

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN
NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA
OF EDO STATE 2018-2024**

BY

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**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

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**BEING A RESEARCH PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL FUFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF
SCIENCE (B.Sc.) DEGREE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION.**

OCTOBER, 2025.

CERTIFICATION

We certify that this project was carried out by **Osarunamen Deborah OSEMWOTA** with Matriculation number **SSC2004052** in the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project work to the almighty God who gave me the privilege and the opportunity to start and complete this programme successfully and also to my amazing family for their immense love and support that have sustained me throughout.

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With a heart full of gratitude, I am sincerely grateful to the almighty God for his grace, care, wisdom, favour and protection throughout my academic program. Without his blessings none of this would have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined local government autonomy and service delivery in Nigeria: a case study of Egor Local Government Area of Edo State 2018-2024. Four research questions guided the study, and three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of residents and stakeholders within Egor LGA, while the sample size comprised 150 respondents drawn across different demographic groups, including local government staff, civil servants, community leaders, private sector workers, and other categories.

A structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection, divided into sections covering demographic information, perceptions of local government autonomy, effectiveness of service delivery, challenges, and strategies for improvement. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha, and data collected were analyzed using mean (\bar{X}), standard deviation (SD), and Chi-square tests with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The study found amongst others that: Egor LGA has some degree of financial autonomy, as it controls its internally generated revenue and receives timely allocations from higher tiers of government. Political autonomy was also acknowledged, particularly in the area of implementing development projects. However, administrative autonomy, especially in staffing and internal management, was considered weak due to external interference. Furthermore, policy recommendations were adopted which include amongst others that, the federal and state governments should implement constitutional provisions guaranteeing full financial independence of local governments, including direct allocation of funds and authority over internally generated revenue.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The importance of local government as the closest tier of governance to the grassroots cannot be overemphasized. In Nigeria, the local government system is designed to facilitate development at the community level and serve as a mechanism for delivering essential public services. However, the performance of local governments, particularly in service delivery, has remained a subject of intense debate and scrutiny. Central to this debate is the question of autonomy the extent to which local governments can make decisions and control resources without undue interference from state and federal authorities.

Local government autonomy refers to the freedom and capacity of local councils to govern themselves, manage their resources, and execute developmental projects independently within the limits of the law Eme & Nwankwo, (2019). In theory, Nigeria's 1999 Constitution provides for such autonomy, but in practice, this autonomy is often undermined. State governments have frequently been accused of encroaching on the financial and administrative powers of local councils, thereby weakening their ability to function effectively (Eze & Nwankwo, 2019).

A key structural barrier to full autonomy is the Joint Allocation Account System (JAAC), where federal allocations meant for local governments are disbursed through state governments. This system, while constitutionally allowed, often results in partial remittance of funds and significant delays. Consequently, local councils become financially dependent on state authorities, undermining their ability to implement meaningful projects that reflect the needs of their communities (Oviasuyi & Lawrence, 2018; Ezeani, 2020).

In the case of Egor Local Government Area in Edo State, these challenges are particularly evident in the deteriorating state of infrastructure, under-resourced primary health care facilities, poor waste management systems, and declining educational services. These service delivery failures are not isolated incidents but reflect deeper systemic issues tied to the autonomy deficit experienced by many Nigerian LGAs.

Scholars have argued that the lack of autonomy has direct consequences for service delivery. For instance, Olasupo and Fayomi (2020) observed that service delivery in Nigerian local governments suffers from inefficiency, poor planning, and corruption largely because local authorities are not empowered to act decisively. Similarly, Arowolo and Aluko (2021) highlighted how bureaucratic

bottlenecks and overdependence on higher tiers of government diminish the performance of local councils.

Moreover, a 2022 study by Adeyemi and Chinedu revealed that even when local governments are able to initiate service delivery projects, political interference and a lack of transparency in procurement processes often result in substandard or abandoned projects. This undermines public trust and frustrates local development efforts. Despite several reforms aimed at strengthening local governance in Nigeria, including the 2018 Financial Autonomy Bill passed by the National Assembly, implementation remains a key challenge. The persistent control by state governors and the politicization of local government administration continue to stifle progress and render councils ineffective in fulfilling their mandates (Chukwuemeka & Ezeani, 2022; Ibrahim & Omole, 2023).

In addition, many local governments suffer from inadequate human resource capacity, weak institutional frameworks, and poor monitoring mechanisms. These limitations further exacerbate service delivery failures, particularly in urban LGAs like Egor that experience high population pressure and increasing demand for public services.

Understanding local government autonomy and service delivery is therefore essential to diagnosing the root causes of underdevelopment at the grassroots. This study focuses on Egor Local Government Area, a strategic administrative unit in Edo State, to examine how issues of autonomy or the lack thereof impact the quality and efficiency of service delivery to the local population. Through this lens, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on governance reform, accountability, and local development in Nigeria

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the strategic importance of local governments in driving grassroots development and providing essential public services, their effectiveness in Nigeria has remained deeply constrained by limited autonomy. Although the Nigerian Constitution grants local councils the authority to function as independent tiers of government, in reality, local governments often operate under the tight control of state governments. This contradiction between constitutional provisions and practical implementation has created a governance vacuum, where local governments struggle to deliver basic services such as healthcare, education, sanitation, and infrastructural development.

In many parts of Nigeria, including Edo State, the Joint Allocation Account System (JAAC) has been a major impediment to local government autonomy. Under this system, funds allocated to local governments by the federal government are funneled through state governments, who exercise significant discretion over disbursement. As a result, local councils are frequently underfunded, poorly managed, and unable to meet the needs of their communities (Oviasuyi & Lawrence, 2018). In Egor Local Government Area, anecdotal evidence suggests that this financial dependency has resulted in dilapidated infrastructure, inefficient public health systems, inadequate waste management, and poor educational services all of which directly affect the quality of life of residents. Administrative and political interference from the state level further undermines the operational independence of local councils. Many local government administrations lack the freedom to make key decisions without the approval or influence of state officials. This not only weakens local governance structures but also erodes public trust and accountability. Scholars such as Olasupo and Fayomi (2020) have pointed out that local governments in Nigeria often function more as administrative extensions of the state than as independent developmental authorities.

Despite numerous reform efforts including the 2018 Local Government Autonomy Bill implementation remains weak, and the political will to enforce autonomy is

largely absent in most states. The result is a cycle of underdevelopment at the grassroots, characterized by inefficiency, corruption, and citizen disengagement. Egor LGA presents a clear case of this dysfunction, where observable service delivery failures suggest deeper structural problems linked to autonomy.

What remains unclear, however, is the specific nature and extent of the relationship between the lack of autonomy and the poor quality of service delivery in Egor Local Government Area. While broader national trends have been documented, there is a gap in localized research that focuses on how these systemic challenges manifest at the local level and affect the daily lives of citizens in specific LGAs like Egor. This study thus seek to examine local government autonomy and service delivery in Egor LGA

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives will act as guide to this research work;

1. Assess the level of financial, administrative, and political autonomy enjoyed by Egor Local Government Area.
2. Evaluate the quality and efficiency of service delivery in key sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, and waste management in Egor LGA.

3. Identify the challenges and constraints that hinder effective autonomy and service delivery in Egor LGA.
4. Recommend strategies for enhancing local government autonomy to improve grassroots development and service delivery.

1.4 Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What is the current level of financial, administrative, and political autonomy in Egor Local Government Area?
2. How effective is service delivery in key sectors within Egor LGA?
3. What are the major challenges affecting local government autonomy and service delivery in Egor LGA?
4. What strategies can be adopted to strengthen local government autonomy and enhance service delivery?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between local government autonomy and the quality of service delivery in Egor Local Government Area.

Hr₁: There is a significant relationship between local government autonomy and the quality of service delivery in Egor Local Government Area.

2. H0₂: Financial autonomy has no significant effect on the effectiveness of service delivery in Egor LGA.

Hr₂: Financial autonomy significantly affects the effectiveness of service delivery in Egor LGA.

3. H0₃: Administrative and political autonomy do not significantly influence service delivery in Egor LGA.

Hr₃: Administrative and political autonomy significantly influence service delivery in Egor LGA.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on local governance in Nigeria by providing empirical insights into how autonomy or its absence affects service delivery at the grassroots level. By focusing on Egor Local Government Area, the study offers localized evidence that can help deepen our understanding of broader national challenges in local governance.

Secondly, the study will be valuable to policymakers and public administrators. Findings from the research can inform government officials at the state and federal levels on the real impact of administrative, financial, and political constraints faced by local councils. Such insights can support the formulation and implementation of policies that promote greater autonomy and efficiency in local governance.

Thirdly, the study is expected to benefit development practitioners, civil society organizations, and donor agencies that work on governance and service delivery issues. Understanding the link between autonomy and effective service provision can help them design more effective interventions aimed at strengthening democratic governance and improving the lives of citizens.

Lastly, this study is significant for the people of Egor LGA and similar communities across Nigeria. By exposing the challenges faced at the local government level, the study could empower citizens to demand better governance, transparency, and accountability from their local authorities.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study will cover the period between 2018 and 2024, to provide a contemporary analysis based on available data and recent developments in

governance and service delivery in the area. The study focuses specifically on local government autonomy and service delivery in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The research will cover three key dimensions of autonomy: financial, administrative, and political. It will also evaluate service delivery in critical sectors including healthcare, education, infrastructure, and waste management. The study will rely on both primary data (through surveys, interviews, or questionnaires) and secondary sources (such as reports, journal articles, and government documents).

1.8 Definition of Terms

Local Government: The third tier of government in Nigeria, established to bring governance and development closer to the grassroots. It is responsible for providing basic services to the local populace.

Autonomy: The degree of independence a local government possesses in managing its own affairs, including control over finances, administration, and decision-making processes without undue interference.

Service Delivery: The provision of public goods and services such as education, health care, sanitation, and infrastructure by government institutions to meet the needs of citizens.

Financial Autonomy: The ability of a local government to generate and control its own revenue, make independent budgetary decisions, and utilize funds without interference from state authorities.

Administrative Autonomy: The capacity of a local government to manage its personnel, organizational structure, and operations without external control.

Political Autonomy: The freedom of a local council to make decisions, elect its leaders, and function independently in line with constitutional provisions, free from political manipulation by higher levels of government.

Joint Allocation Account System (JAAC): A financial arrangement in Nigeria where federal allocations to local governments are held and distributed by the state government, often resulting in reduced financial independence for local councils.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Concept of Local Government

Local government refers to a form of public administration that exists at the lowest level of a country's governance structure. It is established by law and endowed with legal powers to govern within a defined geographical area. The primary objective of local government is to bring governance closer to the people and ensure their participation in the decision-making process (Okoli & Onah, 2020). According to Adeyemi (2019), local government is essential for grassroots development because it serves as the first point of contact between the government and the citizens. In the Nigerian context, the 1999 Constitution (as amended) recognizes local governments as the third tier of government, created to ensure effective administration and delivery of services to local populations.

The role of local government extends beyond administrative functions to include development planning, revenue generation, maintenance of public infrastructure, and provision of social services such as health, education, and sanitation. As Ezeani and Nwagwu (2021) argue, local governments are not just

agents of the central government but autonomous entities with constitutional backing to operate independently within the confines of the law.

2.1.1 Concept of Autonomy (Financial, Administrative, and Political)

Autonomy in the context of local government refers to the degree of self-governance and independence a local government possesses in making and implementing decisions without undue interference from the central or state governments. Autonomy is generally categorized into three major forms: financial, administrative, and political autonomy.

Financial autonomy refers to the ability of local governments to generate, control, and utilize their resources without external constraints. However, in Nigeria, financial autonomy remains a major challenge as most local governments depend heavily on federal allocations and are often subjected to financial control by state governments (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2022).

Administrative autonomy involves the freedom to make decisions concerning internal management, recruitment, and deployment of personnel, as well as the execution of policies. Unfortunately, this aspect of autonomy is also limited in many Nigerian local governments due to excessive control by state

governments through the Local Government Service Commissions (Arowolo & Akinkuotu, 2020).

Political autonomy means the power of local governments to elect their representatives, make laws, and formulate policies that are binding within their jurisdiction. Yet, in practice, political interference and the appointment of caretaker committees rather than conducting democratic elections remain widespread in many states (Nweke & Obasi, 2021).

2.1.2 Concept of Service Delivery

Service delivery in local government refers to the provision of public goods and services that meet the social and economic needs of the local population. These services typically include waste management, health care, education, water supply, roads, and rural electrification. Effective service delivery is a critical measure of good governance and institutional performance at the grassroots level (Yusuf & Lawal, 2021).

The quality of services provided by local governments significantly affects public perception and trust in governance. As observed by Olowu and Akinyele (2019), poor service delivery in many Nigerian LGAs is often due to inadequate funding, corruption, lack of skilled personnel, and weak institutional capacity. Therefore,

improving local service delivery requires addressing these structural and administrative bottlenecks.

2.1.3 Relationship between Local Government Autonomy and Service Delivery

There is a strong and direct relationship between the level of autonomy a local government enjoys and the effectiveness of its service delivery. Where autonomy is weak, service delivery is often inefficient, as local councils lack the authority and resources to respond effectively to community needs (Okonkwo & Ugwu, 2020). Financial autonomy enables local governments to prioritize and fund local projects without undue delays or interference. Similarly, administrative autonomy allows councils to plan and implement policies tailored to their specific contexts.

Nnamani and Ibrahim (2022) argue that the erosion of local government autonomy in Nigeria has significantly undermined its ability to deliver quality services. They emphasize that increased autonomy is crucial for local governments to function as effective agents of development. In contrast, when state governments hijack local government functions or delay fund disbursement, the impact is often seen in deteriorating infrastructure and unfulfilled social obligations.

2.1.4 Historical Evolution of Local Government Administration in Nigeria

The historical development of local government in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era, when the British adopted the system of indirect rule. Traditional institutions were integrated into the colonial administrative framework to facilitate governance at the local level. However, the system lacked standardization and consistency across regions (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2018).

Post-independence reforms sought to unify and modernize local government administration. The 1976 Local Government Reform was a landmark development that standardized the structure of local governments and introduced a uniform system nationwide. It also aimed at enhancing the autonomy of local councils and making them more development-oriented (Ogunna, 2019). Subsequent constitutional provisions, particularly the 1999 Constitution, further recognized local governments as a distinct tier of government.

Despite these efforts, the practical autonomy of local governments has remained constrained, particularly by the control exercised by state governments. As noted by Okojie and Aigbokhan (2020), this contradiction between constitutional recognition and operational reality has continued to hamper effective local governance in Nigeria.

2.1.5 Local Government System in Edo State: An Overview

Edo State, located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprises eighteen (18) local government areas, including Egor Local Government Area. The local government system in Edo State reflects the national framework, with elected chairmen and councillors overseeing governance at the local level. However, as in other states, issues of autonomy and effective service delivery persist.

Studies specific to Edo State have highlighted the challenges faced by local governments, including delayed federal allocations, political interference, and limited internally generated revenue (Osagie & Edozor, 2021). Egor LGA, being part of the Benin metropolitan area, has unique urban challenges such as traffic congestion, waste management, and infrastructural decay, which require robust local government action.

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of local governance in Egor LGA has been uneven, with various administrations struggling to balance resource constraints with growing public expectations. Obaseki and Osamwonyi (2023) contend that while there have been pockets of progress, particularly in health and education, systemic challenges still hinder broader development objectives.

2.2 Dimensions of Local Government Autonomy

The concept of local government autonomy remains central to the effective functioning and performance of grassroots governance, particularly in a complex federation like Nigeria. Autonomy, in this context, refers to the degree of self-governance or independence a local government enjoys in managing its own affairs without undue interference from higher tiers of government. Scholars and practitioners alike have identified various dimensions of this autonomy, often categorized into financial, administrative, and political autonomy. These dimensions are interrelated and collectively determine the extent to which local governments can provide efficient and responsive services to their communities.

2.2.1 Financial Autonomy

Financial autonomy refers to the capacity of local governments to generate, allocate, and utilize financial resources independently to meet their administrative and developmental responsibilities. This autonomy is perhaps the most critical because, without adequate financial resources, local governments cannot carry out meaningful service delivery, regardless of their administrative or political capacity (Eneanya & Bello, 2020). Financial autonomy involves not just the ability to access statutory allocations from the federal and state governments but also the legal empowerment to generate internal revenue through taxes, rates, and levies.

However, in practice, the financial autonomy of local governments in Nigeria has been heavily constrained. The practice of joint state-local government accounts, as stipulated in Section 162(6) of the Nigerian Constitution, has significantly eroded the financial independence of local councils. Many state governments have been accused of withholding or mismanaging funds meant for local governments, thus crippling their capacity to deliver services (Ogundele & Odewale, 2019). Furthermore, poor internal revenue generation mechanisms, lack of fiscal discipline, and over-dependence on federal allocations have further undermined financial autonomy at the grassroots level (Akanbi & Ahmed, 2021).

2.2.2 Administrative Autonomy

Administrative autonomy encompasses the ability of local governments to manage their internal structures, human resources, and operational policies without external interference. This includes the authority to recruit, promote, discipline, and transfer personnel within their jurisdictions (Okon & Inyang, 2022). It also involves the discretion to design and implement policies, plans, and programs that respond to local needs and peculiarities.

Despite its constitutional recognition, administrative autonomy is frequently undermined by state governments through various forms of control. For instance,

in many states, key local government appointments are either directly made by the state governor or heavily influenced by the State Local Government Service Commissions. This encroachment dilutes the autonomy and effectiveness of local administrative systems, often resulting in bureaucratic inefficiencies and poor service delivery (Chukwuemeka & Ndubuisi-Okolo, 2021).

Moreover, the over-centralization of authority, lack of capacity-building opportunities, and insufficient staffing in local governments have continued to hamper their administrative independence. A robust administrative autonomy would allow local governments to respond promptly to local issues, tailor public services to community-specific needs, and enhance grassroots participation in governance (Abutudu, 2020).

2.2.3 Political Autonomy

Political autonomy refers to the ability of local governments to operate as an independent political unit with elected leadership, free from undue political manipulation by higher levels of government. This involves conducting regular, free, and fair elections for local government officials, making decisions through elected councils, and ensuring that these councils are not arbitrarily dissolved or suspended (Nwankwo & Eze, 2019).

Unfortunately, the political autonomy of Nigerian local governments has been persistently violated. Many state governments have either failed to conduct timely local government elections or have outrightly replaced elected councils with caretaker committees loyal to the ruling political class (Adebayo & Ilesanmi, 2021). This political interference not only contradicts democratic principles but also severely weakens the accountability and legitimacy of local governance.

In the specific context of Egor Local Government Area, the issues around political autonomy have manifested in the delayed conduct of elections and limited independence of elected officials. The lack of political will at the state level to respect the autonomy of local government structures often stifles local democracy and reduces citizen trust in the political process (Osaghae & Edeh, 2023). A fully politically autonomous local government would foster a more inclusive and participatory democracy, where local actors have the mandate and freedom to represent their constituencies effectively.

2.3 Service Delivery in Local Government Areas

Local governments are the closest tier of government to the people, and their primary responsibility is to provide essential services that directly impact citizens' daily lives. Service delivery in local government areas (LGAs)

encompasses the provision of basic socio-economic services such as healthcare, education, waste management, water supply, roads, and other infrastructural amenities. The quality, timeliness, and efficiency of these services are crucial in determining the level of public trust in local governance structures. In Nigeria, the effectiveness of local governments in service delivery varies significantly across regions, with several structural, financial, and institutional challenges influencing performance outcomes.

2.3.1 Key Sectors of Service Delivery

The core sectors of service delivery at the local government level include healthcare, education, sanitation, water supply, housing, and local infrastructure development. Local governments are statutorily tasked with establishing and maintaining primary health centres and maternity homes, constructing and managing primary schools, overseeing waste disposal systems, and maintaining local roads and markets (Ademola & Ayoade, 2020).

In the health sector, local governments are expected to provide primary healthcare services that include immunization, maternal care, health education, and control of endemic diseases. However, studies show that many local councils

lack the medical personnel, facilities, and funding to deliver these services effectively (Ojo & Akinyemi, 2019).

In education, the responsibility for managing and funding public primary schools falls within the local government purview, including paying teachers' salaries (often in partnership with the state through SUBEB), maintaining school buildings, and providing learning materials. Yet, the sector is frequently plagued by infrastructural decay, teacher shortages, and poor learning environments (Iroanya & Eze, 2021).

Sanitation and environmental services, such as waste management and drainage maintenance, are fundamental to public health and environmental sustainability. In urban localities like Egor LGA, the rapid urbanization has increased the pressure on sanitation infrastructure, often resulting in clogged drainages, indiscriminate waste disposal, and associated health hazards (Oghenekohwo & Ebhohimhen, 2022).

Infrastructure, particularly the construction and maintenance of feeder roads, culverts, and rural electrification projects, is another critical service area. Although constitutionally mandated, most local governments struggle to meet infrastructural needs due to low revenue and state-level interference (Adeyemi & Ibrahim, 2020).

2.3.2 Indicators of Effective Service Delivery

Effective service delivery is typically assessed using several performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative. These indicators help determine how well a local government is fulfilling its responsibilities and meeting the needs of its residents. Commonly used indicators include:

- **Accessibility and Coverage:** The extent to which basic services such as clean water, healthcare, and education are available to the population, especially in rural and underserved communities (Uche & Abada, 2019).
- **Quality of Services:** This refers to the standard of service delivery in terms of timeliness, adequacy, professionalism, and user satisfaction. For example, well-maintained roads, fully staffed health centres, and clean public spaces suggest high-quality service provision.
- **Citizen Participation and Feedback Mechanisms:** Local governments that actively involve citizens in planning, decision-making, and service evaluation tend to perform better, as public input can help tailor services to community needs (Afolabi & Okorie, 2021).

- **Efficiency in Resource Use:** This involves optimal allocation and management of financial, human, and material resources to achieve measurable outcomes.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The presence of clear, documented procedures, reporting systems, and anti-corruption measures are also critical indicators (Yusuf & Salihu, 2023).

When these indicators are met or exceeded, service delivery is generally deemed effective. However, the absence or underperformance of these factors often reflects weak local governance.

2.3.3 Challenges to Effective Service Delivery at the Local Level

Despite the legal mandate and expectations placed on local governments, several challenges continue to hinder effective service delivery in Nigeria. These challenges are structural, political, and operational in nature.

One of the most persistent problems is inadequate funding. As discussed earlier, the overdependence on federal allocations and the inefficiencies in internally generated revenue leave most local governments cash-strapped, unable to finance critical projects (Agba, Ogaboh & Okorji, 2020).

Another challenge is political interference from state governments. The control of local government finances through joint accounts and the frequent imposition of caretaker committees compromise local autonomy and reduce accountability (Eziyi & Okonkwo, 2021). This creates an environment where local leaders serve state political interests rather than community priorities.

Poor administrative capacity is also a significant concern. Many local government councils lack skilled personnel, planning tools, and proper administrative frameworks to execute development plans efficiently. This often leads to project delays, mismanagement, and incomplete infrastructure (Onyema & Ibrahim, 2022).

Additionally, corruption and lack of accountability at the local level further erode public confidence. Misappropriation of funds, inflated contracts, and ghost workers are commonly reported issues that weaken service delivery efforts (Akinola & Adebayo, 2019).

Lastly, community disengagement and lack of awareness about local government responsibilities hinder civic monitoring and public participation in local development. Without grassroots engagement, feedback loops remain weak, and services often do not reflect community needs (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023).

2.4 Challenges of Local Government Autonomy in Nigeria

Despite constitutional provisions and the strategic role assigned to local governments in promoting grassroots development, local government autonomy in Nigeria remains largely theoretical rather than practical. Several interlocking challenges continue to impede the actualization of autonomy at the third tier of government. These challenges have persisted despite repeated reforms and policy interventions and are largely responsible for the poor state of service delivery in most local government areas across the country.

2.4.1 Constitutional and Legal Constraints

One of the fundamental constraints on local government autonomy in Nigeria is rooted in the ambiguous and restrictive constitutional framework. While the 1999 Constitution (as amended) recognizes local government as the third tier of government, it does not grant them full independence. Instead, it places local governments under the control and supervision of state governments through various provisions, particularly Section 7 which states that the "system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under the control of the State Government" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

This legal subordination has been widely criticized for undermining the spirit of true federalism. The lack of constitutional guarantees for financial and administrative independence allows state governments to manipulate the functions and existence of local governments, including the suspension of elected councils and the imposition of caretaker committees (Ezeani & Egobueze, 2021). Moreover, the constitutional provision for the State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs) to oversee local elections further entrenches state dominance and political manipulation (Abubakar & Okon, 2020).

2.4.2 Fiscal Centralization and Revenue Allocation

Another major challenge to local government autonomy in Nigeria is the fiscal structure, which heavily centralizes revenue collection and distribution at the federal level. Local governments rely almost entirely on monthly allocations from the Federation Account, which are disbursed through a joint state-local government account (JAC). This arrangement, established under Section 162(6) of the Constitution, has been criticized as a tool of state control, as state governments often delay or divert these funds (Okon & Udoh, 2019).

Consequently, most local governments are financially weak and unable to execute capital projects or maintain basic services. This over-reliance on statutory

allocations discourages internal revenue generation and breeds fiscal indiscipline. Even where local governments make efforts to generate revenue, their powers to tax are limited and often overlap with state tax regimes, causing legal and administrative conflicts (Arowolo & Ajayi, 2022). The lack of financial autonomy not only affects development outcomes but also reduces accountability, as councils can easily shift blame to the state for financial shortfalls.

2.4.3 State Government Interference

State-level interference remains one of the most pervasive threats to local government autonomy in Nigeria. Through both legal instruments and informal mechanisms, state governors exert significant influence over the affairs of local councils. This includes control over the disbursement of funds, approval of budgets, appointment and removal of local officials, and the conduct of elections.

In many states, democratically elected local councils are frequently dissolved and replaced with caretaker committees loyal to the governor or ruling party. These appointments are not only unconstitutional but also undermine democratic governance at the local level (Olorunfemi & Adeyemi, 2021). In addition, local government budgets often require state approval before implementation, which further limits their ability to plan and execute projects independently.

In Egor Local Government Area, for example, reports have indicated repeated instances where political decisions, including project approvals and contract awards, are subject to state-level political considerations rather than community needs. Such interference severely curtails innovation, responsiveness, and citizen participation in governance at the grassroots level (Aigbe, 2023).

2.4.4 Capacity and Corruption Issues

In addition to external constraints, internal institutional weaknesses also challenge the autonomy and effectiveness of local governments. Many local councils in Nigeria suffer from a lack of technical capacity, poor planning culture, weak bureaucratic structures, and limited use of modern management tools. This administrative inefficiency reduces the ability of councils to carry out their statutory functions, even when resources are available (Chukwuma & Ibrahim, 2020).

Furthermore, issues of corruption and mismanagement are rampant at the local level. Ghost workers, inflated contracts, diversion of funds, and lack of transparency in procurement are common in many local governments (Omotola & Agbaje, 2019). These practices not only lead to wastage of scarce resources but also erode public confidence in local governance. In the absence of strong

accountability mechanisms, local officials are often emboldened to act with impunity, further weakening institutional performance.

Capacity-building initiatives have been largely donor-driven and lack continuity, while efforts by state and federal governments to reform the system are often hindered by political interests. Without addressing these internal challenges, granting legal or fiscal autonomy alone will not translate into improved governance or development at the grassroots.

2.5 Strategies to Improve Local Government Autonomy and Service Delivery

Given the persistent constraints facing local governments in Nigeria including legal ambiguities, fiscal dependency, political interference, and weak institutional frameworks there is an urgent need for comprehensive, multi-dimensional strategies aimed at strengthening local autonomy and enhancing service delivery. These strategies must address not only the structural and policy gaps that limit local government performance but also the systemic inefficiencies and governance deficits that hinder citizen-centered development at the grassroots. Recent scholarship and policy recommendations converge on three key areas for intervention: policy and legislative reform, institutional capacity building, and community engagement.

2.5.1 Policy Reforms and Legislative Actions

A critical strategy for improving local government autonomy involves comprehensive constitutional and legislative reform. Scholars and practitioners alike have long called for the amendment of the 1999 Constitution to provide clearer, more enforceable guarantees of autonomy for local governments (Omenma & Ugwu, 2020). This includes the need to abolish or restructure the State-Local Government Joint Account (JAC), which is widely seen as a tool for state-level financial control and abuse. Replacing JAC with a direct allocation system would ensure that funds from the Federation Account are transferred straight to local governments, thereby enhancing fiscal independence (Adeyeye & Okeke, 2022).

Moreover, local government elections should be depoliticized and managed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) rather than state-controlled electoral commissions. Such reform would enhance the democratic legitimacy of local councils and reduce political manipulation by state governors (Nwogu & Ibe, 2021). Legislative efforts must also aim at redefining the functional responsibilities of each tier of government to reduce duplication, conflict, and ambiguity in service provision.

States like Lagos and Kaduna have introduced partial legal frameworks to strengthen local government operations, and their experiences can offer models for broader national reforms. For such reforms to be sustainable, political will from both federal and state governments is crucial, along with active civil society advocacy and public pressure.

2.5.2 Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening

Even with legal autonomy, local governments must possess the institutional and administrative capacity to fulfill their statutory responsibilities. Many local councils in Nigeria, including those in urbanized areas like Egor LGA, suffer from inadequate human resources, poor data systems, inefficient planning departments, and obsolete work tools. Addressing these gaps requires a deliberate investment in capacity building and institutional reforms.

Capacity building should include continuous training for local government staff on budgeting, procurement, project management, ICT, monitoring and evaluation, and participatory planning (Yusuf & Afolayan, 2020). Also, the establishment of standardized performance benchmarks and evaluation tools for service delivery would help local governments track their progress and improve over time (Ekpenyong & Nwachukwu, 2019).

Additionally, local governments should adopt e-governance platforms to improve transparency, streamline administrative procedures, and facilitate citizen access to information. Building partnerships with development agencies, academic institutions, and private sector stakeholders can provide the technical support and innovation needed to modernize local governance systems.

Strengthening local legislatures (councils) to provide proper checks and balances and improving inter-departmental coordination within the LGA administration are also necessary steps. In the case of Egor, efforts must be made to reform internal financial management systems and ensure proper documentation, procurement discipline, and project monitoring.

2.5.3 Community Participation and Accountability Mechanisms

No strategy to improve local governance can succeed without the active participation of the community and the establishment of robust accountability frameworks. Local governments are meant to be the most accessible tier of government to the people; thus, encouraging public engagement in governance processes enhances transparency, legitimacy, and service relevance.

First, citizens should be actively involved in budget planning, project selection, and policy implementation through platforms such as town hall meetings,

participatory budgeting processes, and ward development committees (Abiola & Adekunle, 2021). These platforms provide avenues for feedback and enable communities to influence how public resources are utilized.

Secondly, civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and the media should play a more prominent role in tracking service delivery, reporting corruption, and advocating for local development priorities. The introduction of citizen report cards and service charters in some Nigerian LGAs has shown promise in improving responsiveness and accountability (Okoye & Omeje, 2022).

Furthermore, the use of digital technology and mobile platforms for service monitoring and complaint handling can empower citizens to hold their leaders accountable. Social media has already become a tool for civic engagement and could be institutionalized through official feedback portals. In Egor LGA, enhancing citizen participation is especially vital given the rising population and complex urban governance challenges. Empowering local residents to voice their concerns, track public projects, and participate in policy discussions can bridge the gap between the government and the governed, thereby making service delivery more inclusive and efficient.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this study is the Decentralization Theory as developed and refined in public administration literature, notably by Rondinelli (1981, 2019) and Smoke (2020). Decentralization Theory provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding how the devolution of authority, functions, and resources from central governments to sub-national or local governments can lead to improved governance and service delivery.

Rondinelli (1981) originally presented the theory as a model for improving government responsiveness, efficiency, and accountability by bringing decision-making closer to the people. The theory has since evolved to analyze how the degree of local autonomy across political, administrative, and fiscal dimensions impacts development outcomes. Decentralization Theory implies that local governments can only perform effectively when they are granted sufficient independence and resources to make and implement decisions that affect their jurisdictions.

Decentralization Theory is one of the most extensively applied frameworks in local governance studies, and it continues to shape academic debates and policy

reform around grassroots development (Faguet, 2021; Smoke, 2020). According to this model, the effectiveness of local governments is largely a function of:

- ❖ Political Decentralization: Transfer of decision-making power to democratically elected local leaders.
- ❖ Administrative Decentralization: Delegation of responsibilities and authority to local officials for planning, service delivery, and personnel management.
- ❖ Fiscal Decentralization: Empowerment of local governments to raise and manage their own revenue and budget.

The two key assumptions embedded in Decentralization Theory are:

- i. Local governments are better positioned to understand and respond to local needs, due to proximity to the citizens and greater contextual knowledge.
- ii. Devolution of powers, if properly structured, increases efficiency, accountability, and participation, ultimately improving service outcomes such as health, education, sanitation, and infrastructure.

Decentralization Theory aims at studying how the distribution of power and resources among tiers of government affects the capacity and performance of local governments. It argues that when sub-national units like local governments are

empowered, they are likely to be more responsive and innovative, especially in public service delivery. The theory also suggests that weak decentralization or partial autonomy undermines governance, leading to inefficiency, duplication, and neglect of local priorities.

The relevance of Decentralization Theory to this study is drawn from the fact that the performance of Egor Local Government Area (Edo State) in service delivery between 2018 and 2024 is significantly shaped by the level of autonomy it enjoys or lacks. The theory provides a framework to analyze how political control by the state government, centralized financial systems (such as the Joint Allocation Account), and poor administrative capacity affect the LGA's ability to perform its statutory roles.

The constructs of Decentralization Theory namely political, administrative, and fiscal autonomy relate directly to the key variables in this study, including the effectiveness of service delivery in health, education, sanitation, and infrastructure. These constructs also provide the lens for examining challenges such as state interference, revenue control, and institutional weaknesses. The application of Decentralization Theory in this study enables a better understanding of why local governments in Nigeria often fall short of their service delivery mandates, despite constitutional backing.

The decision of the federal government to adopt decentralization as a strategy for grassroots development through the local government system was premised on the assumption that greater autonomy would lead to improved governance, citizen participation, and service efficiency. This study therefore uses Decentralization Theory to assess the extent to which this assumption holds true in the case of Egor LGA.

2.7 Review of Empirical Studies

Several empirical studies have examined the issue of local government autonomy and service delivery in Nigeria, highlighting various dimensions such as fiscal decentralization, political interference, administrative capacity, and citizen engagement.

Oviasuyi, Idada, and Isiraojie (2010) conducted a study on Constraints of Local Government Administration in Nigeria. The study focused on how constitutional, financial, and political challenges have limited the performance of local governments in Nigeria. The researchers used a descriptive approach and found that state government interference, corruption, and lack of qualified personnel were major constraints to effective local governance and service delivery. The study, while relevant, is slightly dated and did not provide updated data on the impact of recent reforms or interventions such as the Nigerian

Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) guidelines of 2019, which sought to improve fiscal autonomy for local councils.

Adeyemi (2018) examined the Challenges of Local Government Autonomy in Nigeria, using case studies from South-West states. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach, including key informant interviews and document analysis. The findings revealed that local governments lack full financial independence, with the State-Local Government Joint Account often serving as a tool for fiscal manipulation by state governors. While the study is relevant to the present research, it focused more on the legal and structural impediments to autonomy, without deeply engaging with how these constraints impact actual service delivery outcomes.

Ogunna (2019) studied Service Delivery in Local Government: A Nigerian Experience, employing surveys across several local councils in the South-East zone. The research identified that inadequate funding, low personnel capacity, and lack of autonomy were the primary causes of poor service delivery in sectors such as waste management, road maintenance, and primary healthcare. Although the study provides rich insights into service delivery challenges, it lacked focus on specific LGAs, and thus did not capture localized governance dynamics, such as those unique to Egor Local Government Area in Edo State.

Nwankwo and Eze (2020) investigated Political Interference and Local Government Performance in Enugu State. Their qualitative study found that political appointments, suspension of elected councils, and lack of administrative discretion by local officials contributed to inefficiencies and delays in service delivery. The study recommended strengthening institutional checks and depoliticizing local governance processes. However, the research was limited to the South-East region and did not account for inter-regional differences in the autonomy-service delivery relationship.

Oladipo and Adesanya (2021) in their research titled Fiscal Decentralization and Local Service Delivery in Nigeria used regression analysis to assess the relationship between local revenue capacity and the quality of public services in 15 LGAs across Lagos and Ogun states. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between local fiscal autonomy and quality of services in areas such as public health and primary education. Nonetheless, the study's emphasis on economic analysis left out political and administrative factors, which are also crucial to understanding autonomy in practice.

Uhunmwangho and Aigbe (2023) carried out a recent study on Local Governance and Service Delivery in Urban LGAs: The Case of Egor. Using a combination of community surveys and key informant interviews, the study found

that residents expressed dissatisfaction with services such as sanitation, public road maintenance, and access to primary health services. The research attributed these deficiencies to state-level bureaucratic bottlenecks and financial delays. However, the study concentrated mainly on citizens' perceptions and did not include institutional or legislative analyses, which are critical to explaining the root causes of limited autonomy in Egor LGA.

It was observed therefore that the above studies were related to the topic under study because they all focused on local governance, autonomy, and service delivery in the Nigerian context. However, many of them were geographically limited, generalized findings across regions, or lacked a comprehensive approach that integrates fiscal, political, and administrative dimensions within a specific case study framework. This research seeks to fill that gap by focusing on Egor Local Government Area from 2018 to 2024, thereby contributing current, localized, and multidimensional evidence to the existing body of knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable as it allows for the systematic gathering of data from respondents within Egor Local Government Area in order to assess the extent of local government autonomy and its impact on service delivery across the period under review (2018–2024). The descriptive survey design enables the researcher to explore and analyze the financial, administrative, and political independence of the local government, evaluate the efficiency of service delivery, and identify the constraints affecting both autonomy and service performance. The flexibility of this design makes it ideal for collecting views, experiences, and perceptions from various stakeholders through multiple sources of data.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study includes key stakeholders within Egor Local Government Area, such as local government officials, council staff, community leaders, and residents who directly experience the services provided by the local government. These individuals are critical informants as they possess firsthand

knowledge of the governance structure and service delivery in the area. According to estimates from the National Population Commission (2023), the population of Egor LGA is approximately 625,000.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A sample size of 150 respondents was selected for this study. The purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were employed to ensure that relevant stakeholders from different categories (e.g., local government officials, health workers, educators, market leaders, and residents) were represented. Stratification was done based on demographic groups and sectors of service delivery (health, education, infrastructure, and waste management). From each stratum, participants were randomly selected to avoid bias and enhance the reliability of the data.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The study will employ both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data will be generated through the administration of structured questionnaires and the conduct of in-depth interviews with selected key informants within Egor LGA. The questionnaires will be personally administered by the researcher to enhance

clarity, ensure proper understanding of the items, and improve the response rate. In-depth interviews will be conducted to elicit more nuanced perspectives and deeper insights into issues relating to autonomy and service delivery. Secondary data were sourced from official government reports, policy documents, journals, books, previous research, and credible online resources. These sources provided historical and contextual information relevant to the research objectives.

3.5 Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed using a four-point Likert scale format: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: **Section A** gathered demographic data such as age, gender, occupation, and years of residency or service. **Section B**; addressed the core aspects of the research questions, including financial autonomy, administrative structures, political independence, quality of services, and challenges encountered.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor. His inputs helped confirm the face and

content validity of the instruments. All corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test will be conducted with 15 participants from Oredo Local Government Area (a neighboring LGA not involved in the main study). Their responses were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha method to test the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained, indicating that the instrument is reliable for the study.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to address the research objectives. Tables and charts were used to present data clearly. In addition, inferential statistics such as the Chi-square test may be used to examine the relationship between local government autonomy and the quality of service delivery. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter deals with the analysis of data and presentation of findings based on the research questions raised to guide the study. The data were analyzed in Section A and B. Section A analyzed the demographic data of the respondents, while Section B analyzed data generated on the basis of the research questions and hypotheses.

4.1 Presentation of Results

4.1.1 Section A: Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender of Respondents	Male	68	45.3
	Female	82	54.7
	Total	150	100.0
Age of Respondents	18–30 years	32	21.3
	31–45 years	39	26.0
	46–60 years	39	26.0
	60 years and above	40	26.7
	Total	150	100.0
Occupation of Respondents	Local Government Staff	27	18.0
	Civil Servant	27	18.0
	Community Leader	32	21.3
	Private Sector Worker	41	27.3
	Others	23	15.3
	Total	150	100.0
Years of Residency in Egor LGA	Less than 5 years	45	30.0
	5–10 years	49	32.7
	Above 10 years	56	37.3
	Total	150	100.0
Years of Service in Egor LGA	Less than 5 years	52	34.7
	5–10 years	55	36.7
	Above 10 years	43	28.7
	Total	150	100.0

Table 1 shows that out of 150 respondents used in the study, 68 (45.3%) were males while 82 (54.7%) were females. In terms of age distribution, 32 (21.3%) were between 18–30 years, 39 (26.0%) were between 31–45 years, 39 (26.0%) were between 46–60 years, while 40 (26.7%) were 60 years and above. With respect to occupation, 27 (18.0%) were Local Government Staff, another 27 (18.0%) were Civil Servants, 32 (21.3%) were Community Leaders, 41 (27.3%) were Private Sector Workers, while 23 (15.3%) belonged to other occupations.

Regarding years of residency in Egor LGA, 45 (30.0%) had stayed for less than 5 years, 49 (32.7%) for 5–10 years, while 56 (37.3%) had lived there for more than 10 years. On years of service in Egor LGA, 52 (34.7%) had served for less than 5 years, 55 (36.7%) had served for 5–10 years, while 43 (28.7%) had been in service for more than 10 years.

4.1.2 Analysis of Research Question

Research Question One: What is the current level of financial, administrative, and political autonomy in Egor Local Government Area?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing the current level of autonomy in Egor Local Government Area

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	N	X	DECISION
1	Egor LGA has full control over its internally generated	40 (26.7)	41 (27.3)	36 (24.0)	33 (22.0)	150	2.59	Agree

	revenue (IGR).							
2	The local government receives adequate and timely allocations from the state and federal governments.	47 (31.3)	29 (19.3)	35 (23.3)	39 (26.0)	150	2.56	Agree
3	Egor LGA independently manages its administrative and staffing affairs.	40 (26.7)	29 (19.3)	40 (26.7)	41 (27.3)	150	2.45	Disagree
4	Political decisions at the LGA level are made without external interference from state authorities.	41 (27.3)	33 (22.0)	39 (26.0)	37 (24.7)	150	2.52	Agree
5	The LGA has sufficient autonomy to implement development projects.	69 (46.0)	53 (35.3)	25 (16.7)	3 (2.0)	150	3.25	Agree

Decision rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree, Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Table 2 reveals the respondents' assessment of the level of autonomy in Egor Local Government Area. Findings show that respondents agreed that Egor LGA has full control over its internally generated revenue ($\bar{X} = 2.59$), and that the local government receives adequate and timely allocations from higher levels of government ($\bar{X} = 2.56$). However, there was disagreement regarding the independent management of administrative and staffing affairs ($\bar{X} = 2.45$), suggesting external influences in this area.

On political autonomy, respondents agreed that political decisions are relatively free from state interference ($\bar{X} = 2.52$). The strongest agreement was on the LGA's autonomy to implement development projects ($\bar{X} = 3.25$), with nearly half (46.0%) strongly agreeing.

Overall, the results suggest that while Egor LGA enjoys reasonable financial and political autonomy, its administrative independence remains constrained.

Research Question Two: How effective is service delivery in key sectors within Egor LGA?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation showing the effectiveness of service delivery in Egor LGA

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	N	X	DECISION
1	Health facilities in Egor LGA are functional and accessible.	39 (26.0)	51 (34.0)	41 (27.3)	19 (12.7)	150	2.73	Agree
2	Public primary and secondary schools are well-funded and managed.	35 (23.3)	46 (30.7)	40 (26.7)	29 (19.3)	150	2.58	Agree
3	Roads and infrastructure within Egor LGA are adequately maintained.	36 (24.0)	50 (33.3)	44 (29.3)	20 (13.3)	150	2.68	Agree
4	Waste management services are timely and effective.	32 (21.3)	55 (36.7)	36 (24.0)	27 (18.0)	150	2.61	Agree
5	Residents are satisfied with the quality of services delivered by the local government.	38 (25.3)	45 (30.0)	44 (29.3)	23 (15.3)	150	2.65	Agree

Decision rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree, Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Table 3 presents respondents' assessment of service delivery across key sectors in Egor LGA. Findings indicate that respondents agreed that health facilities are functional and accessible ($\bar{X} = 2.73$). Similarly, public schools were perceived as fairly well-funded and

managed ($\bar{X} = 2.58$). Roads and infrastructure maintenance also received agreement ($\bar{X} = 2.68$).

Waste management services were rated as timely and effective ($\bar{X} = 2.61$), while residents' satisfaction with overall service delivery also fell within the agreement threshold ($\bar{X} = 2.65$).

Overall, the results suggest that service delivery in Egor LGA is viewed as moderately effective across health, education, infrastructure, waste management, and general satisfaction. However, the relatively moderate mean values (ranging from 2.58 to 2.73) indicate that while services are functional, there remains room for significant improvement in quality and consistency.

Research Question Three: What are the major challenges affecting local government autonomy and service delivery in Egor LGA?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation showing the major challenges affecting local government autonomy and service delivery in Egor LGA

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	N	X	DECISION
1	Political interference from the state government limits Egor LGA's autonomy.	60 (40.0)	64 (42.7)	22 (14.7)	4 (2.7)	150	3.20	Agree
2	Inadequate funding hampers service delivery in Egor LGA.	53 (35.3)	58 (38.7)	29 (19.3)	10 (6.7)	150	3.03	Agree
3	Corruption and mismanagement affect effective governance at the local level.	59 (39.3)	56 (37.3)	25 (16.7)	10 (6.7)	150	3.09	Agree
4	Poor staffing and lack	35	34	39	42	150	2.41	Disagree

	of trained personnel weaken service delivery.	(23.3)	(22.7)	(26.0)	(28.0)			
5	Lack of community participation reduces accountability in service delivery.	36 (24.0)	40 (26.7)	34 (22.7)	40 (26.7)	150	2.48	Disagree

Decision rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree, Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Table 4 highlights the key challenges affecting autonomy and service delivery in Egor LGA. The results show strong agreement that political interference from the state government significantly limits autonomy ($\bar{X} = 3.20$). Respondents also agreed that inadequate funding ($\bar{X} = 3.03$) and corruption/mismanagement ($\bar{X} = 3.09$) are major challenges confronting effective governance and service delivery.

However, the mean values indicate disagreement on whether poor staffing and lack of trained personnel ($\bar{X} = 2.41$) and lack of community participation ($\bar{X} = 2.48$) are critical challenges, as both fell below the decision threshold of 2.50.

Overall, the findings suggest that political interference, financial constraints, and corruption are the most pressing obstacles to autonomy and effective service delivery in Egor LGA, while issues of staffing and community participation are considered less significant by respondents.

Research Question Four: What strategies can be adopted to strengthen local government autonomy and enhance service delivery?

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation showing strategies to strengthen local government autonomy and enhance service delivery

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	N	X	DECISION
1	Granting full financial autonomy to LGAs will improve development outcomes.	69 (46.0)	52 (34.7)	16 (10.7)	13 (8.7)	150	3.18	Agree
2	Reducing state-level interference will strengthen LGA political autonomy.	55 (36.7)	69 (46.0)	20 (13.3)	6 (4.0)	150	3.15	Agree
3	Enhancing staff training and capacity building can improve service delivery.	61 (40.7)	50 (33.3)	31 (20.7)	8 (5.3)	150	3.09	Agree
4	Citizens' involvement in governance will enhance transparency and quality of service.	47 (31.3)	41 (27.3)	30 (20.0)	32 (21.3)	150	2.69	Agree
5	Strengthening anti-corruption measures at the local level is necessary for better service delivery.	54 (36.0)	53 (35.3)	32 (21.3)	11 (7.3)	150	3.00	Agree

Decision rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree, Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Table 5 presents respondents' views on strategies for strengthening local government autonomy and enhancing service delivery in Egor LGA. Respondents strongly agreed that granting full financial autonomy ($\bar{X} = 3.18$) and reducing state-level interference ($\bar{X} =$

3.15) would significantly improve autonomy and governance effectiveness. Similarly, enhancing staff training and capacity building was seen as a key strategy ($\bar{X} = 3.09$).

Citizens' involvement in governance was also considered important for improving transparency and accountability ($\bar{X} = 2.69$). In addition, strengthening anti-corruption measures at the local level was widely endorsed ($\bar{X} = 3.00$) as a means of ensuring more efficient service delivery.

Overall, the findings suggest that financial and political reforms, capacity building, citizen participation, and anti-corruption initiatives are crucial strategies for empowering local governments and improving development outcomes.

4.2 Analysis of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between local government autonomy and the quality of service delivery in Egor Local Government Area.

Table 6: Chi-square Test of Local Government Autonomy and Service Delivery in Egor LGA

Autonomy Indicators	Health Facilities χ^2 (p)	Education χ^2 (p)	Roads χ^2 (p)	Waste Mgmt χ^2 (p)	Resident Satisfaction χ^2 (p)	Decision
IGR control	4.340 (.888)	5.118 (.824)	1.523 (.997)	10.499 (.312)	4.808 (.851)	NS
Timely allocations	9.705 (.375)	4.649 (.864)	9.288 (.411)	4.670 (.862)	2.988 (.965)	NS
Staffing autonomy	4.530 (.873)	2.640 (.977)	9.266 (.413)	8.337 (.501)	8.304 (.504)	NS
Political independence	12.649 (.179)	3.845 (.921)	5.646 (.775)	8.423 (.492)	4.284 (.892)	NS
Development autonomy	6.190 (.721)	6.811 (.657)	16.301 (.061)	12.768 (.173)	8.083 (.526)	NS

(NS = Not Significant at $p > 0.05$; $df = 9$ for all tests)

The results in Table 6 indicate that all dimensions of local government autonomy (financial, administrative, and political) show no statistically significant relationship with the effectiveness of service delivery (health, education, infrastructure, waste management, and residents' satisfaction) in Egor LGA, as all p-values are greater than 0.05.

The only relationship that approached significance was between development autonomy and road maintenance ($\chi^2 = 16.301$, $df = 9$, $p = .061$), which suggests a possible link but still falls short of statistical significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is retained, meaning that within the scope of this study, local government autonomy does not significantly influence the quality of service delivery in Egor LGA.

Hypothesis Two: Financial autonomy has no significant effect on the effectiveness of service delivery in Egor LGA.

Table 7: Chi-square Test of Financial Autonomy and Service Delivery in Egor LGA

Financial Autonomy Indicators	Health Facilities χ^2 (p)	Education χ^2 (p)	Roads χ^2 (p)	Waste Mgmt χ^2 (p)	Resident Satisfaction χ^2 (p)	Decision
IGR Control	4.340 (.888)	5.118 (.824)	1.523 (.997)	10.499 (.312)	4.808 (.851)	NS
Timely Allocations	9.705 (.375)	4.649 (.864)	9.288 (.411)	4.670 (.862)	2.988 (.965)	NS

(NS = Not Significant at $p > 0.05$; $df = 9$ for all tests)

The results from Table 7 show that financial autonomy, measured by control over internally generated revenue (IGR) and timely allocations from higher tiers of government, does not significantly influence service delivery in Egor LGA.

For IGR control, the Chi-square tests across all service delivery indicators (health facilities: $\chi^2 = 4.340$, $p = .888$; education: $\chi^2 = 5.118$, $p = .824$; roads: $\chi^2 = 1.523$, $p = .997$; waste management: $\chi^2 = 10.499$, $p = .312$; residents' satisfaction: $\chi^2 = 4.808$, $p = .851$) were not statistically significant, indicating that variations in responses about IGR control are not strongly related to perceptions of service delivery.

Similarly, the results for timely allocations also showed no significant relationships (health facilities: $\chi^2 = 9.705$, $p = .375$; education: $\chi^2 = 4.649$, $p = .864$; roads: $\chi^2 = 9.288$, $p = .411$; waste management: $\chi^2 = 4.670$, $p = .862$; residents' satisfaction: $\chi^2 = 2.988$, $p = .965$).

Overall, these findings suggest that financial autonomy alone does not significantly affect the effectiveness of service delivery in Egor LGA. This implies that even when the local government generates or receives funds, other factors such as management efficiency, corruption, or political interference may play a stronger role in determining service delivery outcomes.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted: Financial autonomy has no significant effect on the effectiveness of service delivery in Egor LGA.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between local government autonomy and service delivery in Egor LGA.

Table 8: Chi-Square Test Results for Local Government Autonomy and Service Delivery in Egor LGA

Autonomy Indicators	Health Facilities χ^2 (p)	Education χ^2 (p)	Roads χ^2 (p)	Waste Mgmt χ^2 (p)	Resident Satisfaction χ^2 (p)	Decision
Staffing autonomy	4.530 (.873)	2.640 (.977)	9.266 (.413)	8.337 (.501)	8.304 (.504)	NS
Political independence	12.649 (.179)	3.845 (.921)	5.646 (.775)	8.423 (.492)	4.284 (.892)	NS
Development autonomy	6.190 (.721)	6.811 (.657)	16.301 (.061)	12.768 (.173)	8.083 (.526)	NS

NS = Not Significant (p > 0.05)

The results from the table above indicate that none of the autonomy indicators had a statistically significant effect on service delivery outcomes in Egor LGA, as all p-values were greater than 0.05.

For instance, staffing autonomy did not significantly affect the functionality of health facilities ($\chi^2 = 4.530$, $p = .873$), the management of schools ($\chi^2 = 2.640$, $p = .977$), road maintenance ($\chi^2 = 9.266$, $p = .413$), waste management services ($\chi^2 = 8.337$, $p = .501$), or residents' satisfaction with services ($\chi^2 = 8.304$, $p = .504$).

Similarly, political independence of the LGA was not significantly related to service delivery indicators, including education ($\chi^2 = 3.845$, $p = .921$), roads ($\chi^2 = 5.646$, $p = .775$), health services ($\chi^2 = 12.649$, $p = .179$), waste management ($\chi^2 = 8.423$, $p = .492$), and resident satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 4.284$, $p = .892$).

Development autonomy also did not significantly influence service delivery. Although the association with road maintenance ($\chi^2 = 16.301$, $p = .061$) was close to significance, it still remained above the 0.05 threshold, meaning the relationship was not statistically strong.

Overall, the findings suggest that local government autonomy alone does not guarantee improved service delivery in Egor LGA. Other structural factors, such as financial constraints, resource allocation, and institutional efficiency, may play a more decisive role in shaping service outcomes.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed that Egor Local Government Area enjoys a moderate level of autonomy across financial, administrative, and political dimensions. Respondents agreed that the LGA has control over its internally generated revenue and receives relatively timely allocations from higher levels of government. However, administrative independence, particularly in staffing and internal management, was rated low, reflecting persistent external influence from state authorities. These results align with the arguments of Olowu (2019), who observed that while Nigerian LGAs are constitutionally empowered to control finances, state-level interference often erodes their administrative capacity. Similarly, Adeyemi (2018) emphasized that the implementation of local projects is often subject to state oversight, limiting true autonomy. The high mean score for development autonomy in this study suggests that Egor LGA may still retain some discretion in executing local projects, but this is tempered by broader institutional constraints.

Research question two showed that service delivery in Egor LGA is rated as moderately effective across key sectors. Health facilities, education, road infrastructure, waste management, and general satisfaction all scored slightly above the acceptance threshold,

with mean values ranging between 2.58 and 2.73. This indicates that while services are functional, their quality remains modest. These findings are consistent with Nwachukwu and Nwafor (2020), who found that local governments in Nigeria typically provide only basic services due to financial and institutional challenges. The results also align with Agba et al. (2019), who noted that service delivery at the grassroots level is often undermined by weak governance, corruption, and lack of accountability. Although Egor LGA appears to perform relatively well in keeping basic services operational, the moderate ratings suggest that residents still experience gaps in quality, reliability, and inclusiveness of service provision.

The findings of research question three highlighted political interference, inadequate funding, and corruption/mismanagement as the most critical challenges facing Egor LGA. Respondents strongly agreed that these factors limit autonomy and weaken service delivery. Conversely, staffing shortages and lack of community participation were not viewed as major constraints. This result echoes Ezeani (2012), who argued that political interference by state governments represents the most significant impediment to the effectiveness of Nigerian local governments. Likewise, Adeyemo (2017) found that the joint allocation system enables state governments to exercise excessive control over local funds, often leading to mismanagement and diversion. The fact that respondents did not perceive staffing or participation as severe problems suggests that structural issues of governance and finance take precedence over human resource limitations.

Research question four emphasized strategies to strengthen autonomy and service delivery. Respondents strongly endorsed granting full financial autonomy, reducing state-level interference, and enhancing staff training and capacity building as critical reforms. They also highlighted citizen participation in governance and stronger anti-corruption mechanisms as key interventions. These findings mirror recommendations by Arowolo (2020), who stressed that fiscal and political reforms are prerequisites for effective grassroots governance. The emphasis on anti-corruption measures also resonates with Adeyemi (2018), who observed that even when resources are available, weak accountability mechanisms often prevent meaningful improvements in service delivery. Together, these strategies suggest a holistic approach where both structural reforms and community-based accountability mechanisms are necessary for stronger governance. The test of hypotheses further reinforced these observations. Hypothesis one revealed no significant statistical relationship between local government autonomy and service delivery, with p-values exceeding 0.05 across all autonomy indicators. The only near-significant result was between development autonomy and road maintenance ($\chi^2 = 16.301$, $p = .061$), which hints at a possible but weak relationship. This outcome is consistent with findings by Olowu (2019), who noted that the mere existence of autonomy does not guarantee better service delivery unless accompanied by effective management and resource utilization.

Hypothesis two, focusing on financial autonomy, also showed no significant association between financial independence (through IGR control or timely allocations) and service

delivery outcomes. This aligns with Agba et al. (2019), who argued that while financial resources are important, their impact is often diluted by corruption, poor planning, and political interference. The findings suggest that financial autonomy in isolation cannot drive improvements in service delivery without strong institutional frameworks.

Hypothesis three confirmed that administrative, political, and development autonomy had no significant influence on service delivery. This reinforces the idea that autonomy alone is insufficient for development outcomes. Instead, complementary factors such as institutional capacity, transparency, and accountability must be in place. As Adeyemo (2017) observed, autonomy without governance reforms often leads to inefficiency, as resources may be captured by elites rather than directed toward community needs.

Generally, the findings suggest that Egor LGA enjoys partial autonomy and delivers basic services at a modest level, but governance challenges particularly political interference, corruption, and financial dependence continue to undermine effectiveness. The lack of significant relationships between autonomy and service delivery underscores the argument that autonomy, while important, must be matched with capacity, transparency, and accountability for genuine improvements to occur.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusion, and recommendations arising from the findings.

5.1 Summary

This study investigated the relationship between local government autonomy and service delivery in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study, and three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of residents and stakeholders within Egor LGA, while the sample size comprised 150 respondents drawn across different demographic groups, including local government staff, civil servants, community leaders, private sector workers, and other categories. A structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection, divided into sections covering demographic information, perceptions of local government autonomy, effectiveness of service delivery, challenges, and strategies for improvement. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha, and data collected were analyzed using mean (\bar{X}), standard deviation (SD), and Chi-square tests with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The major findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Respondents agreed that Egor LGA has some degree of financial autonomy, as it controls its internally generated revenue and receives timely allocations from higher tiers of government. Political autonomy was also acknowledged, particularly in the area of implementing development projects. However, administrative autonomy, especially in staffing and internal management, was considered weak due to external interference.
2. Service delivery in Egor LGA was rated as moderately effective across health, education, infrastructure, waste management, and overall resident satisfaction. While services were functional, the relatively moderate mean values indicated significant room for improvement in terms of quality, consistency, and sustainability.
3. Political interference from the state government, inadequate funding, and corruption/mismanagement emerged as the most critical challenges undermining both autonomy and service delivery. Staffing and lack of community participation were not considered significant challenges by respondents.
4. Respondents strongly endorsed granting full financial autonomy, reducing state interference, enhancing staff training and capacity building, promoting citizen participation in governance, and strengthening anti-corruption measures as effective strategies to improve autonomy and service delivery.
5. Results from Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between local government autonomy and the effectiveness

of service delivery in Egor LGA. Financial, administrative, and political autonomy, when tested against service delivery indicators, all returned p-values greater than 0.05. The only association that approached significance was between development autonomy and road maintenance ($p = .061$), which still fell short of statistical significance.

In summary, the study found that while Egor LGA enjoys some degree of financial and political autonomy and provides moderately effective services, systemic issues such as state interference, financial constraints, and corruption continue to weaken governance outcomes. Autonomy alone does not significantly guarantee effective service delivery without addressing these underlying structural challenges.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that local government autonomy in Egor LGA is partial and uneven across financial, administrative, and political dimensions. While some progress has been made in financial and political independence, administrative autonomy remains constrained, largely due to state-level interference.

Service delivery in key sectors is functional but only moderately effective, indicating that citizens' expectations are not fully met. The persistence of political interference, financial inadequacies, and corruption significantly undermines governance effectiveness.

The hypothesis testing confirmed that autonomy alone does not directly translate to improved service delivery in Egor LGA. Instead, institutional efficiency, resource management, and accountability mechanisms appear to play stronger roles in shaping

outcomes. Therefore, strengthening local government performance requires a holistic approach that integrates financial reforms, administrative independence, anti-corruption initiatives, and citizen engagement.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The federal and state governments should implement constitutional provisions guaranteeing full financial independence of local governments, including direct allocation of funds and authority over internally generated revenue.
2. State governments should limit undue interference in the administrative and political processes of local governments. Institutional reforms should be pursued to safeguard the independence of local decision-making.
3. Local governments should be empowered to independently recruit, train, and manage staff. Regular capacity-building programs should be organized to improve staff efficiency and service delivery competence.
4. Strong anti-corruption frameworks and transparent financial management systems should be enforced at the local government level. This should include independent auditing mechanisms, community oversight, and the adoption of digital platforms for revenue tracking and expenditure monitoring.
5. Local governments should adopt participatory governance approaches that actively involve citizens in planning, decision-making, and monitoring of

development projects. Town hall meetings, public consultations, and feedback channels can enhance accountability and trust.

6. Targeted investments should be made in critical service areas such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and waste management. Emphasis should be placed not only on access but also on sustainability and quality of services provided.
7. Strengthening autonomy must go hand-in-hand with broader governance reforms. Financial independence without administrative competence or accountability structures will not yield the desired outcomes.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

In the course of this study, certain gaps and limitations emerged which future researchers may address:

1. This study was limited to Egor Local Government Area. Future studies could adopt a comparative approach across multiple LGAs in Edo State or across different states in Nigeria to better understand variations in autonomy and service delivery.
2. Since this research used a cross-sectional survey design, it captured only a snapshot in time. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to assess changes in autonomy and service delivery over time.
3. This study relied primarily on quantitative methods (mean, standard deviation, and chi-square). A qualitative or mixed-methods approach involving interviews, focus group discussions, or case studies could provide deeper insights into the

lived experiences of staff, community leaders, and residents regarding autonomy and governance.

4. While this study examined service delivery broadly (health, education, infrastructure, waste management), future studies could focus on specific sectors such as healthcare or education to assess how autonomy influences outcomes in these critical areas.
5. Since corruption emerged as a major challenge, further studies could specifically evaluate the effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms at the local government level in improving governance and service delivery.
6. Although community participation was not rated as a major challenge in this study, its potential importance in ensuring accountability and effective service delivery should be explored in future research.

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AND SERVICE DELIVERY
IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA OF EDO STATE 2018-2024

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

REQUEST FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE

I am an undergraduate Student of the above-mentioned Department and University. As part of the programme, I am presently conducting a research on the topic “*Local Government Autonomy and Service Delivery in Nigeria: A Case Study Of Egor Local Government Area Of Edo State 2018-2024*”. This questionnaire is therefore designed to collect the relevant data for the study. Your response to the questions will not be used for any other purpose other than the one stated above.

Furthermore, you are kindly requested to respond as sincerely as possible to all questions as stated in the questionnaire. Please, tick (✓) in the space provided in the most appropriate column on each of the item.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Deborah Osarunamen OSEMWOTA
Researcher

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please tick (✓) the appropriate response.

Gender: Male [] Female []

Age: 18–30 [] 31–45 [] 46–60 [], 60 and above []

Occupation:

Local Government Staff [], Civil Servant [], Community Leader
[]

Private Sector Worker []

Other (please specify): _____

Years of Residency in Egor LGA:

Less than 5 years [] 5–10 years [] Above 10 years []

Years of Service in Egor LGA:

Less than 5 years [] 5–10 years [] Above 10 years []

SECTION B

Please indicate the extent at which you agree to the following items in the table.
Please tick [√] appropriately.

KEY: Strongly Agree = SA; Agree = A; Disagree = D; and Strongly Disagree = SD

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
RQ1	Financial, Administrative, and Political Autonomy in Egor LGA				
1	Egor LGA has full control over its internally generated revenue (IGR).				
2	The local government receives adequate and timely allocations from the state and federal governments.				
3	Egor LGA independently manages its administrative and staffing affairs.				
4	Political decisions at the LGA level are made without external interference from state authorities.				
5	The LGA has sufficient autonomy to implement development projects.				
RQ2	Effectiveness of Service Delivery in Key Sectors				
6	Health facilities in Egor LGA are functional and accessible.				
7	Public primary and secondary schools are well-funded and managed.				
8	Roads and infrastructure within Egor LGA are adequately maintained.				
9	Waste management services are timely and effective.				
10	Residents are satisfied with the quality of services delivered by the local government.				
RQ3	Challenges Affecting Autonomy and Service Delivery?				
11	Political interference from the state government limits Egor LGA's autonomy.				
12	Inadequate funding hampers service delivery in Egor LGA.				
13	Corruption and mismanagement affect effective governance				

	at the local level.				
14	Poor staffing and lack of trained personnel weaken service delivery.				
15	Lack of community participation reduces accountability in service delivery.				
RQ4	Strategies for Improving Autonomy and Service Delivery				
16	Granting full financial autonomy to LGAs will improve development outcomes.				
17	Reducing state-level interference will strengthen LGA political autonomy.				
18	Enhancing staff training and capacity building can improve service delivery.				
19	Citizens' involvement in governance will enhance transparency and quality of service				
20	Strengthening anti-corruption measures at the local level is necessary for better service delivery.				