



EFFECTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN KOGI STATE NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The impact of local government on service delivery in Kogi State's Ogori-Magongo local government area was evaluated in the study and it examined the contentious issue of local government reforms. Politicians and academics debate on the question of whether these reforms have made it simpler for local governments to provide necessities like primary healthcare, elementary education, and road maintenance. For this study's investigation into the effects of local government reform on service delivery, two unique objectives, research questions, and hypotheses were created. The idea of effective service delivery served as the basis for the study's analysis. A survey research strategy was utilized to acquire the data for the study, and the main tool for gathering data were questionnaires. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling, specifically SMART PLS3. The results showed that the provision of primary healthcare services in Kogi State's Ogori-Magongo Local Government Area had negatively and negligibly affected by local government reform. Based on these conclusions, the report suggested, among other things, that the 1999 Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution be amended to permit the direct distribution of funds from the federation account to local governments.

Keywords: *Local Government, service delivery, efficiency theory, primary health care, rural development.*

Introduction

A key indicator of a local government's performance is how well it provides services to the community. Local governments play a crucial role in delivering necessary services to their inhabitants and rely on their human and material resources to accomplish this goal. Nigerian local governments are the third tiers of government, and the public's input into decision-making is what gives them credibility. However, majority of local government functions are heavily reliant on statutory funding from the federal government. Decentralization and the transfer of power to lower levels of government are made possible by Nigeria's federal structure. Decentralization is the process by which formal authority is transferred from the central government to entities or individuals at lower rungs of the political, administrative, and territorial food chain. A key indicator of a local government's performance is how well it provides services to the community. A majority component of political and economic reforms in many nations is the decentralization of social and development functions. However, depending on each country's constitutional and political situations, the level and type of decentralization varies. (Diejomaoh & Eboh, 2010).



According to Agu (2007), one of the main issues with local government in Nigeria is that state governments divert cash under the guise of the Joint Account rather than giving sufficient funding from the Federation Account and State payments. In Kogi State, for instance, all 21 local governments have similar compositional, functional, and service-delivery traits, but it is unclear how much better healthcare, better educational, and better maintained rural roads are provided, thereby leading to an improved standard of living. The local government as the third layer of government in Nigeria is meant to enjoy some autonomy. The 1976 local government reform sought to enhance local control by giving the Council the authority to carry out specific duties (Nwaodike, 2016). Local councils in Nigeria have received harsh criticism for their subpar performance and alienation from the demands of the populace, despite their attempts (Fatile & Okewale, 2014). Numerous things, such as corruption, a lack of local autonomy, and a lack of skilled employees, have been blamed for this subpar performance (Nwaodike, 2016).

The ability of local governments in Nigeria, particularly those in Kogi State, to finance the provision of fundamental social services that can transform rural communities and bring government closer to the people has been taken away from them (Fatile & Okewale, 2014). As a result, there have been several concerns about how the local government has not been able to offer basic services including healthcare, education, and road upkeep (Nwaodike, 2016). These debates served as the impetus for the current study, which seeks to determine how Kogi State's local government affects service delivery.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to examine the effect of Local Government on Service Delivery in Ogori-Magongo local government councils in Kogi State. The specific objectives include:

- i. To examine the effect of local government reforms on primary health care delivery in Ogori-Magongo local government area of Kogi State
- ii. To examine the effect of local government reforms on rural development in Ogori-Magongo local government area of Kogi State

Research Hypotheses

In line with the research questions and objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated in null form:

- H₀₁: Local government reform has no significant effect on primary health care delivery in Ogori-Magongo local government area of Kogi State.
- H₀₂: Local government reform has no significant effect on rural development in Ogori-Magongo local government area of Kogi State.

The Concept of Local Government

Local government is a political subdivision that is established by law to govern a defined geographical area. It operates below the central, regional, or state levels of government and is responsible for the provision of basic public services and the administration of local affairs. According to Olisa et al. (1990) as quoted in Chukwuemeka et al. (2014) and Udentia (2007), local government exercises political authority through a representative council. The most widely accepted definition of local government in Nigeria was established in the 1976 local government reform as follows:



In order to execute certain powers within predetermined boundaries, representative councils are how local government is run. These councils ought to exercise a great deal of authority over neighborhood matters and have the personnel, institutional, and financial authority needed to plan, organize, and carry out programs. By actively involving the populace and their traditional institutions, the councils aim to maximize local initiatives and solutions to local needs and situations, complementing the work of the state and federal governments in their particular regions (Eze & Nnaemeka, 2019, p. 4).

In Nigeria's federal system, local government is established as the third tier of government to effectively carry out specific functions and responsibilities that are best handled at the local level. The local level of government is regarded as being the most significant since it can be extremely vital in sustaining national progress. In certain developing nations, according to Bello-Imam (1996), local government is the only source of power other than established institutions. Local government, according to Udentia (2007), is a form of local administration that is in charge of upholding law and order, providing a limited number of social services and public facilities, and encouraging cooperation and involvement among residents in order to improve living conditions. The system offers a formal framework for communities to manage their business successfully and control member behavior for the greater good. Nigeria implemented a national local government reform in 1976, establishing local government as a separate level of government in recognition of the significance of local government in service delivery (Bello-Imam, 1996). The fourth schedule of the Nigerian Constitutions of 1979 and 1999 lists the duties and obligations of local government. While some of these duties are specific to local governments, others are concurrent and can be carried out in collaboration with the state government (Udentia, 2007).

Ikelegbe (2005) defines the term "local government" as a division of a constituent state or a region of a nation state that is created by law to oversee public affairs and offer public services within its specified authority. King (1988) points out that, despite having different names, local government is a common element of contemporary politics. Local government's obligation to represent the needs and interests of the community is what gives it legitimacy. As a democratic institution, local government must be given the authority to manage issues at this level because it is the place where the welfare and interests of the populace are most likely to be directly impacted.

Service Delivery

The provision of social or public goods that advance the socioeconomic well-being of citizens is how service delivery is defined by Angahar (2013). The government offers a range of public services, including security, economic growth, and public utilities. By offering local answers to local problems, service delivery at the local government level aims to raise the standard of living of the populace. The Fourth Schedule of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution assigns specific duties to the local government in order to achieve efficient service delivery (Angahar, 2013).

The provision of social or public goods aimed at enhancing citizens' socioeconomic well-being is referred to as service delivery. The government offers a range of services to the general population, including public utilities, security, initiatives for economic development, and law enforcement, among others. Raising the standard of living for the populace is the goal of local delivery of public goods and services (Angahar, 2013). The three levels of government in Nigeria are required by the constitution,



and states and local governments are critical in providing essential services such housing, water, power, waste management, education, healthcare, transportation, and healthcare (Adeyemi, 2013; Agba, Akwara, & Idu, 2013).

Development is the emancipation from problems like poverty, starvation, sickness, illiteracy, ignorance, and insecurity that are prevalent in every community (Sen, 1999). Development must be sustainable, which necessitates that state and local governments have resources available to provide essential social services (Samihah and Adelabu, 2010). However, growth can only be worthwhile if it makes a difference in the lives of people in the society. The three levels of government in Nigeria are required by the constitution, and states and local governments play a crucial role in delivering essential services such housing, water, health care, and trash disposal (Adeyemi, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate the local government's performance in providing services during this time.

Primary Health Care Services

In Nigeria, there is a Primary Health Care Coordinator who oversees the provision of primary healthcare and the coordination of medical facilities in each Local Government Area. This coordinator is often a senior nurse or physician. However, many of the primary healthcare facilities constructed in Nigeria have deteriorated, unlike in other nations where they have grown into full-fledged hospitals (Yovbi, 2008). The federal government develops general policy and carries out monitoring and evaluation, while local governments are largely responsible for executing primary health care policies and programs, according to the current National Health Policy, which was last changed in 1996. The state governments provide logistical support to the Local Government Areas, such as personnel training, financial assistance, and planning and operation (Khemani, 2004). This is better explained according to the National Health Policy in (Khemani, 2004) as thus:

Local Governments are entrusted with developing and putting into action plans to carry out their constitutional obligations and address the health needs of their particular communities under the auspices of Ministries of Local Government. The State Health Ministries provide broad direction, assistance, and technical oversight to enable the efficient performance of these obligations.

Under the direction of Ministries of Local Government, Local Governments are tasked with creating and implementing plans to carry out their constitutional commitments and address the health needs of their specific areas. To ensure that these duties are carried out effectively, the State Health Ministries offer extensive guidance, support, and technical monitoring

Rural Development

For rural communities to evolve from their current primitive state to one that is more desirable—characterized by the absence of absolute poverty, high unemployment rates, and wide-gap inequalities—effective economic planning and programs are required. This is only possible if the local government can deliver quick and sufficient services, such as small-scale jobs, empowerment initiatives, and an equitable distribution of services (Agbani and Ugwuoke, 2014). Rural development, according to Ugwu in Agbani and Ugwuoke (2014), is the coordination, provision, and promotion of economic activity, facilities for medical and educational advancement, and utilities for rural residents. The improvement of locals' quality of life is the ultimate aim of rural development. Local governments, who are the level of government closest to the people in rural areas, must deliver services effectively



and efficiently in order to accomplish rural development. The efficiency hypothesis of local government states that if local governments are effective at providing services with local content, then development would be close at hand (Agbani and Ugwuoke, 2014).

Local Government Reforms In Nigeria

To improve the Local Government system, the Nigerian government has adopted a number of reforms. These reforms had clear goals, and we'll take a quick look at a few of them. The 1976 Local Government Reform, which was a turning point in the Nigerian Local Government system, was one of the most important reforms. After 15 years of military control under the Murtala/Obasanjo administration, this reform was a component of the timeline for the transition back to civil authority. Despite the fact that worries about local government existed before to this, the federal government's 1973–1974 interference in local government finances and 1975 reform of basic education made reform even more necessary (Ibrahim, 2014).

Since it made local governments a constitutional third tier of government under Section 7(1) of the 1979 Constitution, the 1976 Local Government Reform is seen as a crucial turning point in the Nigerian Local Government system. By distributing a specified portion of the federation account to local governments, this reform also attempted to enhance uniformity in their financial operations and provide local governments more authority. It is important to remember that the Nigerian native authority system came to an end with the Local Government Reform of 1976. In addition, the reform's other goals include making sure that services and development projects are responsive to local needs and initiatives by handing them off to local representative organizations. Additionally, it seeks to support democratic local self-government and foster potential for initiative and leadership. Additionally, through including the community in local development, local government hopes to mobilize both human and material resources. Creating a two-way communication channel between local, state, and federal governments is another crucial goal in order to ensure efficient coordination and program and policy execution.

Other reforms, like the Dasuki Committee reform in 1986 and the civil service reforms in 1988, which also applied to local government, came after the local government reform of 1976. The structural adjustments that were the emphasis of the 1988 reforms included reducing the number of departments and fostering professionalism. The 1991 reforms, on the other hand, placed a greater emphasis on democratic participation and included measures like dividing the executive from the legislative branch and tightening funding and budgeting controls. State and municipal governments also had to implement the 1988 changes, but with modifications to fit their own circumstances. One objective of these reforms was to increase local governments' ability to deliver effective and efficient services to the populace. However, the ongoing reform of local government implies that these initiatives have not had the anticipated impact and that some have even done the opposite, returning the civil service with just minor modifications to its pre-1988 state. The Ayida Panel's recommendations, which were released in June 1997, are still applicable today, especially given the present democratic system (Ibrahim, 2014).

Empirical Studies

Here, we have to review some of the related works done by some scholars. Kurfi and Danrimi (2020) evaluated the revitalization of local governments and sustainable development in Nigeria utilizing only secondary sources of information, including published books, reputable journals, official publications,



magazines, newspapers, websites, and personal observations. According to their findings, especially when using the state joint local government account, embezzlement and careless spending are becoming more common in some local governments in Nigeria. The study comes to the conclusion that unless adequate action is done to solve the issue, local government would soon collapse completely. To help local governments achieve sustainable growth, the authors suggest doing rid of state joint accounts.

Kurfi and Danrimi (2020) used only secondary sources of information, such as published books, respectable journals, official publications, magazines, newspapers, websites, and personal observations, to assess the regeneration of local governments and sustainable development in Nigeria. Their research indicates that wasteful spending and theft are on the rise in several local governments in Nigeria, particularly when using the state joint local government account. The analysis concludes that unless sufficient steps are taken to address the problem, local governance would soon completely collapse. The authors advocate getting rid of state joint accounts to aid local governments in achieving sustainable growth. To increase financial independence and foster development at the local government level, Okafor suggests direct funding distribution to Local Government Areas and the establishment of an independent audit body to monitor the examination of statutory allocations.

According to Lamdi and Fagbohum's (2013) study on the direct revenue distribution to local governments in Nigeria, this distribution is essential for the growth of the country. They contend that allocating direct funding will support local democracy, economic growth, sound governance, accountability, and transparency while also fostering responsiveness to local needs and the transformation of rural areas. The authors argue that in order to achieve rural, community, and national development goals, local government must have financial autonomy and access to sufficient funding. According to Musa (2011), one of the major challenges facing local governance in Nigeria is the handling of the provisions of sections 7 and 162 of the constitution by state governments. He argues that the way in which state governments have managed the State Joint Local Government Account, as stipulated in section 162, has weakened local government financial autonomy and its ability to fulfill its functions and obligations to the people. Thus, it is impossible to improve the local government system without ensuring greater autonomy, especially financial autonomy.

According to Eme et al. (2013), the lack of fiscal autonomy is to blame for the independency of local government. They underlined that financial independence is a requirement for gaining complete autonomy. Decentralization of fiscal systems, diversification of income mobilization, and lessening local government's reliance on the federal and state governments financially were other recommendations made by the writers.

Similar to this, Nweke (2013) studied the steps taken to protect local government finances and made the case that these monies are not secure because of how state governments handle their revenue and funds. As a result, local governments now function as an extension of state ministries and are controlled and directed by them. As a result, the national development is negatively impacted by this uncertainty of local government revenues. This study intends to evaluate the consequences of the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) as well as the causes or trends of state governments in Nigeria abusing the SJLGA.



Research on the challenges faced in managing local government finances in Nigeria was done by Coker and Adams (2012). They identified a number of obstacles that prevent the effective management of local government finances for development, including a lack of qualified personnel, a lack of accountability, unjustified state government interference with local government revenue, insufficient budgeting, a lack of accountability, and corruption. They recommended measures to address these issues, including establishing local governments' financial independence, ending the usage of the State Joint Local Government Account, encouraging strong leadership, and hiring qualified employees for efficient management of local government finances.

Theoretical Framework

The efficiency theory emphasizes that the primary goal of any organization, including local government, is to provide quality services to its residents (Fatile, Majekodunmi, Oni & Adejuwon, 2013, as cited in Dibla et al., 2020). It was first presented by J.K. Sengupta in his book "New Efficiency Theory: With Applications of Data Envelopment Analysis" in 2003. Efficiency theorists contend that local government, which serves a smaller population than state or federal governments, is in the greatest position to carry out a variety of tasks in an efficient manner. Local government is the most efficient agent for delivering the local services it is accountable for, according to Sharpe Ola and Tonwe, 2009, also noted in Dibla et al. (2020).

The fact that another government agency would be in charge of providing these necessities if local government didn't exist serves as a reminder of how important it is to provide them. But in practice, decentralizing a national government agency to take on local government duties would not result in the same level of coordination as a local government (Fatile, Majekodunmi, Oni, & Adejuwon, 2013, as quoted in Dibla et al., 2020).

According to the efficiency-service model, the primary goal of local government is to efficiently deliver social services including law and order, education, sanitary facilities, and local roadways. The major contention of this paradigm, according to Kafle and Karkee (2003), is that local government's primary duty is to ensure effective service delivery. According to Machenzie (1954), the principal proponent of the efficiency-service paradigm, as cited by Adeyemo (2010), the provision of services to the local population should be the local government's top priority in terms of allocating resources, power, and time. Supporters of this model argue that as long as the local government can effectively serve the populace, even with limited democratic participation in governance, it is still acceptable. Due to their proximity to the area they serve, local governments can therefore provide some services more effectively than the federal or state governments.

Methodology

Research Design, Sample Size and Sources of Data Collection

Due to the uncertain target demographic, a survey research design was used in the study, and 225 respondents were chosen overall using a non-probability selection technique called incidental sampling. A questionnaire served as the instrument for the main source data gathering technique. The study's data came from both local government employees and residents.

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the data on SmartPLS3 after data collection. The gathered data was checked for outliers and missing values. Missing values were filled in using the mean substitution method. The data was also examined for multicollinearity and for normalcy using the skewness, kurtosis, and variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics. The measurement model and the structural model (sometimes known as the outer and inner models) are the two models that make up SmartPLS3. Path coefficients and path loadings were analyzed using the outer model, whereas path coefficients, total effect coefficients, and indirect impact coefficients were analyzed using the inner model (Garson, 2016).

Results

Assessing theoretical relationships is the first step in the structural model evaluation. In order to evaluate the significance of path coefficients for the direct and indirect interactions, the usual bootstrap approach was applied on a sampled case of 225 using 5,000 bootstrap samples, as recommended by Hair et al. (2017) and Henseler et al. (2009).

H_{01} : Local Government has no significant effect on primary health care delivery in Ogori Magongo Local Government Area of Kogi State.

Table I: Bootstrapping results of the structural model

Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
LGA -> PRIMARY_HEALTH	-0.079	-0.040	0.130	0.602	0.547	Not Supported

Source: SmartPLS3 output

The reflection of the results in table I is shown in figure I:

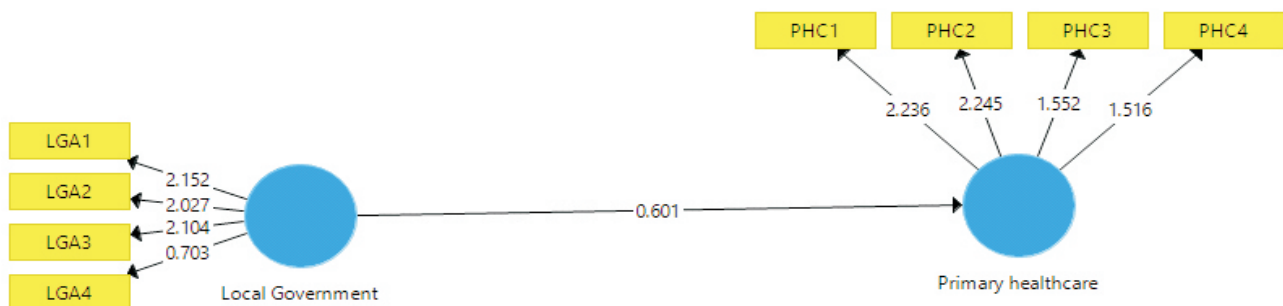


Figure 1: Structural Model

The results shown in Table I and Figure 1 show that there is no statistically significant relationship between local government in Kogi State's Ogori-Magongo local government area and the provision of basic healthcare delivery. The findings indicate that local government has a negative and statistically negligible impact on the delivery of primary healthcare (value = -0.040 and p-value of 0.547). Therefore, at a significance level of 5%, the null hypothesis that local government has no discernible influence on the delivery of primary healthcare is accepted.

H₀₂: Local Government has no significant effect on rural development in Ogori Magongo Local Government Area of Kogi State.

Table II: Bootstrapping results of the structural model

Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
LGA -> RURAL DEVELOPMENT	0.123	0.076	0.140	0.876	0.381	Not Supported

Source: SmartPLS3 output

The reflection of the results in table II is shown in figure I:

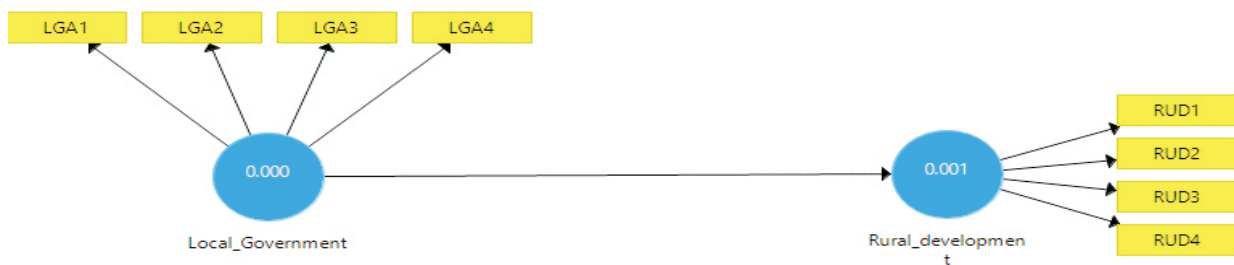


Figure 2: Structural Model

The study's findings are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, which show a favorable but statistically insignificant association between local government and rural development in Kogi State's Ogori-Magongo local government region. The findings show that while local government has a favorable impact on the provision of primary healthcare (value = 0.076 & p-value of 0.381), this impact is not statistically significant. Therefore, at a 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis, which contends that local government has no significant influence on rural development, is sustained.

Discussion of Results

With a p-value of 0.547 and a "local government" t-statistic of 0.602, the link shown in the model is statistically insignificant at the 5% level of significance. This indicates that there is insufficient statistical support for the null hypothesis to be rejected by the investigation. The result's coefficient was -0.040, indicating a bad or inverse association. According to the data, an increase in local government activity by a certain proportion had a statistically negligible 4% negative impact on primary healthcare operations. This shows that local government's involvement did not significantly affect how primary healthcare was provided.

The study's findings indicate a negative correlation between local government's negative effect on performance and the provision of primary healthcare in Kogi State's Ogori-Magongo local government area. These results are consistent with those of Bello-Iman (1996), who discovered that many states struggled to promptly pay local governments their 10% earnings, which had an impact on planning and performance. Since the revenue is necessary for good service delivery in primary healthcare, the analysis of questionnaire responses showed that local government had a poor impact on project planning and execution. The outcome is in line with Kawi's (2021) study's findings, which showed that local government councils were poor at carrying out capital projects, encouraging community development, and quickly paying employees. In a similar vein, Dibla et al. (2020) discovered that local governments' performance in carrying out capital projects in important sectors such primary

healthcare, primary education, agriculture, and rural infrastructure had not greatly improved. According to Nweke's (2013) findings, state governments' handling of its revenue and money resulted in a lack of security for local government funding.

The second hypothesis looked at how local government and rural development are related. In this hypothesis, the "local government" t statistic was 0.876, and the associated p-value was 0.381. The results are statistically insignificant at the 5% level of significance since the p-value is higher than 0.05, and the null hypothesis cannot be disproved. The correlation coefficient for this discovery is 0.076, demonstrating a favorable association. According to the findings, although this association is not statistically significant, an increase in local government activity by a certain percentage causes a 7.6% increase in rural development.

The local government is meant to improve the lives of the populace at large by offering them necessary services. The inquiry did, however, support Uzundu's (2011) findings that local governments only get a small portion of their statutory allotment from the federation account, with the state government keeping the remainder. Due to this, it is difficult for local governments, such as Ogori-Magongo, to carry out their mandates. Respondents voiced displeasure with the rate of deduction from their allocation, and despite an increase in allocations from the Federal government, social and infrastructure development in local government areas are not reflected which is largely due to state interference with its finances. Lack of financial independence makes local government vulnerable to State exploitation. According to Acba (2009), local governments either receive inadequate financing from state governments through joint allocation committees or are underpaid, which results in an inefficient system. The State Joint Local Government Account mechanism interferes with the financial independence of local governments and retards development, according to Okafor's (2010) study in Borno State. Evidence of unauthorized access and required withdrawals from the joint account by the state government was discovered by Nwogwugwu and Olusesi (2015).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined how the state government affects the provision of services in Kogi State's Ogori-Magongo local government area. The results of the study showed that there was no meaningful connection between local government and the provision of basic healthcare. However, the research did discover that there was a positive relation between the Ogori-Magongo local government and rural development albeit insignificant. Thus, the supply of basic services to the general populace, as seen in the Ogori-Magongo local government, continues to be a difficult problem. Consequently, the following suggestions are made:

- i. The Nigerian Government and Kogi State in particular must provide an enabling environment that increases the prompt release of funds to local government accounts in order to improve the performance of local government areas thereby promoting rapid national development. This can be accomplished by modifying the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to allow for direct transfers from the federation account to the local government, giving them the essential political and economic independence for effective service delivery.
- ii. The Nigerian government should enact strict rules that forbid state government from meddling with Local government funds in order to guarantee that local government regions have sufficient resources to deliver necessary services and contribute to the overall advancement of the country. These rules ought to stop frequent deductions from local government budgets, enabling local government councils to fulfill their duties in a productive and efficient manner.



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