



## THE POLITICS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AND SERVICE DELIVERY: A STUDY OF ANAMBRA NORTH SENATORIAL ZONE

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### Abstract

The study focused on Local Government Autonomy and Service Delivery in Anambra North Senatorial Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. Local Governments have witnessed inordinate usurpation of powers, substantial interference on their autonomy by the state governments, which has led to unproductiveness and abysmal failure. In the light of this, the study examined various patterns of interference on local governments' administration by the state governments and the extent of autonomy granted to local governments by the constitutions. In carrying out the study, data were collected through primary and secondary sources. The population of 2841 was drawn from local government staff and communities. They were reduced to a sample size of 351 using Taro Yamani's Statistical formula. The study revealed that state governments interfere on financial, administrative and political autonomy of the local governments. Also, the extent of financial, administrative and political autonomy granted to local governments was insignificant. The following recommendations were made: constitutional amendment to expunge the provision of Joint State and Local Government Account in the 1999 constitution to guarantee financial autonomy of the local governments. Administrative and decision-making hindrances by the Local Government Service Commission in the management of local government staff needs to be reexamined. The freedom to initiate and execute developmental projects of their choice at the local government areas needs to be granted to local governments to enable them carry out their constitutional responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

**Keywords:** Local government, senatorial zone, autonomy, developmental project

### Introduction

Over the years, one of the major challenges that has confronted local government system in Nigeria is the issue of autonomy and its debilitating features, which includes constitutional restrictions, pervasive interference, usurpation of powers and the use of appointed caretaker committee members to run the affairs of local governments by the federal and state governments. Local government autonomy has been a mirage in the Nigeria's post-colonial political history, as local governments have not operated independent of both the state and federal governments (Akpan and Okonette 2013). This no doubt has resulted in poor service delivery such as education, health, good road network, pipe borne water and other public utilities within the constitutional jurisdictions of the local governments and as well stunted the growth and general wellbeing of the communities at the grassroots. The history of local government system in Nigeria began during the pre-colonial era where various communities in what is Nigeria today, were governed through the instrumentality of their traditional political institutions (Ugwu 2017). During the colonial era in 1900, local governments operated through the

traditional rulers known as Indirect Rule System solely for strengthening of the native courts and the establishment of local tax and treasury for the colonial masters (Emezi, 1999 in Ugwu 2000).

Those traditional political systems created by ethnic groups known as Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba were used for the maintenance of law and order and the provision of social services to meet the needs of the people within their domain, Agba, Akwara, & Idu (2013) in Odalonu (2015). However, there were no remarkable improvements in the lots of local governments as the problems of governance at the grassroots have remained largely lack of autonomy, lack of uniformity, poor implementation of policies, corruption, mismanagement, lack of citizen's participation and inter-governmental conflict (Kaita 2012). These therefore prompted the federal government into initiating the 1976 local government reform, which conceptualised local government as a unified structure with defined functions and responsibilities in line with national developmental objectives, Saalah and Stanley (2011) in Ugwuanyi (2014). In addition, the provisions of the 1999 Constitution in section 7(1) and section 8 guaranteed local government autonomy essentially and ostensibly for the protection of local government from unnecessary interference from other tiers of government and to enable it play significant roles in the national development process (Ugwuanyi, 2014). Also, the same constitution gives the state the autonomy to lord over the local governments and this practically tied them to the apron strings of the state governments, Agunyai, Ebirim and Odeyemi (2013).

The problem of local government system stems from the constitution that expressed the structure and the extent of autonomy granted to local governments by the federal and state governments. Local government autonomy entails that local governments should have full opportunity to discharge their jurisdictional functions for the general wellbeing of the communities at the grassroots, without interference from other tiers of government. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case due to the state governments' barefaced insensitivity and undue interference. It is against this backdrop that this study examines local government autonomy and service delivery in Anabra North Senatorial Zone of Anambra State, Nigerian.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

The quest for Local government autonomy in the Nigeria polity has not only been a reoccurring and perennial issue but also has a tendency for evoking high memories to all concerned. As the name implies, local government globally has been recognized as a veritable tool for administering local and grassroots development and to enhance overall national development, Andrews (2010) ALGON (2012). It is not surprising therefore that the cry for local government autonomy stems from the inordinate usurpation of powers of local governments by the state governments in Nigeria. This master-servant relationship has undoubtedly inhibited the utility and performance of local government to a great degree. The first identified problem as buttressed by Ugwuanyi, (2014) is in the area of financial autonomy. He observed that the financial autonomy of the local governments is being severely interfered with by the state governments principally through the instrumentality of the State and Local Government Joint Account. Andrews (2012) and Ogban (2011) maintained that State and Local Government Joint Account is used as a mechanism to make local governments appendages of the state governments. Ugwu, (2001) observed that inadequate finance has hindered local governments from carrying out their statutory responsibilities as they depended heavily on the federation account for their basic responsibilities and their monthly emoluments.

Another pertinent issue is undue influence and excessive control that the state governments exercise over the local governments through the Local Government Service Commission in the area of recruitment, management and discipline of staff. Another remarkable problem is that local governments' lack the freedom of initiating and executing developmental projects of their choice in their areas of jurisdiction. In Nigeria, most State governments created agencies, such as the office of the Special Adviser to the Executive Governor on Political and Local Government Matters, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters with Commissioners. This in effect, shows that most projects and programmes of the local government in the state must be approved by the agencies of the state before they can be executed, Ugwu (2001). There is also Constitutional constraint on local governments in Nigeria. Section 177 (b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, provides for the establishment of State Independent Electoral Commission to conduct Local Government Election in each state, Ugwuanyi (2014). The pervasive interference of State Governments in the affairs of the local governments is responsible for the overwhelming outcry for local government autonomy. This is because of the meddlesome and flagrant manipulation of the local government elections through the instrumentality of the state

appointed and controlled electoral body called State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC), which invariably returns 100 percent victory for the ruling party in the state, Abutudu (2011) in Ugwuanyi (2014). As it is often the case, State governments during such elections impose candidates who do not actually reflect people's preferences.

## **Hypotheses**

This study is guided by the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>i</sub>: The extent of financial autonomy granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone is significant
- H<sub>o</sub>: The extent of financial autonomy granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone is not significant
- H<sub>i2</sub>: The extent of administrative autonomy and decision-making granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone in the management of their staff is significant.
- H<sub>o2</sub>: The extent of administrative autonomy and decision-making granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone in the management of their staff is not significant.
- H<sub>i3</sub>: The level of autonomy exercised by local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone in project execution is significant
- H<sub>o3</sub>: The level of autonomy exercised by local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone in project execution is not significant.

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptual framework**

#### ***Local Government***

Local government is defined as a system of government whereby the state allows the establishment of local units of government with powers and authority to make local decisions on matters that affect the local communities and to mobilize local resources for implementation or execution of the decisions made (Eboh&Diejomaoh, 2010). The United Nations Office for Public Administration quoted in Ola and Tonwe (2009), Ubani (2010), Achimugu, Stephen & Agboni (2013) in Odalonu (2015) defines local government as thus: A political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected. In agreement with the above conceptions, Ugwu (2000) indicates the following elements as what precipitate the creation of Local Government.

**(a) Citizens participation in the management of local affairs,**

**(b) Efficient and equitable provision of essential services,**

**(c) Resource mobilization for development purposes.**

#### ***Citizens participation in the management of local affairs***

Local government brings government to the doorposts of the grassroots, being sensitive and involving them in the things that revolve around them to enable them have a say through their own participation.

#### ***Efficient and equitable provision of essential services***

This entails that local government, as the government closer to the grassroots should be responsive to the needs of the communities by ensuring that equitable social services such as primary health care services, portable drinking water, good road net work etc are provided to the grassroots.

### ***Resource mobilization for development purpose***

Adequate financial base of any local government places it on a firm footing and ensures its leverage to wield successfully beyond its horizon for the achievement and realization of its set objectives in appropriate quantity and quality for the general good and welfare of the grassroots (Eze 2010). This posits that local governments need to initiate plans for generating financial resources that will help them in developmental projects at the grassroots instead of depending on the state governments and statutory allocations from the federation account. Also, the Political Bureau Report of March 1987 in Ugwu (2000), acknowledged local government as a viable instrument for rural transformation and for the delivery of social services to people. The report believes that local government is strategically located to fulfil the above functions because of the followings:

- (a) Nearness to the People:** The physical and psychological distance between officials of the other tiers of government and the people frustrate efforts in making people to fully identify with government programmes. People at the grassroots understand and recognize local government because they feel its presence and local governments affect their lives.
- (b) Responsiveness:** The proximity that exists between local government and the grassroots places them in a position where they can easily articulate and aggregate the demands of the people. A government at the grass roots level is most sensitive to the needs of the people.

Local government organization are not usually complex and generally do not really require sophisticated and highly qualified personnel for effective performance. Of the three tiers of government- Federal, State and Local, local government provides the greatest scope of grassroots development. Not only do local governments touch on the lives of people most intimately, but also tremendous opportunities for grassroots effective democratic participation. (Adedeji 1977 in Ugwu 2000). Ezeani (2004) noted the features of local government as thus:

- (i) Localness
- (ii) It has a legal existence enshrined in the constitution
- (iii) it enjoys substantial autonomy
- (iv) It exists within a defined territory
- (v) Local government exercises its authority over a given population
- (vi) It exercises specific powers and performs specific functions allowed by the constitution
- (vii) The council is composed of elected representatives of the local;
- (viii) Local government is bureaucratized into departments, divisions and units.

### **Local Government Autonomy:**

Local government autonomy has been a long-range debate within the Nigerian political system, this focuses on what powers and functions the federal or state government should grant to the local government system Akpan and Okonette(2013). Local government autonomy in Nwatu (2012:81) is referred to as the freedom of the local governments to recruit and manage its own staff, raise and manage its own finances, make byelaws and policies and discharge its functions as provided by law without interference from the higher governments. Okoli (2013) posits that autonomy of local governments in relation to other levels or tiers of government manifest itself in three critical areas as follows:

### **Authority Relationship**

This represents the core and criticality of intergovernmental relations. This relationship determines whether what obtains is local government or local administration in the first place. Where the local unit enjoys a grant of authority over specific area and wide range of functions, then what obtains is a devolved local government. But where, on the other hand the unit enjoys a grant of authority just enough for execution of specified functions and services then what obtains is a de-concentrated local government or indeed a local administration.

### **Finance**

This is the enigma of autonomy. A local unit that has financial control and independent sources of revenue for the initiation and execution of its jurisdictional responsibilities without inhibition, is known as local government. On the other hand, a local unit that is financially incapacitated and independent, is local administration.

### ***Personnel***

The ability to recruit and maintain staff connotes autonomy. The authority to “hire” and “fire” determines organizational autonomy and maturity. Any organization that is sole dependent on another for its personnel, is best described as an extension, as the loyalists, the employees must submit to highest authority.

### **Local Government Financial Autonomy:**

Local Government Financial Autonomy represents a situation where adequate and independent sources of revenue for the initiation and execution of projects and other jurisdictional functions and services are granted to the local governments without inhibition or overbearing influence from other tiers of government. Financial autonomy and coordination is essential ingredient for effective and efficient social service delivery and development at the grassroots. This provision is highly determined by the extent of financial autonomy granted to local government councils.

Local Government Financial Autonomy has severely being interfered with by the State Governments through the mechanism of the State and Local Government Joint Account as provided in section 162(6) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended. Azelama (2008), Ezeani (2012), Chukwuemeka et al.,(2014) in Odalonu (2015) opined that this provision does not allow direct funding of the local governments from federation account. In addition, the state governments manipulate this constitutional provision to keep the local governments as their appendages and, in large measures, siphon the funds meant for them. Ukiwo, (2010), observed that the interference in the local government autonomy by the state governments have become so pervasive that in 2010, 31 out of the 36 state governors tampered with local government funds through the instrumentality of the State and Local Government Joint Accounts.

Ugwuanyi, (2014) stated that the pervasive practice of interference in the statutory allocation of the local governments by the state governments is antithetical to the spirit of the constitution in the creation of the state and Local Government Joint Account. Ahmed, (2012) maintained that local governments are reduced to a mere political and financial apparatus used by the state governments to dispense favour to willing accomplices and serve punishment for errant and recalcitrant opponents. It is disheartening to know that the state governments have seriously vitiated the financial status and activities of the local governments through the mechanism of the State joint and Local Government Accounts. For example, In Anambra North Senatorial Zone under the present administration led by Governor Willy Obiano from 2014 till date local governments are only given peanuts out of the stipulated allocation from federation account due to over deductions from the state governments in respect of expenditures claimed to have been made on behalf of local governments councils. This indeed, makes it difficult for local governments to execute any developmental projects, organise trainings for workers, pay seminar allowances and salaries of staff as at when due. In a similar situation, Ugwuanyi (2014) maintained that in Bornu State between March 2002 and March 2003, half of the total sum of #13.3 billion allocated to the local governments was improperly deducted at source by the state governments. Dlakwa (2010) Okafor (2010), Abada (2007) in Ugwuanyi (2014) observed that local government's between 1997 - 2007 witnessed a lot of financial misappropriation and fraud being perpetrated by various governments that actually eroded the autonomy of local governments.

### **Sources of Revenue Generation:**

There are two main sources of revenue generation to Local governments in Nigeria. These are internal sources and external sources of revenue generation, Ugwu (2000). Internal sources of local governments revenue are revenue that are generated within the jurisdictional capability of a local government such as license, fines, property rates, markets and others. External Sources are those revenues generated beyond or outside the regular jurisdictions of local governments. These are Statutory Allocations, Grants in-aid and Loans.



### **Statutory Allocation**

Refers to constitutionally instituted revenue accrued from the Federation Account among the three tiers of government in Nigeria, which is essential in enabling local governments transform the lives of the people at the grassroots through social service delivery. Funding of local governments in Nigeria is an important aspect of fiscal federalism and intergovernmental relations. However, the statutory allocation to local governments has experienced steady increase from 10% to 15% in 1990, to 20% in 1992 and presently 25% Ugwu (2017). With this, it is expected that more developmental projects and efficient social service delivery will be evident at the local government areas; but regrettably, there is no significant impact to this regard. This is because local governments do not have direct access to their monthly statutory allocations from the federation account. Another pertinent issue is the outright refusals of most State Governments to remit 10% of internally generated revenue to local governments monthly to enable them meet their jurisdictional responsibilities and other expenditures Ugwu (2017).

### **Internally Generated Revenue**

Local governments are exacerbated by limited revenue generation. Local governments are expected to generate revenue from commercial undertakings, such as taxes, markets, incenses, fees, motor parks, mass transit, rent on local government properties, miscellaneous etc Osakede and Ijimakinwa (2014), but unfortunately, the state governments have taken over most viable revenue sources from the local governments. To portray this, USAID (2001) states that, despite the fact that markets, motor packs and waste management fall under the constitutional functions of local governments, some state governments have taken over these functions and collect revenues derived from them through ANSWMA and other state governments' agents. All these therefore pose serious challenges and as well erode the financial autonomy of the local governments.

### **Review of empirical literature**

#### ***Autonomy and Service Delivery in the Local Governments:***

Okoli (2013), maintained that poor performance of local government is seen in three perspectives. (a) Authority relation: this revealed that, 1999 constitution clearly subordinated local government to other tiers of government. Stressing that local governments lack the characteristics tripartite division of governmental and judiciary function to interpret and pronounce on its laws. (b) Finance: local government financial autonomy is inhibited through the instrumentality of the Joint State and Local Government Account. The state government meddle in local government internal revenue generation. (c) Personnel: political interference leading to politicisation of appointments and general human resource management through local government service commission from 07 and above constitutes a problem.

The study of Agunyai, Ebirim and Odeyemi (2013) examined Local Government Autonomy as a veritable tool for redressing usurpation of powers of local government by the state government in Nigeria and revealed that usurpation of power of local governments by state governments in Nigeria has had a severe impact on grassroots development. Egberi and Madubueze (2014), posit that social service delivery at the local governments has been constrained by state governments' interference on local governments' affairs, extreme corruption by politicians and selfish bureaucrats for personal gains. Akpan and Olonette (2013) pointed out that in Nigeria; the kind of autonomy the central/regional government entrust to the local units depends largely on the nature and character of state politics. While in the United State of America, the degree of autonomy granted to local authorities is derived from ideals and values, such as liberty, equality, democracy, unity etc. Such ideals are at core of national unity and shape the character of the state politics. Adeyemo (2005), observed that granting local government autonomy will unleash fullest opportunity for people to participate in determining their own destiny and self-actualisation.

### **Summary of Review**

In summary, from the review of the related scholars, local government autonomy in the Nigeria context has been a mirage because of the federal and state governments' insensitivity to the plights of local governments and this has resulted in abysmal failure in service delivery at the grassroots. Granting local governments' autonomy will enhance rural change, transformation and overall development at the grassroots.

## Gap in Literature

Previous articles have been done on local government autonomy and service delivery in Nigeria, noting its effects and challenges. However, there are limited study on the level of financial, administrative/political autonomy granted to local governments that have resulted in poor service delivery in Nigeria. However, there is none with special focus on Anambra North Senatorial Zone. This lacuna is what this study intends to fill.

## Methodology

The study adopted survey design. Data were collected using questionnaire, face to face interview, focus group discussion and observation. Data collected were analysed using ANOVA statistical tool.

## Data Presentation and analysis

### Research question one

To what extent has financial autonomy been granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone?

## Research Hypothesis One

**Table 4.1: The extent of financial autonomy granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone and Kruskal Wallis One Way ANOVA Test**

Extent of financial autonomy granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone		SA	A	NI	D	SD	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis statistic	P value
Local governments receive direct allocation from the federation account	F	16	22	10	80	150	219.26	2.992	0.302
	%	5.8	7.9	3.6	28.8	54.0			
The instrumentality of Joint State and Local Government Account stipulated by the constitution inhibits financial autonomy of the local governments.	F	132	85	9	35	17	525.91		
	%	47.5	30.6	3.2	12.6	6.1			
State government meddle in the local government viable internally generated sources of revenue	F	120	95	6	30	27	507.33		
	%	43.2	34.2	2.2	10.8	9.7			

With the Kruskal Wallis Statistic of 2.992, Mean Rank of 525.91 and p value of 0.302, the extent of financial autonomy granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone is not significant. The most significant level is "The instrumentality of joint state and local government account stipulated by the constitution inhibits financial autonomy of the governments.

The provision of Joint State and Local Government Account in section 162(6) of the 1999 constitution according to Ahmed (2012) was a mechanism put in place to check the menace of public fund pilfering and ensure accountability and probity. Ugwuanyi (2014) noted that the state governments are only meant to act as trustee of the account and to ensure reasonable oversight of the statutory allocations of the local governments. However, Odo (2003), Okoli and Eze (2001),

Oguntuase (2002) and ALGON (1999) in Ugwuanyi (2014) observed that the state governments have turned the Joint State and Local Government Account into instrument to manipulate and control the local governments. For example, local governments in Enugu State during the regime of Governor Chimaroke Nnamani between 1999 and 2007 were dashed peanuts from their statutory allocations. Ugwuanyi (2014) maintained that there were equally cases of over deductions in respect of certain expenses made by the state on behalf of the local governments. Ahmed (2012) mentioned that funds meant for development projects by the local government was siphoned to slush funds through the mechanism of joint state and local government account with which the state governments finance its extra government activities; such as political thugs, party hangers, settling political adversaries, serving unscrupulous public servants and others. Indeed, state governments' interference into financial autonomy of the local governments through the mechanism of joint state and local government account is so pervasive that Ugwu (2001) observed that local governments hardly carryout their basic monthly emoluments and other constitutional responsibilities.

## Research Question Two

To what extent has administrative autonomy and decision-making been granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone in the management of their staff.

## Research Hypothesis Two

**Table 4.2: Respondents' responses on extent of administrative autonomy and decision making in the management of local governments staff and Kruskal Wallis One Way ANOVA Test**

Extent of administrative autonomy and decision making in Anambra North Senatorial Zone.		SA	A	NI	D	SD	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis statistic	P value
Local governments are restricted by the state government through the Local Government Service Commission in the management of their staff	F	160	109	5	10	8	460.69	16.134	0.750
	%	57.6	34.2	1.8	3.6	2.9			
Senior staff are not recruited and disciplined at higher grade levels by the local government councils in Anambra North Senatorial zone	F	125	95	14	12	18	400.44		
	%	45.0	39.2	5.0	4.3	6.5			
State government interfere in the administration of the local governments through caretaker committees instead of democratically elected members	F	130	86	10	20	32	391.37		
	%	46.8	30.9	3.6	7.2	11.5			

With the Kruskal Wallis Statistic of 16.134, Mean Rank of 460.44 and p value of 0.750, the extent of administrative autonomy and decision-making granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone in the management of their staff is not significant. The most significant level is the "Restriction of local governments through the Local Government Service Commission.

Okoli (2013) posits that local governments greatest albatross is political/administrative interference in terms of personnel management. This is because appointment and general human resource management at the local government is now politicised. In agreement, Ugwu (2000) asserts that the Chairmen of Local Government Service Commission with other members 1,11,111, 1V as the case may be are appointed by the state governments, who invariably are their loyalists and cronies. He stressed that, the Commission is an instrument of the state to exercise undue interference on the local governments and ensure further entrenchment of its control over the local government system. Udentia (2007) opined that



recruitment/appointment, promotion, transfers and disciplines of senior staff from Grade Level 07 and above are the responsibility of the commission while junior staff from Grade Level 01-06 are the responsibility of the local governments through Junior Staff Management Committee (JSMC). In the view of USAID (2001), local government chairmen are constrained in ensuring transparency and accountability because they have no direct control over the senior staff. However, when staff is unresponsive to local officials, the only recourse for a local government chairman is to report to the Local Government Service Commission and this does not guarantee transfer or other appropriate disciplinary measures. USAID (2001) observed that Local government service commission's frequent staff rotations to localities destabilise the operations of local governments. Senior staff transfers come every three years but most often, it occurs frequently. For example, Anambra State Local Government Service Commission was during this study had two secretaries within three years. Another pertinent issue is 1% deduction from each local government share of the federation account from the Local Government Service Commission for training/workshops programmes offered by designated institutions like Staff Development Centre Awka, Federal Training Centre Enugu, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria etc. This has led to abuses that some workshops centres with various management skills now solicit participation of local government officials in workshops of dubious value at exorbitant rates at the expense of local governments USAID (2001).

### Research question three

To what level has local governments exercised autonomy in project execution?

### Research Hypothesis Three:

**Table 4.3: Respondents' responses on the level of autonomy exercised by local governments in project execution and Kruskal Wallis One Way ANOVA Test**

Level of autonomy in the initiation and execution of projects in Anambra North Senatorial Zone.		SA	A	NI	D	SD	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis statistic	P value
Local governments do not enjoy the freedom of initiating and executing development projects of their choice without the approval of the state government.	F	180	60	5	18	15	425.29	1.921	0.630
	%	64.7	21.6	1.8	6.5	5.4			
Most development projects are contracted and executed by the state governments.	F	175	78	3	16	6	423.78		
	%	62.9	28.1	1.1	5.8	2.2			
Communities are not consulted in the development projects.	F	160	89	6	17	6	403.42		
	%	57.6	32.0	2.2	6.1	2.2			

With the Kruskal Wallis Statistic of 1.921, Mean Rank of 425.29 and P. Value of 0.630, the level of autonomy exercised by local governments in project execution is not significant. The most insignificant level of autonomy is that "Local governments do not enjoy the freedom of initiating and executing projects without the approval of the state government in Anambra North Senatorial Zone.

State governments' interference on local governments' affairs constitute a cog in the effective execution of development projects at the grassroots. This is because local governments lack financial ability to execute development projects and as such, depend heavily on the state governments for approval and funding. Consequently, local governments now function mostly as extension or appendages of state governments, Eboh and Diejomaoh (2012), Abibulu (2012) in Odalonu (2015). In support of this position, Adeyemi (2013) asserts that the inherent nature of this problem has caused subservience, a situation where local governments wait for new directives from the state governments before embarking on any development projects. Despite the fact that markets, education, roads are contained in the local governments exclusive functions in the fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution, the state governments build markets, renovate primary schools buildings, maintain

roads and the money deducted at source without due recourse to local government councils USAID (2001). For example, renovations of primary schools buildings in Ayamelum Local Government were recently carried out by the state governments without due consultations on the ultimate needs of the communities. Agba (2006) in Odalonu (2015) observed that the provision of basic social services such as education and health as well as maintenance of roads and public utilities within the jurisdictions of local governments is now both a myth and mirage.

### **Finding**

- 1) The study revealed that the extent of financial autonomy granted to local governments in Anambra North Senatorial Zone is not significant. This is because the instrumentality of Joint State and Local Government Account stipulated in section 162(6) of the 1999 constitution inhibits local governments' financial autonomy.
- 2) The administrative autonomy granted to local governments in the management of their staff in Anambra North Senatorial Zone is not significant because the state governments restrict the administration of local governments through the Local Government Service Commission.
- 3) Also it was revealed that the level of autonomy exercised by local governments in projects execution in Anambra North Senatorial Zone is not significant. This is because local governments lack the freedom of initiating and executing projects of their choice without the approval of the state governments.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made to strengthen and guarantee the autonomy of local government to justify its existence at the grassroots.

- 1) There is need for constitutional review and amendments to abolish the provision of Joint State and Local Government Account and to guarantee the financial autonomy of the local government system in Nigeria.
- 2) Administrative and decision-making bottlenecks through the Local Government Service Commission should be removed. In this regard, Local Governments will have full responsibility of managing their staff at any grade level.
- 3) Local Governments need to be given the freedom to initiate and execute development projects because they are government closer to the grassroots and as such, feel their impulses and understand their needs more than other tiers of government.
- 4) There is need for community consultations and involvement on decisions, policies and programmes that affect them at the local governments. This will ensure effective participation and sustainability.

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