.
Kwara	APC	26-Oct-13	18-Nov-17	All local government chairmen are suspended and the Director of Administration in each LGA is expected to take over the administration.
Niger	APC	16-Jan-16	30-Nov-19	Local governments run by Caretaker Committees.
Ogun	APC	22-Jul-13	8-Oct-16	The state government suspended the council boss and directed the Head of local government administration to take over.
Ondo	APC		23-Apr-16	Governor sacked all elected Chairmen in 2017 and appointed Caretaker Committees. The Caretaker Committees was dissolved on June 13, 2019, and were directed to hand over to Directors of Local Government Administration in respective councils.
Sokoto	PDP	23-Jul-11	12-Mar-16	Caretaker Committee appointed to head the administration after the end of elected Chairmen's tenure.
Yobe	APC	28-Dec-13	11-Feb-17	Caretaker Committee appointed to head the administration after the end of elected Chairmen's tenure.

Source: [Enough is Enough Nigeria \(2019\)](#).

Some elected local government representatives are known for taking bribes directly; through a brazen request, indirectly; by insinuation, or through a third party; using subtle requests. Most of these bribes are usually paid before a service is rendered and could take the form of cash, valuables, or food and drink in exchange for public service; even though the majority of the bribes are paid in cash. Notably, the most common service for which bribe is sought and paid is public utility service, issuance of an administrative license or permit, import/export of goods, the issuance of an administrative certificate or document, medical visit, exam or intervention, and tax exemption; in no particular order ([UNODC, 2019](#)).

According to [Ezeamalu \(2014\)](#) officers of Ikeja local government area are complicit in quite some corruption cases involving the refusal to return five official cars after the expiration of their tenure as dictated by the law, N1.4 million advanced payment to political officer holders, defrayment of ₦540,000 without proper accountability, the dubious sundry expense of ₦460,000, non-remittance of ₦32.5 million statutory deductions and failure to reconcile the sum of ₦204,747,401.30 used for purchase and construction of assets.

The study also demonstrates that poor planning is another major factor that confronts local governments in service delivery. This aligns with [Shamsuddin and SiddigBalal \(2014\)](#) argument that local governments in Nigeria are enmeshed in an unending – yet vicious – circle of poor planning and sheer administrative inefficiency. Asides from operating in a poor work environment with little or no motivation, the staff of local governments are usually lacking in expertise, with low educational qualifications. [Nwalieji and Igbokwe \(2011\)](#) state that local governments in Nigeria often estimate revenue and expenditure without proper recourse to, and due consultation with the people for whom the exercise is being carried out to know their needs, their problems, and potentials. [Agba et al. \(2013\)](#) also corroborate this submission when they opine that, generally, local governments in Nigeria suffer from a lack of experienced staff who are either without required qualifications or lacking in requisite technical know-how. This is major because local governments have been subjected to protracted cronyism over the years; wherein electoral cronies and foot soldiers are compensated with the jobs for their involvement in the electoral process.

True to Agba et al's opinion, 'electoral machinery' are usually rewarded with slots in the local government for their pre, peri, and post-political participation and active contribution to the party's seizing of power. This was affirmed by one of the respondents which the authors interacted, who claims that recruitment into the local government is not a transparent process, neither is it meritorious. He also mentioned that local governments are often filled with loyalists of the political party in power making it an extension of the local party assembly. The implication of this is that these staff end up showing a poor attitude to work, showing up to work late, absenting themselves from work without permission, lying, and approaching tasks with lackadaisical brashness.

[Musser \(2019\)](#) claims that the structural problem faced by the federal, state, and local governments in Nigeria, as experienced in poor planning and ineffective implementation is further rooted in corruption. This is because "corruption harms public finances, deters business investment, reduces the standard of living, exasperates inequality, and weakens the social contract between the government and its people" thus making it practically difficult for the government to follow up on its programme or deliver on its promises. Beyond this, corruption is projected to cost Nigeria up to 37% of GDP by 2030, or around \$1,000 per person, if not curbed proximately. Corruption has a dynamic impact, which is felt the most by poorer households and smaller firms in Nigeria. Corruption is an "existential threat" to Nigeria and "the single greatest obstacle preventing Nigeria from achieving its enormous potential." It is in light of this that the study laments that if this trend is left unchecked, it will continually impede local governments in their efforts towards service delivery, and therefore turns to make policy recommendations in the succeeding section.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are hereby made. It is recommended that the government should set up a Community Education System (CES) to sensitize the community and its residents on the role of local governments in service delivery. After all, the people cannot hold the government responsible for not performing a role they are oblivious of, *ab initio*. CES will also be saddled with grassroots political education to keep the people informed of the role of state government in local government affairs, reduce states' interference, and promote local government autonomy.

Transparency, accountability, and probity should be promoted in local governments through the establishment of a Community Feedback Monitoring System (CFMS) which will empower citizens to hold government at the grassroots accountable for their actions. More so, this system will ensure that residents of various local governments are aware of the activities of the government and are actively involved. Citizens will also be exposed to real-time information on the government's financial management; auditing, income, and expenditure, as well as its projects and plans for the community. Indeed, CFMS – which will be made up of stakeholders from every division of the community – will keep the local government on its toes in service delivery by being part of the

budgetary process. The system will also be privy to election monitoring and serve as a linkage between the local government and the community in promoting mutual trust and rural sustainable development.

Considering the endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria, it is instructive that a multipronged approach is taken to address the malady. As such, the role of the civil society in sensitization on the consequences of corruption and bribery should be emphasized through the setting up of a Community Anti-Corruption Volunteers' Group (CACVG) to serve as a podium for campaigning against corruption at the individual level, amid entrepreneurs, in the private sector, among business owners, and political leaders in a particular local government.

The enhancement of democratic practices should be encouraged at the local government level to make the system truly emanate from the people. In so doing, it will entrench the rule of law and wipe clean the blurry line of autonomy between the local government and other levels of government which by extension, will also enhance participation and the delivery of services.

The non-involvement of the people in the decision-making process is counterproductive. The people should be made a part of developmental initiatives and processes. The over-reliance on the elite as the only important stakeholder for consultation is not healthy for the system. A holistic approach, concerted efforts, and mechanisms should be put in place so that local initiatives can be stimulated to enhance the people's conditions.

The local government system in Nigeria needs to reorganize and re-strategize its policies and programmes to meet the specific needs of the people. The reorganization will make LGs more functional in the rendering of services such as quality feeder roads, quality, and affordable health care services, and improved access to quality educational services, etc.

Security of tenure of elected chairman and councillors should be guaranteed in the constitution. The excessive abuse faced by elected representatives of the local government level and lack of adequate protection of their offices calls for concern. They are left at the mercy of the whims and caprices of the State government that can remove an elected representative of the local council at will, and appoint a sole administrator or caretaker chairman without recourse to the people's mandate is antithetical to their autonomy and development. This trend should be outlawed. A fixed term of office for a specific period as enjoyed by their counterpart at the state and federal level will go a long way to protect local government finances and enhance development.

Finally, direct allocation of finances to local government from the Federation Account should be encouraged, while the flagrancy that accompanies a joint state/local government account, funds withholding, and bootlegged substantial reductions should be obliterated. This will not only enhance autonomy but will also promote local government's efforts in service delivery.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Local governments, the world over, in a bid to fulfil their role in delivering essential goods and services, are faced with enormous challenges and contend with allocating resources to meet up with increasing demands for public service. The study started by laying a background wherein the functions of local government vis-à-vis the reality was appraised. The study further delineated the concepts; local government and service delivery, of the research and defined the study area. Findings from the study reveal that lack of autonomy, corruption, and poor planning are the major challenges confronting local governments in Nigeria; urban areas inclusive. It, therefore, behoves local governments to implement the policy recommendations made in this study as the practical solutions to their challenges.

**Funding:** This study received no specific financial support.

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Acknowledgement:** Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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