

## CHALLENGES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The paper examined the challenges of local government administration in socio-economic transformation in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. Both primary and secondary data were used. The study population was 830 and the sample size was 260, determined through Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. 260 questionnaires were distributed to seven (7) departments in Ilorin West local government council while 239 were retrieved and analyzed using Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Findings from the study show that respondents agreed that fiscal dependency on higher government tiers limits the local government's financial autonomy. The study also revealed that respondents agreed that political instability, marked by frequent changes in leadership, disrupts the continuity of development initiatives within local governments and respondents equally agreed that inadequate capacity, including a lack of skilled personnel and weak administrative structures, impairs the planning and implementation of development projects. The paper recommends that Ilorin West local government staff should train and retrain frequently. Financial control mechanisms in the council should be activated and reinforced to promote transparency accountability and enforcement of laws against corrupt practices in the council.*

**Keywords:** Administration Challenges, Local Government, Socio-Economic, Transformation.

### Introduction

The historical evolution of local government administration in Nigeria has been marked by a series of transformative phases. The colonial era laid the foundation for local administration, primarily serving the interests of the British Empire. Post-independence, efforts were made to decentralize power and resources, culminating in the 1976 Local Government Reform, a crucial step toward enhancing local autonomy and fostering grassroots development (Tobi and Oikhala, (2021). However, the subsequent years have witnessed a nuanced interplay of successes and challenges in achieving the intended objectives. The constitutional framework, as outlined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, plays a pivotal role in shaping local government administration. The Fourth Schedule of the Constitution delineates the functions of local governments, emphasizing their responsibilities in providing essential services such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). This legal framework establishes the parameters within which local governments operate and underscores their significance in the broader governance structure.

The essence of local government administration, therefore, is to provide for the needs of the people at the grassroots (Akhakpe, 2011). The expediency for the creation of local government anywhere in the world stems from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots. The socio-economic impact of local government administrations, however, cannot be understated. Initiatives in infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and agriculture have positively influenced communities, elevating living standards and contributing to economic growth. Such contributions highlight the potential of local governments as catalysts

for development in Nigeria (Olusola, 2011). The paper will answer the following research question. What are the primary challenges of local government administration in socio-economic transformation in Ilorin West local government area, Kwara state? Despite the constitutional provisions and various local government reforms on socio-economic development in Nigerian local government, the Ilorin West local government council presumably still suffers from inadequate finance, inadequate drugs, lack of technical manpower, and denial of autonomy. Fiscal dependency, corruption, political instability, and inadequate capacity pose formidable obstacles to the optimal performance of local governments (Edeh, 2017).

## **Literature Review**

### **Local Government**

Olukotun (2019) asserts that local government encompasses public sector institutions recognized and mandated by legal and constitutional means to perform specific functions at the community level, representing the lowest sub-national level of government. According to Iyoha, Ubhehin, and Aiya (2005), local government involves the administration of local affairs by the residents of a particular locality. Local government refers to government at local level exercise through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers are intended to grant the council significant influence over local affairs, providing the necessary control over staff, institutions, and financial resources. This control enables the initiation and direction of service provision and the planning and execution of projects to complement the efforts of state and federal governments in their respective areas. The aim is to ensure that, through the devolution of functions to local councils and active involvement of the people and traditional institutions, local initiatives and responses to local needs and conditions are maximized. (FRN, 1976).

### **2.2 Local Government Administration**

Local Government Administration refers to the process through which essential resources to local areas are effectively mobilized, controlled and utilized for the purpose of ensuring grassroots development (Amin and Olowookere, 2023).

### **2.3 Socio-Economic Transformation**

Socio-economic transformation refers to a progression wherein a growing share of economic output and employment originates from sectors beyond agriculture. This transformative process signifies the transition from agrarian societies to urban, industrial, or service-oriented economies, marked by sustained high GDP growth rates. The combination of GDP growth and a decrease in population growth rates, stemming from advancements in educational access and quality, contributes to an elevation in GDP per capita, ultimately leading to a reduction in poverty (Mpango, 2013).

## **Empirical Review**

Augustine (2020) studied on financial management in local government: the challenges and prospects of the 21st century -Nigeria perspective. The study revealed that globally, governments have pursued various forms of public Financial Management (FM) reforms to improve the performance of Local Government (LG). Inadequate FM has contributed to the failure and inefficiency of LGs in achieving substantial development, with many facing challenges related to a significant gap between citizens' needs and available financial resources. Therefore, there is a need for a better understanding of the concept, challenges, steps, and roles of FM in LG. The study concluded that LG administrators should emulate their

counterparts in the private sector by adopting modern FM practices. This approach can lead to increased efficiency, financial capability, transparency, and accountability in the delivery of goods and services. The study emphasized the importance of implementing a robust internal control mechanism to minimize fraud, corruption, and wastage affecting the LG system and grassroots development. Additionally, LGs are encouraged to consistently prepare accurate and reliable annual budgets, recognizing financial planning and control as crucial aspects of effective FM.

Myint (2000) conducted a study on corruption, its causes, consequences, and remedies. The article emphasized the imperative of consistently addressing the issue of corruption within the development agenda. It explores the causes and repercussions of corruption, particularly in the context of a least-developed country characterized by extensive regulation and centralized direction. The study identified factors such as the absence of transparency, accountability, and consistency, along with institutional weaknesses in legislative and judicial systems, as conducive to the proliferation of rent-seeking activities in such a nation. Additionally, the study underscores the emergence of an underground economy and the substantial social costs associated with corruption. It examines the adverse effects of corruption on income distribution, consumption patterns, investment, government budgets, and economic reforms. Furthermore, the paper touches upon the supply side of bribery, and its international dimensions, and offers insights on addressing the corruption issue with the aim of bringing it under control.

Edeh (2017) addressed corruption in the Nigerian local government system and the way forward. The study revealed that corruption has permeated various sectors of the Nigerian economy, posing a significant threat to socio-economic development. The blatant mismanagement and looting of public financial resources contribute to the widespread poverty experienced by many Nigerians. In 2015, Nigeria ranked 136 out of 168 countries surveyed, signifying its position as the 32nd most corrupt country globally (Corruption Perception Index, 2015). This study delves into corrupt practices within the Nigerian local government system, utilizing the prebendalism theory. Employing content analysis, the researcher explores corruption issues, particularly at the local government level. The study identifies factors such as an unsettled value system, lack of commitment to the public good, poverty, greed, and the monetization of official positions as root causes of corruption in Nigeria. Emphasizing the detrimental effects of corruption, the study concludes that addressing this issue is crucial for Nigeria's progress, particularly in local government administration. The study recommended that strengthening institutions responsible for anti-corruption efforts, such as the EFCC and ICPC. It emphasizes the need for an inclusive approach, with no exemptions for those involved in corrupt practices. Additionally, the study suggests promoting vigilant monitoring of financial activities within the local government system as part of a multifaceted strategy to curb corruption.

Ijewereme (2015) unravelling corruption in the Nigerian public sector that corruption poses a significant impediment to progress in Nigeria, consistently thwarting the achievement of national objectives despite the country's abundant natural and human resources. This article critically examines the concept of corruption, encompassing its various forms and its impact on the Nigerian State. It delves into the historical context, exploring corruption in public service from the era of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa to President Goodluck Jonathan's administration. The article evaluates several theoretical frameworks, including idealistic,

resource curse, two public, low risk–high benefit, and anomie theories. Ultimately, it adopts the resource curse and low risk–high benefit theories to elucidate the causes of corruption in Nigeria. Incorporating personal observations and data from Transparency International, the article sheds light on corrupt practices within the country. It concludes that corruption persists in the Nigerian Public Sector due to societal pressure, tribalism, nepotism, and the perceived low-risk–high benefits associated with engaging in corrupt activities. The article suggests various measures to counteract corruption in Nigeria.

Okafor and POkafor (2023) delved into the autonomy of the Local Government System in Nigeria. The debate revolves around whether there is a legitimate need to grant substantial autonomy to this tier of government, allowing it to fulfil its constitutional roles and access funds, as outlined in sections 7, 162(5), and the 4th schedule of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended). On one hand, proponents argue in favour of autonomy, emphasizing the constitutional provisions; on the other hand, sceptics believe that pursuing absolute autonomy for any tier of government may be misguided. In contrast to Nigeria, some developed nations such as Brazil, Argentina, and the United States of America afford relative autonomy to their Local Governments. However, the scenario is different for Nigerian Local Government Councils. Despite being tasked with providing essential services to the local population, the controversy surrounding their autonomy raises questions about how effectively they can fulfill this role. This study critically examines the autonomy of the Nigerian Local Government to determine its utility or lack thereof for the Nigerian populace.

Lawal and Oladunjoye (2010) explored the interplay of local government, corruption, and democracy in Nigeria. The primary purpose of local government is to facilitate meaningful grassroots development through a participatory approach, with democracy serving as a crucial means to achieve this objective. However, in Nigeria, democracy has faced challenges at the grassroots level, primarily due to pervasive corruption. This study critically assessed the impact of corruption on grassroots democracy and development, concluding that curbing and penalizing corruption within the local government system is essential to enhance democratic participation among citizens and ensure effective service delivery.

Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto, and Nkah, B.C (2014) conducted a study on Local Government Administration and the Hurdles in Achieving Sustainable Development in Nigeria. Local government administration plays a pivotal role as the primary tool for advancing and sustaining rural development, encompassing functions such as political education and mobilization. The study adopted the Basic Needs Approach (BNA) framework, the paper scrutinized the intricacies of local government administration and the impediments to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The analysis contends that local government administration grapples with issues such as interventions by federal and state governments in the constitutional responsibilities of local government, often serving as a conduit for dispensing political patronage to party loyalists. These challenges, among others, have hindered local government administration from delivering good governance and democratic dividends to the citizens. Drawing insights from experiences in both developed and developing countries in the globalized era, the study concludes that addressing the hurdles to sustainable rural development in Nigeria requires a return to true federalism, establishment of positive leadership anchored on the rule of law, transparency, and accountability. Additionally, there is a need for administrative probity, the pursuit of economic self-reliance through internally generated revenue, and the embracement of a culture of good governance and global best

practices.

Ademolekum (1983) identified three major explanatory factors for official corruptions in local governments, procedures for managing local government fund, incompetence and ignorance of both political and appointed officials and the prevailing attitude in the society which appears to be tolerant of corrupt behaviour on the part of elected and appointed leaders at every level of government. However, the local authorities also attempted to provide and improve social development once they gained autonomy (Reinikka 2000). Formulating and implementing a good local government administration requires an enormous effort and the (amount of) success depends on the way this implementation and formulation is organized (Aberdeen Group, 2001; Sherrill et al, 2001). Most leaders at the local government level have a sit-tight mentality which does not allow for new ideas, fresh initiative and innovation. Rather than concentrate on developmental efforts, some local government chairmen are busily boot-licking state governors and donors/donor agencies (Anazodo, Igbokwelbeto, Osawe & Nkah, 2014).

Shortall and Shucksmith (1998) emphasized that development was not about increasing goods and services provided and consumed by society. It also involves enabling communities to take control of their environment through being empowered, capacity building, carefully designed social animation and the provision of suitable training and development institutions through central policies. Picchi (1994) stated that certain political institutional arrangements can help in development patterns such as rich network services provided by local administrations for economic sectors, and planning mechanisms that aimed at strengthening development.

### 3. Methodology

According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, in a population of eight-hundred and thirty (830) respondents, the appropriate sample size is two-hundred and sixty (260) respondents. *Therefore, the sample size for the study is 260. A total number of 260. questionnaires were distributed to seven (7) departments in Ilorin West local government area, Kwara State while 239 were retrieved and analyzed using Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.*

### 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 4.1. Bio Data**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Male	99	41.4%
<b>Female</b>	140	58.6
<b>Staff categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Junior	8	3.3%
Senior	142	59.4%
Management	89	37.2%

**Source:** Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

**Table 4.2. Challenges of Socio-Economic Transformation in Ilorin West Local Government Area**

S/N	Items	SD	D	U	A	S A	Total	Remark
1	Fiscal dependency on higher tiers of government limits the financial autonomy of local government.			8 (3.3%)	91 (38.1%)	<b>140</b> <b>(58.6%)</b>	239 <b>(100%)</b>	Strongly Agree
2	Limited financial autonomy hampers the ability of local government to initiate and sustain development projects independently.	11 (4.6%)	9 (3.8%)	9 (3.8%)	60 (25.1%)	<b>150</b> <b>(62.8%)</b>	239 <b>(100%)</b>	Strongly Agree
3	Corruption within local government administration, including misappropriation of funds, negatively impacts public trust.	21 (8.8%)	55 (23%)	28 (11.7%)	<b>110</b> <b>(46%)</b>	25 (10.5%)	239 <b>(100%)</b>	Agree
4	Corruption fosters a culture of inefficiency, nepotism, and malpractice within local government operations.	21 (8.8%)	54 (22.6%)	37 (15.5%)	53 (22.2%)	<b>74</b> <b>(31%)</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	Strongly Agree
5	Political instability, marked by frequent changes in leadership, disrupts the continuity of development initiatives within local governments.	Nil	9 (3.8%)	44 (18.4%)	<b>116</b> <b>(48.5%)</b>	70 (29.3%)	239 <b>(100%)</b>	Strongly Agree
6	Inadequate capacity, including a lack of skilled personnel and weak administrative structures, impairs the planning and implementation of development projects.	47 (19.7%)	36 (15.1%)	11 (4.6%)	<b>82</b> <b>(34.3%)</b>	63 (26.4%)	239 <b>(100%)</b>	Agree

7	The lack of administrative capacity limits the ability of local governments to effectively address the diverse and evolving needs of their communities.	58 (24.3%)	28 (11.7%)	7 (10%)	61 (25.5%)	68 (28.5%)	239 (100%)	Strongly Agree
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Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

### 5. Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study showed that the majority of the respondents (58.6%) agreed that fiscal dependency on higher tiers of government limits the financial autonomy of local government. The finding is in line with Gauba (2014) who says Local government autonomy has been perceived as a panacea for the diverse challenges of the divergent people with different cultures. Fiscal autonomy is important for local government units to provide better services for the community and allocate funds based on local preferences. The degree of fiscal autonomy can be measured by the extent to which resources and responsibilities are under the control of local and regional governments. High dependency of municipalities on the central government is considered a limitation of local autonomy, making municipalities more dependent on central government funds

The majority of the respondents (62.8%) agreed that the limited financial autonomy hampers the ability of local government to initiate and sustain development projects independently. The result is similar with Manuela (2021) that financial autonomy is integral to local self-government, and restrictions on adequate financial resources prevent local governments from exercising their powers with the necessary autonomy. Pawe<sup>3</sup> (2014) posited that the financial autonomy of local self-government is expressed through independence in obtaining funds and the independence of their spending. However, many local governments do not yet have the financial autonomy anticipated by the Charter, as they do not have adequate financial resources commensurate with their responsibilities that they may dispose of independently Manuela (2021). State governments' releases money to local governments only to pay staff salaries and in some instances their staff are owed for months. Yet, financial paucity in local government administration could be blamed on lack of seriousness on the part of local government administrators to explore internal sources of revenue generation (Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto & Nkah, 2014).

The majority of the respondents (46%) agreed that corruption within local government administration, including misappropriation of funds, negatively impacts public trust. The finding is in line with previous study by Edeh (2017) that the prevalent forms of corruption within the local government include political, economic, and bureaucratic corruption. These manifest prominently through the mismanagement of financial resources, embezzlement, looting, kickbacks, inflation of contract terms, fraud, nepotism, and favouritism. Ijewereme (2015). asserted that cases of corruption inefficiency, nepotism, and embezzlement of

public funds have been noticed in all parts of local government corruption involves the misuse of public office and resources by individuals in positions of power at the local level for personal gain or the benefit of select groups.

Lawal and Oladunjoye (2010) admitted that corruption stands as the primary obstacle to effective local government administration in Nigeria. At the grassroots level, corruption has become deeply ingrained, tolerated, and even celebrated within the system. Within the local government context, corruption is euphemistically termed "EGUNJE," a slogan that essentially signifies an "illegal offer" in Nigeria. Unfortunately, despite the assumption that democracy serves as a remedy for corruption, its effective practice is lacking at the grassroots level. Consequently, there is a prevalent sense of apathy, cynicism, and poverty among rural dwellers.

Lawal, and Oladunjoye (2010) believed that this situation, asserting that despite the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC), corruption still thrives in our society. In his analysis/ They contended that the hindrance to local government performance is no longer merely a lack of funds but rather the mismanagement and misappropriation of the funds allocated to it (Lawal, and Oladunjoye (2010). Odey (2002) mentioned that corruption in Nigeria is the air which every living person breathes in and out. According to him, nobody makes any effort to breathe in the air; it comes naturally. Corruption, in Nigeria, has become so naturalized that many of us simply become corrupt without making any effort and often even without knowing it.

The majority of the respondents (31%) agreed that corruption fosters a culture of inefficiency, nepotism, and malpractice within local government operations. The result is in line with Oru, Ude and Nnanemerem (2019) said that as significant as this tier of government has been, its autonomy has been a huge impediment which infringes on its performance as well as function ability in current times. This impediment is hinged on political but undue interference of the higher levels of government such as federal and state governments, coupled with the issue of corruption to embezzlement as well as gross inadequacy of well-trained and qualified personnel to bring about the much desired socio-economic development of local areas. These challenges range from political but undue interference of federal and state governments, coupled with the high rate of bribery and corruption to embezzlement and gross inadequacy of well-trained and qualified human resources among others (Akhakpe, Fatile & Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2012).

The majority of the respondents (48.5%) agreed that political instability, marked by frequent changes in leadership, disrupts the continuity of development initiatives within local governments. The finding is similar to Ademolekun (1983) who posited that official corruptions in local governments, procedures for managing local government fund, incompetence and ignorance of both political and appointed officials and the prevailing attitude in the society which appears to be tolerant of corrupt behaviour on the part of elected and appointed leaders at every level of government.

The majority of the respondents (34.3%) agreed that inadequate capacity, including a lack of



skilled personnel and weak administrative structures, impairs the planning and implementation of development projects. The result is in line with Akhakpe (2012) who stated that most public administrators are ill-trained and abhor training where available. The majority of the respondents (28.5%) agreed that lack of administrative capacity limits the ability of local governments to effectively address the diverse and evolving needs of their communities. Despite the constitutional provision which defined functions and sources of funding of the system, local governments in the country have not been able to extricate themselves from the apron string of state governments. State governors appoint Caretaker Committees to whom they dictate and direct how to run the operations of local governments in their respective states. Yet, these committees are dissolved at will (Agbodike et al 2014).

### **Conclusion**

The paper examined the challenges of local government administration in socio-economic transformation in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. The paper concluded that fiscal dependency on higher tiers of government limits the financial autonomy of local government, and political instability and inadequate capacity are identified as the challenges of the Ilorin West Local Government Area.

### **Recommendations**

Ilorin West local government staff should train and retrain frequently so as to improve skills and ensure greater efficiency. The local government autonomy should be activated to forestall the undue state governments' interference in the management of Ilorin West Local Government Council as stated in the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria. Financial control mechanisms in the council should be activated and reinforced to promote transparency and accountability. Grant greater fiscal autonomy to the local government to enable it to generate and manage its revenue effectively. The council should invest in training and capacity-building programs for local government officials to enhance their skills in governance, administration, and service delivery instead of hiring and engage the service consultants. There should be enforcement of laws against corrupt practices in the council. There is need for recruitment of more staff with proper placement.

There should be implementation transparent financial management practices to curb misappropriation and enhance accountability. Establish mechanisms for regular community engagement to involve citizens in decision-making processes. Encourage public participation in local development projects and initiatives to ensure they align with community needs and priorities. The government should prioritize and invest in critical infrastructure projects that address the specific needs of the local community. Develop and implement a comprehensive infrastructure development plan to enhance the socio-economic well-being of the residents. There is need to integrate modern technology in local government operations for better data management, service delivery, and citizen engagement. Lastly, develop programs and initiatives that empower and engage the youth in skill acquisition and entrepreneurship.

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