

# DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES, PROSPECTS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

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Received 07.07.2025.

Revised 25.08.2025.

Accepted 11.10.2025.

Keywords:

*Decentralization, autonomy, grassroots development, issues, opportunities.*

Original research

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## ABSTRACT

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*Decentralization has been one of the most advanced notions of ameliorating governance, transparency and inclusive growth in the globe. The paper has explained the split problem of decentralization and autonomy of the local governments in Nigeria considering issues that underlie the problem and how the problem can be leveraged to spur development at the grassroots level. The research process is historical and documentary because it is devoted to the development of the local government organizations. Secondary data was gathered using the sources related to the government publications, policy documents, scholarly works, and journal articles and evaluated with the help of content analysis. The research was based on the Decentralization Theory that asserts that decentralization of power to the lower levels of government would lead to more service delivery to the population and civic involvement; they found out that the local autonomy of the government is highly impaired by the big intrusions by the state, the dependence of financial resources and institutional inefficiencies despite the existence of the concept of decentralization in the constitution that created the country. These limits have highly limited the ability of the local governments to guarantee the ground development. The paper has made a conclusion that decentralization and fiscal autonomy is a real phenomenon that is needed to achieve good local governance and sustainable rural development. It also proposes constitutional change, institutional fortification, and reinforcement of the local capacity, as the key measures of empowering the local governments in Nigeria.*




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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Decentralization has been perceived as one of the biggest features of the contemporary governance reforms particularly in the developing world where yearning to have an inclusive, participative and accountable government is still smouldering. The source of the argument of decentralization here is that the decentralization of power and resources to the lower level of government results to a higher level of efficiency, service delivery and better democracy (Rondinelli, 1981;

Faguet, 2014). Decentralization allows augmenting the proximate governance to the citizens, boosts the participation of citizens and fair development by making certain that the responsiveness of the governance is more responsive to local demands (Smoke, 2015). In Nigeria, a federal state with complex ethno-regional diversity, the decentralization process will be employed to bridge the gap between the state and the citizens by using the local government system (Aghahowa & Igbafe, 2017). The practice of decentralization in Nigeria has been marked with incessant problems despite this theoretical

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potential. The rural development is immature and the local councils are economically dependent on the higher government and state level intervention has ruined the local autonomy. The apparent contradiction between the constitutional recognition of the local governments and their functional subordination to the state governments makes the mode of decentralization and its efficiency in the context of the Nigerian environment a rather controversial topic (Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe, 2022). The paper will challenge these contradictions by exploring the role of the constitutional provisions, institutional and political practices with respect to freedom of the local governments and their capabilities to grow in the grassroots.’

## **2. COGNITIVE ELUCIDATION AND THEORETICAL BASIS**

Decentralization is one of the discussed concepts in governance and work in public administration as the international community attempts to make the government more responsive, efficient, and inclusive. It is popularly defined as the decentralization of authority, responsibilities, and resources between central and subnational states or other local players (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983; Faguet, 2014). This is supposed to bring the government closer to the masses and the local populations can be concerned with their governance and development. This concept is rooted in the fact that central governments are less contextual and less adaptable to effectively respond to local problems, whereas local governments are in closer touch with the population and can develop and implement policies that are more local in nature and in their responses to the local demands and wants (Smoke, 2015).

The decentralization is not a unitary process but a complicated concept because it takes different forms in political, administrative and economic systems of the country. Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) state that four forms of decentralization exist namely: deconcentration, delegation, devolution and fiscal decentralization.

On the other hand, the least form of decentralization is deconcentration which involves the allocation of the administrative functions within the central government system but without the actual power of decision making. It may also include the establishment of regional or field offices of the center ministries to maximize the service delivery and coordination with the ultimate control at the center (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004).

Delegation involves the transfer of some decision making and management functions to semi autonomous units such as parastatals, agencies or regional level authorities. They are organizations which operate rather independently but which are accountable to the central government (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983). The reason is that the most demanding, the transfer of authority and responsibility to the local governments, not only legally formed but also to the geographical boundary, the form of government and source of revenue. Taking local

governments as an independent political, administrative, and financial entity, the devolution allows them to make independent decisions regarding the local priorities (Faguet, 2014).

The purpose of fiscal decentralization is to empower the local governments via the financial tools. It involves providing them with the authority to generate revenue, spending and manages local budgets. Local governments are in a better position to meet the population needs with the assistance of fiscal independence and more responsible because local authorities can be held responsible in terms of the utilization of the means of the resources (Smoke, 2015). The key strategies of decentralization in the Nigerian context are the devolution and fiscal decentralization, although the real performance of these two concepts is poor due to the ambiguities in the constitution, association between state and the poor performance of the institutional structures (Akindele & Olaopa, 2002).

One of the fundamental ideas of this paper is the local government autonomy that involves the degree of independence that the local government has in the decision making and decision making and implementation without necessarily being subjected to the greater ranks of the government. Three dimensions are involved in it, i.e., political autonomy, administrative autonomy, and fiscal autonomy (Smoke, 2015; Zango & Mohammed, 2025).

Political autonomy involves the election of the local government representatives and the policy making and the local priorities by the local governments. This freedom is however impeded by the state governors in Nigeria who tend to dissolve elected councils and appoint caretaker committees therefore compromising the democratic accountability (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2020). Administrative autonomy may be described as the control of internal processes by the local governments like staffing, planning and carrying out of local projects. However, these functions are usually subjected in the real world to bureaucracy by state ministries through the local governments (Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015).

Fiscal autonomy could be defined as the fact that the local governments could control their budgets, formulate revenues and expenditures depending on the local demands. Alas, this freedom has been curtailed in Nigeria by the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) that allows the state governments to manage the local allocations and thus, this leads to diversion of funds and to poor provision of services to the citizens (Imhanlahimi, 2011).

This paper has its theoretical foundation in the Decentralization Theory that provides a view of the incentive, the procedure and the outcomes of the deposition of power to the lower government levels. The theory came about as a result of the works of Rondinelli (1981) and later refined by Olowu and Wunsch (2004) because the theory assumes that, decentralization enhances the efficiency of the governance by providing the citizens with better services, a more applicable accountability and involvement of the citizens. It implies

that when decentralization of power and resources to local institutions is done, they become more accommodating to the needs of the communities, and therefore evolve and attempt to embrace the community. One of the key principles that are used to present the theory of Decentralization is the principle of subsidiarity as it provides that the most basic level of government must carry out the public functions that it can execute (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004). This principle implies that decisions should also be made as close to citizens as possible in order to make decisions responsive, efficient and legitimate. In practice, subsidiarity is a justification both moral and operational to empower local governments because in most cases, local governments are better placed to have a sense of local reality and respond to them (Faguet, 2014).

However, it is agreeable that the Decentralization Theory values the fact that decentralization is not a panacea to inefficiencies of governance. Its efficiency is dependent on a series of enabling factors, including influential institutional capacity, consistent legal systems, effective fiscal regimes and political commitment to the devolution (Rondinelli, 1981; Smoke, 2015). They are necessary since in their absence, decentralization can lead to disintegrated governance, elite and corruption in the local governments. Besides, weakening or loosely institutionalized states can only recreate the central level inefficiencies at the local level particularly in the absence of accountability measures (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004).

The Decentralization Theory is the right analytical instrument that may be applied in the situation in Nigeria to understand the unsolvable gap between the constitutional provisions of the independence of the local government and the reality of interventions at the state level. Despite the inclusion in the 1999 Constitution of the third tier, the local government, a lack of political will, low fiscal autonomy, and misappropriation of the State Joint Local Government Account have had dire impacts on decreasing the effectiveness of the decentralization (Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015).

Basically, the decentralization theory and the very concept itself provide the importance of decentralization of not only functions but also resources, power and responsibility systems to the local governments. Decentralization needs to be implemented in actual sense whereby the local governments are enabled to make decisions, not only to raise revenues but also to be accountable to their constituents rather than the higher government power. In this case, the concept of decentralization can become a powerful instrument of betterment in governance, better democracy, and sustainable development of grassroots.

### **3. NIGERIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT – HISTORY**

The history that follows the local government in Nigeria portrays a complex overlaying of local traditional structures, colonialism structure of administration and

post independence reformation processes that interrelate in one way or another to the freedom and functionality of local government. This tier of government has been attributed to fluctuations of centralization and decentralization according to the trend of the entire political and constitutional practices in the nation.

The pre-colonial era of local governance in Nigeria was grounded on the native modes of administration which were varied among the ethnic groups but had the common aspect of communal participation and responsibility and local authorities (Aghahowa & Igbafe, 2017). The Oba (king), the council of chiefs and the community elders were arranged in such a way that they would advise and check on the authority of the ruler in the Yoruba (Adewumi, 2013). Hausa-Fulani emirates were more central politically controlled with the Emir being the head of states through tax collection and maintenance of law in the territory of the Islamic law by appointing district heads (hakimai) (Ola & Tonwe, 2009). Rather, the Igbo had a form of government that was decentralized with regard to village meetings, councils of elders that can be described as a stateless or acephalous societies (Okoli, 2005). These indigenous systems were diverse so that the degree of community involvement and responsibility was high, and to ensure that the majority of decisions were made on a consensus basis.

Colonial period (1861-1960) was a time in which there was to be experienced a major change in the local control beginning with annexation of Lagos by the British in 1861 up to the introduction of the colonial government in the entire territory. It was the system of indirect rule that was spearheaded by the British particularly under the leadership of Lord Frederick Lugard that was adopted to govern the vast areas with minimal financial and human resources (Akindele & Olaopa, 2002). The traditional rulers were further included in the colonial administration in the form of the intermediaries in the actualization of the British policies and collection of taxes through the indirect rule. Though this system presented the administrative convenience, it actually transformed the indigenous systems of governance in nature since they were to be placed second to the colonial state (Okoli, 2005).

The indirect rule was more successful to the North due to its aspect of hierarchy and faced a lot of challenges in the South especially in the Igbo where the aspect of political power was more decentralized (Aghahowa & Igbafe, 2017). The British did this through filling the loopholes in the administration, thus undermining the traditional legitimacy, which brought about a resistance such as the Aba Women Riot in 1929 (Ekeh, 1972). The local government was greatly extractive as it was organized to maintain law and order and smooth exploitation of resources rather than being organized to develop the local area or even provide autonomy (Adamolekun, 2011).

The post colonials are associated with the attempts to reform and implement the local government as an inseparable part of the federal government of Nigeria. The 1960 independence still largely left the regional

governments mostly controlling the local government administration with slight variations in structure and efficiency in the Northern, Western and Eastern Region (Ajayi, 2010). This disparity led to ineffectiveness and lack of balance in service provision. This was the turning point in the year 1976 when the military government led by general Olusegun Obasanjo, introduced the Local Government Reform. It had a purpose of bringing about a single-tier local government system where the local governments would become the third tier of government democratically elected in the country (Akindele and Olaopa, 2002).

The 1976 Reform provided an accurate work description of the local government work such as the provision of certain basic government services such as education to primary level, health care, sanitation, and development in rural areas. It also introduced direct federal distribution among the local governments in an endeavor to enhance their financial independence (Ajayi, 2010). However, despite these reforms local governments continued to live in the shadows of state governments that retained the supervisory powers. The 1976 reforms were entrenched under the constitution as stipulated in the 1979 Constitution that officially acknowledged the local government as the other tier of government and at the same time authorizing the state to be in charge of the local government which weakened the local autonomy (Imhanlahimi, 2011).

Further changes occurred during the 1980s and 1990s to professionalize and unite the management of local governments. Meritocracy and efficiency in the local government service had been emphasized by General Ibrahim Babangida via the 1988 Civil Service Reform. Similarly, the Dasuki Report of 1991 recommended that additional finances and responsibility measures are required to curb corruption and improve corruption management at the grassroots (Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015). However, majority of these recommendations were neither well implemented nor compromised because of political interferences and inadequate institutional capacity.

The introduction of the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) in section 162(6) of the 1999 Constitution where the state governments would get all the federal allocations to the local governments was one of the biggest losses to the local government autonomy. Though the provision was supposed to offer transparency and coordination, in practice, it was an instrument of interventions at the state level to the local finances (Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015). The local government funds have been alleged to be diverted or withheld by the majority of the state governments thus crippling their capacity to deliver the required services (Oviasuyi, Idada & Isiraojie, 2010).

Their political structure has been compromised in addition to the fact that the local governments have become financially dependant. Many of the governors dissolve elected local councils and place caretaker committees in place at the expense of democratic accountability and the spirit of decentralization

(Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2020). This means that local governments in Nigeria have little independence and as such, only serve as a subsidiary organ of the state governments.

However, despite all these continuous challenges, the authors feel that the platform that was laid down in the 1976 Reforms and other constitutional provisions still can provide a platform to actual decentralization as long as the initiatives are properly implemented (Adamolekun, 2011; Ajayi, 2010). It is possible only through political will, fiscal reforms, and law protection that the local government can have a higher level of independence without unnecessary interference. It is indicated in the history of local government development in Nigeria that there has been a dilemma of autonomy and control always. With the period of indigenous rule to the colonial rule of indirect rule, the post-independence rule of reforms up to the current debate of decentralizations, the issue of the centrality of an effective local government has remained relevant in the centre of the discussion of the Nigeria development. The issue is not whether the constitution does not grant the right to reforms, but whether the reforms have been implemented to enable the local governments execute their mandate of developing the locals.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The research design employed in this study is a qualitative, historical-descriptive research design; this is the most suitable one to be conducted in order to identify the changes in institutions, policy formation and dynamic mode of governance over time. It has been chosen owing to the nature of the research problem- to discover the trend of the historical past, structural limitations, and opportunities of reform of local government autonomy within the context of decentralization in Nigeria. The qualitative research allows a rich and contextual and interpretative study of process of social and political process whereas the historical- descriptive approach allows a systematic study of how events, reforms and changes in the constitution have contributed to the form of local governance since 19th century till now (Bowen, 2009).

The data collection exercise has only made use of secondary sources which provide the data with a comprehensive and sound source of analysis. Data was sought using a number of documentary sources such as provisions in the Constitution which includes the provisions of the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which provide the legal provisions on which the local government administration is founded. Others such as the bulky papers in reforms such as the 1976 Local Government Reform Guidelines, the 1988 Civil Service Reform and the Dasuki Report on Local Government Administration of 1991 were also resorted to. These documents were supplemented with government white papers, the policy briefs and agency reports e.g. Federal Ministry of Intergovernmental

Affairs, and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Academic literature (journal articles, textbooks, published theses, etc.) helped to attain theoretical background and critical attitudes towards the issue of decentralization, autonomy and governance problems in Nigeria (Creswell, 2014; Bowen, 2009).

The internet based materials, which the authors have used, are also reliable in that the authors have used the reports of the international bodies like World bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) to reflect on the opinions of the world on decentralization and local government. Online repositories (ResearchGate and Google Scholar) were used to access peer-reviewed articles with empirical data related to the reform efforts and performance of the local governments. All of these sources served to provide the study with a depth of analysis since they included the historical and modernistic perspectives.

To achieve methodological rigor, content analysis was adopted as the element of analysis in the research. The aim is content analysis, which is an objective, systematic and replicable process of exploring text data to establish information patterns of information, themes and meanings (Bowen, 2009). The implication of this research was to conduct an in depth study in order to code the identified materials that were gained during the study to establish the recurring themes in light of the local government autonomy, financial dependence, and institutional capacity, political interference, and prospects of reform. The discussion was done to determine how these themes have evolved over the years and how they are likely to continue to form the core challenge of the discourse of decentralization in Nigeria. By using the thematic categorization, the study was in a position to determine the historical trends and describe the trends in relation to the current governance problems giving a longitudinal view of how well the institutions were performing and how successful the reforms were.

The research design in its historical-descriptive element was imperative in projecting the developments in other political regimes like the colonial indirect rule into post-independence centralization and the federal democratic system of governance as preferred by the 1999 Constitution. Through this, the continuities and the discontinuities on the governing practices were established and the manner in which the structural and constitutional set up has influenced the autonomy of the local governments over the decades was established (Olsen, 2014). The historical prism also helped frame up the present predicaments of the institutional legacies of the past to demonstrate how colonial administrative hierarchy and centralized fiscal systems affected the local governance in the modern day Nigeria.

Though there are certain limitations given to the research mainly due to secondary use of data such as the absence of primary field data used in the form of interviews or focus group discussions, methodologically, it is still possible to carry out a historical and conceptual research. Secondary data analysis enables the researcher to utilize

a plethora of evidence that already exists and reduce bias that could be created because of poor field observations (Johnston, 2017). Moreover, it would provide an analytical solid groundwork of the analysis of the long-term institutional life since historical and policy documents are prone to reflect the authoritative accounts of the government intentions, structural designs and reform outcomes.

It is, therefore, not only qualitative-historical design that is capable of synthesizing the Nigerian experience with decentralization in a holistic way, but also trying to provide a subtle way of understanding the current policy debates on local government reform. The methodology guarantees that both empirical and conceptual studies are used in order to inform the findings since it integrates legal analysis, review of the policy, as well as theoretical reflection. Last but not least, this approach underscores the fact that the study is aimed at not only creating the scholarly knowledge regarding the subject of local governance in Nigeria but also contributing to more broad discussions on effective decentralization and democracy building in Africa.

## **5. FINDINGS**

### **5.1 The confusion of the law and constitution.**

Despite the recognition of local governments as the third level of governance in the 1999 Constitution, the details given about it undermine this by the fact that the state governments can oversight it. The section 7(1) grants the ability of states to organize, form, and regulate local councils that have a lot of room in determining their independence (Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyi, 2022). This kind of confusion has led to wanton dissolution of chosen councils and caretaker committees nominated by state governors that have had the effect of eroding democratic accountability (Olasupo, 2014). Also, local government elections are typically administered by State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs) not normally impartial in their behavior and biased in favor of ruling parties at the state level.

### **5.2 Fiscal Dependence and State Joint Local Government Account**

One of the greatest problems that threaten the local autonomy remains financial dependence. Under the SJLGA, Federation Account allocations are distributed to a common account under the control of the state governments that are to make payments to local councils. In practice, such funds are reallocated or delayed by most states, leaving local governments with limited finances to provide their service (Fatile and Ejalonibu, 2015; Zango & Mohammed, 2025). Besides, most LGs lack robust internally generated revenue (IGR) due to small tax bases, low enforcement as well as over centralization of key sources of revenues such as value added tax and corporate taxes on federal level (Arowolo, 2011).'

### **5.3 Administrative Inefficiency and Weaknesses of the Institution**

These are administrative inefficiencies, low manpower and poor institutional culture, which is endemic in the local governments of Nigeria, and paralyzes their performance. Ineffective administrative machinery is also apparent with most councils being disorganized, possessing an archaic bureaucracy and technical inefficiency in the systems to carry the complex development programmes. This is also augmented by the fact that the recruitment process is also politicized and that working at the local government is often accompanied by political goodwill as opposed to merit or competence (Okafor, 2010). It has created a work force that is unprofessional and unmotivated in offering efficient services to the people. Majority of the local government workers are ill equipped to meet the new administrative and financial requirements of the job as most of the training and capacity-building programmes are barely institutionalised (Ezeani, 2012).

More than that the culture of the institution in most of the local councils encourages mediocrity, absenteeism and corruption. It also has the tendency of administrative manipulations to satisfy some personal or political interests and undermine transparency and accountability (Arowolo, 2011). Decision-making is usually centralized and the decision made by a representative of either the chairmen or the politically minded individuals at the expense of the professional civil servants whose technical contributions are required when planning and executing policies. This implies that the local governments are finding a challenge in planning, implementing and monitoring the development projects. This has seen to poor service delivery, incomplete infrastructure projects and embezzlement of the public funds.

Absence of administrative autonomy also helps to increase the level of inefficiency. The administration of local government state ministries usually intercesses in usual administrative matters by identifying the direction of policy and financial alternatives. This has forced the local officials to be dependent and uncertain since they cannot take initiative and innovate to meet local problems. All these vices in the system have undermined the stature of the local governments as growth engines in the grassroot level and rendered them passive administrative units, rather than change agents.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

The findings show that the decentralization in Nigeria is not substantial but nominal. It is the system of the constitution and political practice, such paradox is inherent: decentralization is formally considered, the autonomy is highly limited. The above paradox is consistent with findings in other African contexts where the decentralization reforms were found to be derailed by the central or regional elite who desire to remain in control of the resources (Smoke, 2015).

It is empirically proven that the real local independence is positively correlated with the enhanced service delivery and satisfaction of citizens (Faguet, 2014; Wunsch, 2013). However, in Nigeria, the fiscal autonomy has been lacking thereby rendering the local governments unfit to perform their developmental role. The rural development projects such as development of roads, water supply, primary education and health are usually left undone or half completed due to the lack of funds as well as political meddling (Arowolo, 2011). Therefore, the chances of decentralization in the betterment of the grassroots development are still to be fulfilled.

In fact the state governments have been turned into gatekeepers rather than to facilitate decentralization. By controlling SJLGA, the governors have political and monetary influence over the local councils by manipulating local elections and, placing caretaker committees (Zango & Mohammed, 2025). This not only is stifling innovation, but it is also inculcating a dependency and patronizing culture. In the majority of cases, local government finances are redirected into political projects or spending on the same areas rather than on community development (Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015).

To guarantee the success of the decentralization, Nigeria needs to solve the legal and institutional inconsistencies that continue the local dependency. Local government needs to be constitutionally independent and its federal spending and ability to conduct plausible elections with the assistance of an independent national institution through constitutional amendments (Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe, 2022). The establishment of such systems as the transparent financial management and efficient audit systems and capacity-building of the local officials also plays a high role.

Political good will is what makes the final decision of success in reform. This is not the first time efforts have been made like the national conference recommendations of 2014 to allow the independence of local governments which have been unsuccessful due to the political elites in the state. The civil society and the citizens ought to be more pushy when it comes to accountability and autonomy. Community-based monitoring, open governance work, and participatory budgeting can lead to transparency and establishment of the public trust (Wunsch, 2013).

## **7. CONCLUSION**

This paper has demonstrated that even though the concept of decentralization has constitutional deep root in the system of governance in Nigeria, structural, political and institutional shortcomings continue to severely limit the application of the concept. The third level of government according to the Nigerian Constitution is the local government, which should serve as a tool of building the grassroots in addition to participating in the democratic process. Reality however

has altered this and has been compromised by a series of legal grey areas, financial dependency as well as institutional weakness that have brought local councils to near ineffectiveness. The state governments are not involved in the facilitation of local autonomy, but they usually have tendencies to overwhelm the local government problems, particularly through the manipulation of State Joint Local Government Account and the dissolution of the elected local councils. These practices reduce financial and administrative independence of appropriate local government and development (Akindele and Olaopa, 2016).

These limitations have far reaching consequences. The roles of local governments that should be the drivers of community development, service provision and participatory rule of governance, have been reduced into administrative appendices of the state. The resultant cycle of inefficiency, patronage and corruption has been triggered by dominance of state governors on what leadership and financing should do first at the locally level that further compromised trust of the people on the system (Eneaya, 2012). The revolutionary merit of decentralization has thus failed to materialize of bringing the government closer to the people, and make it accountable and participative in making decisions. Instead, decentralization in Nigeria has been symbolic and not substantive in most instances as it has been applied and utilized as a political expediency and not developmental need (Oviasuyi, Idada & Isiraojie, 2010). In order to transform the rural state that the country desires at the local government level in Nigeria, the country must pursue authentic decentralization that is founded on fiscal, administrative and political independence. Local councils would be able to develop and handle revenue to local demand and therefore, fiscal independence, unlike administrative and political independence which would offer the liberty of needless state interference. Institutional reforms that will improve the transparency, capacity-building and accountability mechanisms are also important. These structural changes

are what will see the implementation of decentralization in Nigeria live beyond the theories of rhetoric, a hollow speech that will do no good in its developmental effect in actual sense.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The 1999 Constitution should be amended to make sure that the local government is fully indecent by removing the SJLGA and direct fiscal compensation. The powers of the state governments to disband councils or the use of caretaker committees should be limited.
2. The local governments need to improve their IGR systems through improved management of taxes, electronic revenue collection and development of community-based relationship. This should be done through public audits that will bring about fiscal transparency and accountability.
3. The local administration needs to be professionalized through recruiting, training, and reviewing individuals who work in the administration basing on merit. The capacity building programs are supposed to be collaborated by the federal and state governments.
4. It needs to have credibility by giving independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) the mandate to conduct local government elections. The citizens will be empowered to be active in the process of local governance.

The decentralization reforms are based on the real political will on the all levels. The media, civil societies and the local community must undertake their long term advocacy towards transparency, financial prudence and political accountability.

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