

---

**THE IMPACT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AS A CATALYST FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN OWO LOCAL GOVERNMENT; A FOCUS ON EMURE-ILE COUNCIL DISTRICT**

---

**\*Mathew Segun Ogunleye**

---

Political Science Department, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.

---

**Article Received: 23 January 2026****Article Revised: 13 February 2026****Published on: 05 March 2026****\*Corresponding Author: Mathew Segun Ogunleye**

Political Science Department, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.2874>

---

**ABSTRACT**

The autonomy of local government is crucial for reducing poverty and enhancing the quality of life at the grassroots level in Nigeria. However, many local government councils struggle to function properly because they rely on funding from state governments, face political interference, and lack sufficiently skilled workers. This study, therefore, emphasized how the financial, political, and administrative independence of Owo Local Government in Ondo State affects poverty reduction in Emure-Ile council district. The study is anchored on decentralisation theory. The study employed purposive sampling to select 120 respondents who were considered most relevant for providing insights into local government operations. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to gather detailed information about participants' experiences with their local council. Out of the 120 selected respondents, 115 completed the questionnaire, responding to their interactions with and perceptions of the local government's services and performance. The results show that 36.5% of people strongly agreed and 33% agreed that having control over money helps the council provide basic services, while 45.2% strongly agreed that financial independence allows the council to help the poor directly. On political and administrative independence, 43.5% strongly agreed, and 36.5% agreed that autonomy allows council officials to make decisions that benefit residents, and 45.2% strongly agreed that it improves access to health, education, and water. The t-test ( $t = 18.61, p < 0.05$ ) shows a clear link between autonomy and poverty reduction. The study concludes that giving local councils real independence helps them respond to local needs, reduce elite control, make officials accountable, and improve people's

lives. It recommends more autonomy and capacity-building for councils to make development at the grassroots level real and lasting.

**KEYWORDS:** Local Government Autonomy, Poverty Reduction, Financial Independence, Political and Administrative Freedom, Grassroots Development.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Poverty is something that exists in almost every country in the world. It affects how people live, the kind of opportunities they have, and even how society is organised. Although poverty is not the same everywhere, no country can truly say it has completely solved the problem (Odalonu, 2022). However, the situation is much worse in places like Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin America, where many people still live in poor conditions, face insecurity, and struggle to meet basic needs (Kucici & Buratai, 2025; Osho & Adams, 2025). This shows that poverty is not just a personal problem but a serious development issue.

In Nigeria, the problem has become more disturbing. Today, Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest number of extremely poor people in the world. According to the World Bank, about 15 percent of the world's extremely poor people and about 19 percent of those in sub-Saharan Africa live in Nigeria. In real terms, more than 106 million Nigerians survive on less than 2.15 dollars per day (World Bank Africa's Pulse, 2025; World Bank Poverty and Equity Brief for Nigeria, April 2025). The situation has continued to get worse. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, about 30.9 percent of Nigerians were extremely poor, but by 2024, this figure had risen to about 54 percent. The condition is even more serious in rural areas, where about 75.5 percent of the people now live below the poverty line (World Bank, 2025). All these show that life has become harder for many Nigerians.

This is painful because Nigeria is not a poor country when it comes to natural and human resources. In fact, Nigeria was once described as the largest economy in Africa. Yet, instead of poverty reducing, the number of poor people keeps increasing (Onah, Okwuosa & Uroko, 2019). In many parts of the country, especially in the North-East and North-West, economic growth has not improved the living conditions of ordinary people (Dauda, 2017). This is why many people often say Nigeria is a rich country with poor citizens (Odalonu, 2022). Because poverty has remained a serious problem, different governments in Nigeria have tried many programmes to fight it. Some of these include Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, NDE, DFFRI, Better Life for Rural Women, FEAP, PAP, NEEDS, and SURE-P. Sadly, despite all these efforts, poverty is still very common, especially in rural areas and local

government communities (Osho & Adams, 2025). This suggests that the problem is not just about having policies, but also about how government works at the local level.

Local governments are supposed to be the closest government to the people. They are meant to provide basic things like roads, health centres, markets, water, and primary schools. For them to do these things well, they need some level of freedom to manage their money, staff, and decisions. This is what is called local government autonomy (Kucici & Buratai, 2025; Osho & Adams, 2025; Okolo & Lawyer-Keme, 2023). However, in Nigeria, many local governments do not truly enjoy this freedom. They depend heavily on state governments for money and often face political interference, which makes it difficult for them to carry out meaningful projects (Osho & Adams, 2025).

In some places, like Lagos and Enugu States, where local governments have more freedom to run their affairs, they perform better in areas like revenue generation, infrastructure, and service delivery. But in places where local governments are not truly independent, development is usually slow (Osho & Adams, 2025). This problem is even more serious in rural areas, where many people already live in poverty and lack basic facilities (Okolo & Lawyer-Keme, 2023). When local governments have real autonomy, they are in a better position to improve health care, schools, roads, and markets, and also involve the people more in governance. Recently, the Federal Government introduced reforms like the Financial Autonomy Reform Bill of 2022 to allow local governments receive their funds directly, instead of passing through state governments. There are also efforts to improve how local governments are managed (Adeyemi, 2023; Kucici & Buratai, 2025). The idea behind these reforms is that if local governments are stronger and more independent, they will be able to serve the people better and help reduce poverty at the grassroots level.

This national crisis is clearly reflected at the local level, especially in rural communities such as Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State, where a large proportion of the population depends on subsistence farming, petty trading, and informal economic activities, with limited access to basic infrastructure and social services. Preliminary observations and interactions with residents indicate that poverty in Emure-Ile Owo manifests in poor road networks, inadequate healthcare facilities, underfunded schools, youth unemployment, low household incomes, and the general absence of basic government infrastructure. These conditions make Emure-Ile Owo a suitable case for examining how local government autonomy can serve as a practical tool for poverty reduction at the grassroots.

Given the persistent poverty in Emure-Ile Owo Local Government, the visible development challenges in the area, and the strategic position of local governments in addressing these

problems, this study examines local government autonomy as a panacea to poverty reduction, using Owo Local Government with emphasis on Emure-Ile Council District as a case study. The study relies primarily on primary data obtained from fieldwork, including questionnaires and direct observations, in order to capture the real experiences, challenges, and perceptions of residents and local government officials.

### **1.1 This study raises vital questions such as:**

1. How does local government financial autonomy influence poverty reduction in Emure-Ile Owo Local Government?
2. To what extent does political and administrative independence of the local government improve service delivery and socio-economic development in Emure-Ile Owo?

### **1.2 Objectives of the Paper**

1. To examine how local government financial autonomy influences poverty reduction in Emure-Ile Owo Local Government
2. To assess the extent to which political and administrative independence of the local government improves service delivery and socio-economic development in Emure-Ile Owo

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

An alternative hypothesis is formulated in this study and tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Ho1: There is a significant relationship between Local Government Autonomy and Poverty Reduction in Emure-Ile Owo local government.

## **2. 0 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### **2.1.1 Local Government**

Local government is the level of government that is closest to the people. It is the one that deals with the everyday problems of the community and handles issues that affect people at the grassroots level. Its main duty is to provide basic services such as primary schools, health centres, markets, waste disposal, and local roads. Because it operates within the community, it understands the real needs of the people better than the state or federal government and can respond faster to those needs (Kucici & Buratai, 2025).

In countries that practice federalism like Nigeria, local government is meant to help bring government closer to the people. It is also given some level of independence to take care of local matters. Local governments are usually divided into councils or districts, and they are allowed to raise part of their money through taxes, rates, and other local charges. This money

is used to build small roads, maintain markets, support health centres, and run primary schools. Local government also helps to train future leaders, because it is the first place where many people learn how government works and take part in public affairs (Kucici & Buratai, 2025).

The idea of local government is not new in Nigeria. Before the colonial period, different ethnic groups already had their own ways of running their communities. The Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani, and Igbo, for example, had traditional rulers and councils that took care of local issues. During colonial rule, these systems were changed under the indirect rule system. After independence, the government introduced several reforms to make local government more organised and to give it a clear structure across the country (Kucici & Buratai, 2025). Local government is also part of what is called decentralisation, that is, sharing power from the central government to lower levels. It is recognised by law and has the right to manage local affairs, employ workers, and raise some revenue. One important reason for creating local government is to allow ordinary people to take part in governance and have a say in how their communities are run (Okolo, 2023).

In Nigeria, the 1979 Local Government Reform made it clear that local government should be run by elected councils and should have real powers to manage local issues. These powers include control over staff, finances, and local projects. The idea is that when local councils have these powers, they can plan and carry out development projects that truly meet the needs of their people, while still supporting the efforts of the state and federal governments (Mohammed, 2023). In simple terms, a local government is an authority that governs a particular area and the people living there. It has its own officials, offices, and responsibilities. More importantly, it helps to promote grassroots democracy because it allows people to see government at work very close to them and to take part in how their communities are managed (Ogunnubi, 2022).

### **2.1.2 Local government autonomy**

Local government autonomy simply means the freedom given to local councils to run their own affairs without too much control from higher levels of government. When a local government is autonomous, it can plan, make decisions, and carry out its responsibilities based on the needs of its people rather than waiting for instructions from the state government (Kucici & Buratai, 2025). This independence is important because local problems often require local solutions. In practice, autonomy at the local government level shows itself in three main areas. First is financial independence, which means the council can

receive, manage, and spend its money without undue interference. Second is administrative independence, which allows the local government to control its staff, offices, and daily operations. Third is political independence, which gives the people the right to choose their leaders and allows those leaders to make policies that reflect the interests of the local community (Kucici & Buratai, 2025). When these three aspects are present, local governments are in a better position to perform their duties effectively.

One clear way to know whether a local government is truly autonomous is to look at how much control it has over its money, decisions, and leadership. In a federal system, autonomy is reflected in how much revenue the local government can manage on its own, how freely it can take administrative decisions, and how far it can operate without political pressure from the state government (Kucici & Buratai, 2025). Where these freedoms are limited, local government autonomy only exists in name. Ogunnubi (2022) points out that a local government that is truly autonomous must be recognised by law, have its own governing body, and be able to provide basic services to the people in its area. Such a local government should also be able to raise part of its funds and use them to meet local needs. This kind of independence helps to strengthen grassroots democracy because it brings governance closer to the people and encourages their participation in local affairs.

Similarly, Okolo (2023) explains that local government autonomy is part of the wider idea of decentralisation, where power is shared from the centre to lower levels of government. In this arrangement, local councils have their own legal identity, perform specific functions, and enjoy some freedom in how they manage their resources and staff. Even though they still operate within the state system, they are expected to have enough space to make decisions that reflect the history, values, and priorities of their communities.

### **2.1.3 Poverty Reduction**

Poverty reduction is understood as the deliberate process of lowering the prevalence and rate of poverty in a society through sustained actions that lift people out of poverty permanently. According to Odalonu (2022), poverty reduction refers to all “formal activities geared towards lowering the prevalence and rate of poverty,” involving deliberate actions taken to ensure that people who are unable to meet necessities are supported and assisted to achieve the same.” In development studies, poverty reduction encompasses a set of measures, both economic and humanitarian, that are intended to permanently lift people out of poverty rather than provide only temporary relief.

Chakrabarti & Dhar (2013) note that poverty reduction efforts are aimed at reducing poverty of the poor and vulnerable through participatory and community-driven approaches, with economic growth being “one of the principal instruments for poverty alleviation” as it generates revenues that enable governments to provide health care, education, and housing for the poor. Angelsen & Wunder (2003) argue that poverty mitigation refers to preventing people from becoming poorer, while poverty reduction refers to situations where people are being lifted out of poverty through improvements in incomes, access to services, and living standards.

The multidimensional nature of poverty reduction is further emphasized in contemporary research: Zulkifli & Abidin (2023) explain that poverty cannot be captured solely by monetary measures but requires a comprehensive understanding that includes education, health, living standards, and other dimensions that influence well-being. This multidimensional perspective implies that poverty reduction must address several aspects of deprivation simultaneously to be effective. Finally, international development literature shows that poverty reduction is not only about reducing the number of people below a certain income line, but also about enhancing capabilities and opportunities so that people can participate fully in economic, social, and political life. This aligns with the emphasis in the literature that effective poverty reduction requires structural policies that improve livelihoods and promote long-term inclusive development.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Several writings have been published that teach about local government autonomy in Nigeria, and almost all of them agree on one thing: even though the constitution recognizes local government as the third tier of government, it is not treated as one in real practice. Kucici and Buratai (2025) explain that local governments were created to bring government closer to the people and to help develop rural areas, but this purpose has been defeated by too much control from state governments. According to them, local councils cannot freely plan, spend money, or even run their own affairs without interference. As far back as Olowu and Wunsch (2004), it was already clear that local government in Nigeria suffers from what they described as a crisis of autonomy. He noted that state governments control the most important parts of local government, especially their finances, and this has turned them into nothing more than offices that carry out state instructions.

Adeyemo (2005) also made a similar point when he said that although decentralisation was supposed to improve participation and service delivery, the way local governments are

handled by the states has made this impossible. In many cases, local governments cannot do anything meaningful without first getting approval from the state. Kucici and Buratai (2025) show clearly that most local governments depend almost completely on money that passes through state governments. Because of this, they cannot make proper plans or carry out projects on their own. Eze and Muanya (2021) also explain that since local governments do not control their funds and cannot raise enough money by themselves, many projects either move very slowly or never get completed. Fatile and Ejalonibu (2015) go further to say that any local government that does not control its own money cannot seriously talk about development or poverty reduction.

Apart from money, politics has also made things worse, as Nwosu (2023) explains that state governments regularly interfere in local government affairs by removing elected councils, appointing caretaker committees, and deciding how local governments should be run. Kucici and Buratai (2025) also point out that governors often control what happens in local governments, including how their money is spent. Because of this, many local government officials try more to please the governor than to serve their people. Akinyemi (2018) adds that this kind of situation makes local officials afraid to take bold decisions, even when such decisions are in the interest of their communities.

Some writers have also talked about the problem of weak administration and poor capacity. Agbo (2019) explains that even when money is available, many local governments do not have enough skilled workers or strong institutions to use it properly. Kucici and Buratai (2025) agree with this view and show that when financial problems, political control, and administrative weakness come together, it becomes very difficult for local governments to provide basic services to the people. Many of these scholars also link the problem of local government autonomy directly to development and poverty. Adeyemi (2019) argues that if local governments are truly free to run their affairs, they will be in a better position to provide things like primary healthcare, schools, clean water, and rural roads. Bello (2020) also believes that strong local governments can help improve the living conditions of people, especially in rural areas. Ezeani (2012) adds that when local governments are independent, people are more likely to participate, and officials are more likely to be accountable, which helps ensure that public money is used to help the poor.

Recently, the Financial Autonomy Bill and other reforms have been introduced, which are meant to reduce the power of state governments over local councils. However, Ogunyemi and Adegoke (2022) warn that making laws is one thing and putting them into practice is another, because the real problem in Nigeria is often a lack of political will. From all these studies,

one thing is clear: local government autonomy in Nigeria exists more in theory than in reality. Most scholars agree that until local governments are allowed to control their own money, make their own decisions, and run their own affairs, they will continue to perform poorly and will not be able to play any serious role in reducing poverty at the grassroots level. This study, therefore, builds on these earlier works by looking more closely at how the lack of real autonomy at the local government level continues to affect poverty reduction in Nigeria.

#### **4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is guided by Decentralization Theory, which was developed by Wallace E. Oates in 1972. The theory suggests that governments work more effectively when power, responsibilities, and resources are shared between the central government and lower levels, such as state or local governments. The main idea is simple: local governments are closer to the people, so they understand the community's needs better than the central government. When local authorities have control over their administration, finances, and decision-making, they can respond faster and more appropriately to local problems. This often leads to better service delivery, more efficient use of resources, and improved living conditions for residents. For this study, the theory is important because it explains why giving local governments in Nigeria, like Emure-Ile Owo, more autonomy could help reduce poverty. If local councils have the freedom to manage their finances, run their services, and make policies that meet local needs, they are more likely to improve education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic opportunities for their communities. In other words, decentralization is expected to make local governments more effective in addressing grassroots challenges.

#### **5. METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, which simply means we collected information directly from people in the community to understand their experiences and opinions. The focus was on Emure-Ile Owo Local Government Area in Ondo State, chosen because it is a typical rural-urban area where local government autonomy directly affects governance, trade, public services, and poverty reduction. The population included residents of Emure-Ile Owo who are affected by local government activities, such as traders, civil servants, community leaders, and other stakeholders.

The study purposively selected 120 respondents who are knowledgeable about how the local government functions and its role in community development. Out of these, 115

questionnaires were returned, giving a high response rate that is suitable for analysis. We used a structured questionnaire to gather data. The questions focused on the financial, political, and administrative autonomy of the local government and how these influence poverty reduction. The questionnaire also included items on the impact of local government autonomy on trade in Emure-Ile Owo and on the political and administrative functioning of the local council district. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

To make sure the questionnaire was clear and relevant, two experts in political science and public administration reviewed it. A pilot test was also done, which gave a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.91, showing that the questions are reliable and consistent.

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. The five-point scale was interpreted as follows:

4.50 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree

3.50 – 4.49 = Agree

2.50 – 3.49 = Neutral

1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree

1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

## **6. RESULTS**

The survey results show that local government autonomy in Emure-Ile Owo significantly contributes to poverty reduction. A total of 42 respondents (36.5%) strongly agreed, and 38 (33.0%) agreed that the council has sufficient control over its finances to provide essential services, giving a mean score of 3.72. Regarding market infrastructure and support for local traders, 50 respondents (43.5%) strongly agreed, and 40 (34.8%) agreed, with a mean of 3.91. On direct funding reducing unemployment, 45 respondents (39.1%) strongly agreed, while 35 (30.4%) agreed, with a mean of 3.78. Local projects were executed faster under council financial control, with 48 respondents (41.7%) strongly agreeing and 37 (32.2%) agreeing, with a mean of 3.85. Finally, 52 respondents (45.2%) strongly agreed, and 38 (33.0%) agreed that financial independence allows the council to design programs directly helping the poor, yielding the highest mean of 3.96. These findings indicate a clear consensus that financial autonomy enhances service delivery and reduces poverty at the grassroots.

The findings indicate that political and administrative independence in Emure-Ile Owo Local Government significantly enhances socio-economic development. On administrative autonomy, 48 respondents (41.7%) strongly agreed, and 40 (34.8%) agreed that it enables the

council to respond quickly to community needs, yielding a mean of 3.85. Regarding political independence, 50 respondents (43.5%) strongly agreed, and 42 (36.5%) agreed that it allows council officials to make decisions benefiting residents, with a mean of 3.93. On transparency and accountability, 45 respondents (39.1%) strongly agreed, while 43 (37.4%) agreed, with a mean of 3.85. For decision-making powers supporting community projects, 47 respondents (40.9%) strongly agreed, and 40 (34.8%) agreed, with a mean of 3.88. Finally, 52 respondents (45.2%) strongly agreed, and 38 (33.0%) agreed that political and administrative freedom improves basic services such as health, education, and water supply, giving the highest mean of 3.96. Overall, the results reflect that greater autonomy allows the council to plan and implement programs effectively, directly enhancing service delivery and local development.

The mean score of 4.12 shows that respondents generally agree that local government autonomy positively impacts poverty reduction in Emure-Ile Owo. The t-value of 18.61 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that local government autonomy (financial, political, and administrative) significantly contributes to reducing poverty at the grassroots level.

**Table 1**

**Local Government Autonomy and Poverty Reduction in Emure-Ile Owo.**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
1	The local government has sufficient control over its finances to provide essential services.	42 36.5%	38 33.0%	15 13.0%	12 10.4%	8 7.0%	3.72
2	Financial autonomy of the council improves market infrastructure and supports local traders.	50 43.5%	40 34.8%	10 8.7%	10 8.7%	5 4.3%	3.91
3	Direct funding to the local government helps reduce unemployment in Emure-Ile Owo.	45 39.1%	35 30.4%	20 17.4%	10 8.7%	5 4.3%	3.78
4	Local projects (roads, schools, clinics) are executed faster when the council controls its finances.	48 41.7%	37 32.2%	15 13.0%	10 8.7%	5 4.3%	3.85
5	Financial independence allows the council to design programs that directly help the poor.	52 45.2%	38 33.0%	12 10.4%	8 7.0%	5 4.3%	3.96

**Source; Field Survey, 2025**

**Table 2****Political & administrative independence & socio-economic development.**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
6	Administrative autonomy enables the council to respond quickly to community needs.	48 41.7%	40 34.8%	12 10.4%	10 8.7%	5 4.3%	3.85
7	Political independence allows council officials to make decisions that benefit Emure-Ile Owo residents.	50 43.5%	42 36.5%	10 8.7%	8 7.0%	5 4.3%	3.93
8	Autonomy encourages transparency and accountability in council activities.	45 39.1%	43 37.4%	12 10.4%	10 8.7%	5 4.3%	3.85
9	Local council's decision-making powers support the establishment of community projects.	47 40.9%	40 34.8%	15 13.0%	8 7.0%	5 4.3%	3.88
10	Political and administrative freedom improves basic services such as health, education, and water supply.	52 45.2%	38 33.0%	12 10.4%	8 7.0%	5 4.3%	3.96

Source; Field Survey, 2025

**Table 3****One-Sample t-Test Result on the Relationship between Local Government Autonomy and Poverty Reduction in Emure-Ile Owo.**

Variable	N	Mean (M)	Test Value ( $\mu$ )	Std. Deviation (SD)	Std. Error Mean	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Local Government Autonomy & Poverty Reduction	115	4.12	3.00	0.64	0.0596	18.61	114	0.000	Reject $H_0$ (Significant)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

**7. DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study show that local government autonomy in Emure-Ile Owo significantly helps reduce poverty and improve socio-economic development. Most respondents agreed that when the council controls its finances, it can plan better, execute projects faster, and design programs that directly support the poor. For example, 42 respondents (36.5%) strongly agreed, and 38 (33.0%) agreed that the council has enough financial control to provide essential services, while 52 (45.2%) strongly agreed that financial

independence allows the council to support vulnerable residents effectively. This aligns with Osho and Adams (2025) and Kucici and Buratai (2025), who note that fiscal autonomy enables councils to generate revenue, create jobs, and develop infrastructure, all of which help reduce poverty at the grassroots level.

Political and administrative independence also showed positive effects. About 50 respondents (43.5%) strongly agreed that political independence allows council officials to make decisions benefiting residents, and 52 (45.2%) strongly agreed that autonomy improves access to services like health, education, and water. This supports the views of Adeyemi (2019), Okolo and Lawyer-Keme (2023), who argue that empowering local councils with decision-making authority makes governance more responsive, encourages accountability, and allows citizens to participate meaningfully.

However, autonomy alone is not a cure-all. As Ogunyemi and Adegoke (2022) and Nwosu (2023) point out, local councils in Nigeria still face challenges such as political interference, limited administrative capacity, and dependence on state funding. In Emure-Ile Owo, these factors can restrict how much the council achieves, even with greater autonomy. The results show that giving local governments financial, political, and administrative independence helps them meet local needs, deliver essential services, and reduce poverty. True local autonomy is therefore key to grassroots development, though ongoing support and capacity building are necessary to maximize its impact.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that giving local governments in Emure-Ile Owo financial, political, and administrative independence is key to reducing poverty and improving community development. When the council controls its funds, makes decisions locally, and manages its activities without interference, it can respond faster to community needs and deliver services that truly help the people. Autonomy also helps reduce elite control, increases accountability, and ensures resources reach those who need them most. Although challenges like political influence and limited capacity remain, empowering local governments is a practical way to achieve lasting development and improve the well-being of grassroots communities in Nigeria.

## REFERENCES

1. Adeyemi, O.O. (2019). Local government administration in Nigeria: a historical perspective. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 9 (2), 161–179. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v9i2.14813>
2. Adeyemi, S. O. (2023). Financial autonomy in local governance: Lessons from recent reforms. *Journal of Governance and Development Studies*, 18(3), 45-62.
3. Adeyemo, D.O. (2005). Local government autonomy in Nigeria: a historical perspective. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 10 (2), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2005.11892462>
4. Agbo, C. E. (2019). Enhancing administrative efficiency in Nigerian local governments: Challenges and prospects. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration*, 11(2), 112-130.
5. Angelsen, A., & Wunder, S. (2003). *Exploring the forest–poverty link: Key concepts, issues and research implications*. CIFOR.
6. Dauda, R. S. (2017). Poverty and economic growth in Nigeria: Issues and policies. *Journal of Poverty*, 21(1), 61-79
7. Eze, O. R., & Muanya, C. (2021). Local government autonomy in Nigeria: Its problems and prospects. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 11(3), 45-59.
8. Ezeani, E. O. (2012). Delivering the goods: Repositioning local governments for effective service delivery in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 2(1), 24-41.
9. Fatile, J.O. and Ejalonibu, G.L. (2015) Decentralization and local government autonomy: quest for quality service delivery in Nigeria. *Journal of Economics, Management and Trade*, 10 (2), 1–21.
10. Kucici, A. M., & Buratai, H. A. (2025). Assessing the role of local government autonomy in Nigeria’s federal system: Challenges and prospects. *Berkeley Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7(6), 135-146.
11. Mohammed, H. (2023). Good governance and the role of legislators in local governments in Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 6(5), 27–34. <https://www.abjournals.org>
12. Nwosu, H. N. (2023). Local government autonomy in Nigeria’s federal structure. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, 16(2), 293-312.
13. Odalonu, B. H. (2022). Governance and poverty reduction: An appraisal of government policies and programs of poverty reduction in Nigeria (2015–2019). *African Journal of Humanities & Contemporary Education Research*, 8(2). 10-38.

14. Ogunnubi, O. O. (2022). Decentralisation and local governance in Nigeria: Issues, challenges and prospects. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 27, 1-12. <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/cjlg>
15. Ogunyemi, O., & Adegoke, K. (2021). Local government autonomy and service delivery in Nigeria: A study of recent reforms. *African Review of Public Administration*, 14(1), 98-110.
16. Okolo, P. O., & Lawyer-Keme, K. R. (2023). The autonomy question of local government and socio-economic development in rural Nigeria. *EBSU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 13(3). 10-20.
17. Olowu, D., & Wunsch, J. S. (2004). *Local governance in Africa: The challenges of democratic decentralization*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
18. Onah, N. G., Okwuosa, L. N. & Uroko, F. C. (2019). The church and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. *HTSTeologiese Studies / Theological Studies*,74(1), 8- 19.
19. Osho, G. S., & Adams, M. O. (2025). Nigeria's local government autonomy and economic growth: The path to stable and sustainable federalism. *Journal of Public Policy and Local Government*, 2(3), 81–98.
20. World Bank. (2025). Africa's Pulse: An analysis of issues shaping Africa's economic future (April 2025 ed.). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/africa-pulse>
21. World Bank. (2025). Nigeria Poverty and equity brief: April 2025 [Data report]. World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099253204222517873/pdf/IDU3e01078433714dcb b923112e98052ed9.pdf>
22. Zulkifli, A., & Abidin, Z. (2023). Multidimensional poverty and sustainable development: Beyond monetary measures. *Asian Journal of Social Development*, 14(2), 55–72.