



ISSUES IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY IN ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria, a country with a rich cultural heritage and diverse population, has adopted a federal system of government. Federalism, characterized by the division of power between the central government and various levels of local governments, aims to balance national unity with autonomy. This study examines the effectiveness of personnel management in service delivery within the context of Nigerian federalism and local government autonomy in Adamawa State. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, data was collected using structured questionnaires from a sample of 399 participants across three senatorial zone: Ganye, Yola North, and Mubi North. The study aimed to explore the current status of local government autonomy, its influencing factors, and the challenges faced by local governments under the federal system. Key findings indicate that while local governments possess some degree of autonomy, this is significantly affected by the division of powers, political and administrative environments, and the legal framework. Major challenges include financial constraints, lack of qualified personnel, political interference, and inadequate accountability mechanisms. The study concludes that effective local governance is contingent upon a well-calibrated federal structure that balances national unity with local empowerment. Recommendations include legal reforms, increased financial allocations, capacity-building initiatives, stronger accountability mechanisms, and streamlined administrative processes to enhance local government autonomy and service delivery.

Keywords: *Federalism, Local Government, Autonomy*

1.1 Background to the study

Nigeria, a country with a rich cultural heritage and diverse population, has adopted a federal system of government since its independence in 1960. Federalism, characterized by the division of power between the central government and various levels of local governments, aims to balance national unity with autonomy. Within this framework, local government autonomy plays a crucial role in ensuring effective governance at the grassroots level (Agba, 2019). Local government autonomy refers to the ability of local governments to make their own decisions and manage their own affairs within the framework of national laws and regulations.

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It is considered essential for effective governance at the grassroots level, allowing local communities to address their specific needs and preferences. Proponents of local government autonomy argue that it promotes accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to local needs, contributing to improved service delivery and overall development (Egbuta, 2018).

One of the criticisms against the Nigeria federal system of government is the fact that it has not been able to consolidate on the various features of federalism. In a federal system of government, political power is shared between the central or federal government and the constituent units that compose the federal union. The component units of the federation should be autonomous at least, to a significant degree. There is a lot of hue and cry because of the lack of autonomy of local government in Nigeria (Tonwe, 2018). This has formed a basis for serious agitations for constitutional amendments to grant autonomy to the local governments. The argument is that, the notion of true federalism is predicated upon the autonomy of all the component units within a federating state (Idama, 2017).

It is rather paradoxical that the foundation for a democratic, freestanding, autonomous local government system in the Nigerian federation was laid by the Military, a form of government usually noted for undemocratic rule. While the various Military governments in Nigeria were accused of distorting the federal balance in favor of the central government (centralization), it is ironical that most of these Military regimes gave considerable attention to decentralization through local governments, local democracy and autonomy (Achimugu, 2013). Before the issuance of 1976 Local Government Reform Guidelines, a reform generally acknowledged to be the legal foundation for the so-called third tier status of local government in Nigeria, local government control had been state-dominated. Though the three pre-Independence federating units in Nigeria - the three Regions - had desired from the 1950s to establish democratic local governments, it is generally agreed that these Regions had strong grip on the control of local governments for varying political reasons.

This practice of regional dominance was inherited by the states after subsequent state creation exercises in 1963, 1967, 1975, 1976, 1991 and 1996. The 1976 reforms were aimed at creating a uniform practice of local government in the federating units, and, more importantly sought to sever “the extra strong controlling hands of the state governments on local governments”. Commenting on the objectives of the reforms remarked that “what distinguished the 1976 reforms from all previous reform exercises in the country is the formal and unequivocal recognition of local government as constituting a distinct level of government with defined boundaries, clearly stated functions and provisions for ensuring adequate human and financial resources.” The reform is seen as elevating the local government to the status of the third tier of government (Ola and Tonwe, 2009).

The key points of this third tier status noted are; Local government should become a legal entity distinct from the state and federal government, Local government should be administered by democratically elected officials, Local government should have specific powers to perform a range of functions assigned it by law, Local government should enjoy substantial autonomy to perform array of functions, plan, formulate and execute its own policies, programmes and projects, and its own rules and regulations as deemed for its local needs (Tomislav, 2018). This autonomy includes power to control its finance, recruit and discipline its

staff However, the extent of realizing these intentions, which was later transcribed into the 1979 Constitution and subsequent editions of the Nigerian Constitution, is generally agreed to be very low. These studies provide various reasons for the poor performance of the local governments in Nigeria, including the reasons of lack of autonomy and democracy. Issues of corruption, lack of financial and human capacity, constitutional inadequacies, confusion and complexities. The challenge of conflicting constitutional provisions, political instability and financial/fiscal problems (Amah, 2016). The constitutional recognition or the third-tier status leads to inflexibility that constrains dynamism and adaptability necessary for effective local government; the problem of poor management and corruption. Most of these studies also underscore the issue of lack of autonomy and local democracy. Local governments suffer from constant whittling down of their powers by the state governments. The excessive control of some local governments by the states has reduced them to local administration or local arms of state administration.

The broad objective of the study is to examine Nigeria Federalism and local government autonomy in Nigeria, with a focus on some selected local government areas of Adamawa State. However, the specific objectives are to assess the current status of local government autonomy within the federal framework in Adamawa State, to identify the factors influencing the level of local government autonomy in Adamawa State, to analyze the implications of federalism on the effectiveness of local governance in Adamawa State, to evaluate the challenges faced by local governments in Adamawa State in exercising autonomy under the federal system, and to propose recommendations for enhancing local government autonomy within the federal framework in Adamawa State.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

This chapter focused on the review related literature and theoretical framework on the subject matter of the study. The work of different scholars were analyzed and discussed with relation to the phenomenon. Thematic review was used, it offers a powerful tool for uncovering trends, patterns, and connections within diverse data sets, especially qualitative information. They allow for deep dives into specific topics, facilitate comparisons and contrasts, and are flexible and adaptable to emerging themes. This fosters innovation, creativity, and ultimately leads to engaging presentations and informed conclusions.

2.1.1 Conceptual Clarification

2.1.1.1 The Concept of Autonomy

The concept of autonomy has its roots in the liberal conception of democracy, that is, government by the people at the grassroots. According to this conception, power belongs to the people (popular sovereignty) and those who exercise power do so on behalf of the people (consent of the governed). The nexus between the operationalization of the concept of “popular sovereignty” and the realization of the “consent of the governed” is found in the concept of autonomy or what Dudley (1982) calls, “the area or division of power”. Local government autonomy is thus perceived as grassroots democracy or local self-government.

Okudolo and Onah (2019), autonomy means that each government enjoys a separate existence and independence from the control of the other governments. This means that autonomy would only be meaningful if there are no constitutional requirements for each level of government to accept dictation or directive from another. On his part, Oyedele et al., (2017) asserts that, local autonomy is primarily concerned with the question of responsibilities, resources and discretion conferred on the local authorities as such discretion and responsibility are at the core of local government. The notion of local autonomy here as opined by Adeyemo (2005) is that, local government must possess the power to take decisions independent of external control within the limits of the law. It must gather efficient resources, especially, finance to meet its responsibilities. In other words, local autonomy provides the freedom or independence in clearly defined issue or areas as well as separate legal identity from other levels of government (Usman and Erunke, 2012).

2.1.1.2 Revenue

Okudolo and Onah, (2019), describes revenue as the total income generated from federal, state and local government. He states further that what makes local government a constitutional matter is the revenue sharing perspectives. Enemu, (1999) describes revenue as an income or funds raised to meet the expenditure. He states further that revenue is a raising resources needed to provide government services. He also states that there are two aspect of finance - Income and Expenditure. In other words, finance encompasses both the sources of fund and its utilization. Specifically, Oyedele et al., (2017) defines revenue as all tools of income to government such as taxes, rates, fees, fines, duties, penalties, rents, dues, proceeds and other receipt of government to which the legislature has the power of appropriation. He further classifies government revenue into two kinds - recurrent revenue and capital revenue.

2.1.1.3 The Concept of Local Government

The concept of local government as observed by Ikeanyibe, (2016) involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the governing process at the grassroots level. This implies legal and administrative decentralization of authority, power and personnel by a higher level of government to a community with a will of its own, performing specific functions as within the wider national framework. There are various definitions of local government by scholars and practitioners or administrators alike observed by Ezeani (2006).

A local government according to Diejomaoh and Eboh, (2010) is a government at the grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar grassroots need of the people. Akinboye and Anifowose, (1999) defined it as a government by the popularly elected bodies charged with administrative and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place. Lawal (2000) also defined local government as that tier of government closest to the people, which is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of the people in its domain. Diseko, (2014) defined local government as a unit of government below the central, or state government established by law to exercise political authority through a representative council within a defined area.

Local Government is usually the tier of government that is closest to the people and vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people within its domain. Some forms of Local Government exist in most nations of the world except that the system differs from one nation to another. In some countries, local government exist as deconcentrated units while in others, they are seen as devolution. Such characterization is based on the amount of power they exercise over their human, financial and material resources. Local Government as deconcentrating can be described according to Jacob et al., (2018) as, “a subunit of government controlled by a local council which is authorized by the central government to pass ordinance having a local application, levy local taxes and exact labour within limits specified by the central government, vary centrally decided policy in applying it locally.” Further, as a devolution Lobao, (2016) describe Local Government as, “the legal conferring of powers to discharge specified or residual functions upon formally constituted authorities” (Adeyemo, 2005).

2.1.1.4 Federalism

Federalism is a type of political system in which the powers of government are shared between self-governing units and the central or national government. The extent of power to each of these components is stipulated by the constitution. Awa (1976) defines, federalism as the distribution of power between the inclusive government and the federating units.

Finer (1970) on his part view a federal state as one in which parts of the authority and power is vested in the local areas while another part is vested in a central institution deliberately constituted by an association of the local areas. A definition that is of critical essence to this paper is provided by Gamer cited in Mazi-Mbah (2008) who defines federal governments as that form of government in which sovereignty or political power is divided between the central and the local government so that each of them within its own sphere is independent of others. It is obvious from the above definitions that federalism brings governments together.

2.1.2 Models of Federalism: Power Allocation and Intergovernmental Relations

Despite so much discussion on the concept of federalism, there is no settled common denominator (Gamper, 2005). Part of the difficulty in conceptualizing federalism is the existence of variety of political arrangements today described as such. It has become a valued governmental structure to achieve multiple objectives within polities. Those who value a federal system today do so for some mix of three prominent reasons: i) it encourages efficient allocation of national resources, ii) fosters political participation and a sense of democratic community and, iii) helps to protect basic freedoms and liberties (Inman and Rubinfeld, 1997).

Seeking to realize these key objectives has moved the concept of federalism further from the classic idea of power sharing between two levels of government (Wheare, 1947; Dicey, 1959) - the associating states, and the newly formed state to the idea of federalism as arrangements that include local governments in the distribution of political power or what has come to be popularly known as three-tier federal structure.

Steytler (2005) documents that the first federal constitutions of the modern era did not include local government as an order of government. The Constitution of the United States of 1787 was silent on the

matter, as was the Swiss Constitution of 1848. In the Canadian Constitution of 1867, local government was mentioned only as a provincial field of competence. The Australian Federal Constitution of 1901, being silent on the matter, had the same effect - making local government a creature of state power.

Gibson (2004) observes that 'federalization' today has meant a process of political decentralization that has given greater protagonism to sub-national governments and has redistributed power and resources between levels of government. The relevant question remains whether the local government level can be equal partner as units in a federal contract? How does the status of local government as third tier government affect the power relations between the union government and the middle tier federating units? Some scholars, (Gamper, 2005), believe that municipalities cannot generally become equal "third" partners within the federal system despite the fact that they are very much affected by the federal operative system such as the impetus for fiscal distribution. One obvious reason given by Gamper for his conviction is that they usually do not partake in legislative power-sharing which is essential to the policy-making power of the constituent units of a federal system.

Ayeni (1994) also remarks that three-tier federalism is impossible to define in a consistent manner. He proceeds from this to argue that its utility in Nigerian federal structure has been to centralize the Nigerian state rather than in furthering the idea of local governance. Basically, two fundamental classifications can be made of various theories of federalism, viz the institutional or constitutional (dualistic theories) and the integrative (monistic theories) (Akinde'le and Olaopa, 2003).

The institutional/constitutional theorists believe that federalism depicts a form of government that embodies certain institutional and constitutional features. A variant of this group of theories perceives federalism as nothing but a bargain. It is purely a legalistic and political conceptualization of federalism. Among scholars in this class are pioneer theorists like K.C. Wheare who is regarded as the father of modern federalism and Elazar (1987) who conceptualizes federalism as a covenant in which the constituent units are equals 'who come together freely and retain their respective integrities even as they are bound in a common whole. Wheare (1964) has conceived a number of principles which define a federation. These are:

- i. The division of governmental responsibilities between levels of government.
- ii. A written constitution spelling out this division and from which federal and state authorities derive their powers.
- iii. A judiciary independent of both levels of government that acts as an arbiter in cases where there are conflicts over the jurisdictions enumerated in (1) above.
- iv. The federal arrangement emphasizing co-equal supremacy of the various levels each "in its respective field of operation.
- v. the citizens of the federation being concurrently under two authorities and owing loyalties to them.

While the institutional theory does not expressly state it, it does presume that federations are usually made up of two levels, namely, the newly formed political entity and the various 'equal' units coming together to

form the new political organization. Hence, most scholars of this tradition often refer to two levels of government. This is why the model is often referred to as the dual model of federalism in which each level of government, national and state, is supreme within its sphere of influence; neither level is dominant and neither level should intervene in the affairs of the other (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2002).

Thus, traditionally the constitutional or institutional theory recognizes only two tiers of government in a federation. Even though the model underscores the importance of constitutionalisation, it is not obvious that local governments could be equal parties of the federating units, despite their constitutionalisation. At least their coequal supremacy in their respective field of operations is not guaranteed. For instance, in the Nigerian case, their existence is to be guaranteed by the laws of state government (Section 7, 1999 Constitution). Indeed, most unitary states have as well started to enshrine provisions about the nature of local governments in the constitution. Thus while the idea of third tier status of local government emanate from the practice of including the powers and other features of the local government in the constitution, it has not been adequate to establish their autonomy as much as a federating unit.

The alternative theoretical bent in explaining federalism is the sociological model anchored on the diverse socio-political make-up of a country and the diversities within. It has variants in the process and functional models. The theory basically explains federalism as a tool or instrument for managing diversity and ensuring the self-expression or the autonomy of a unit that is sociologically different from others within a polity. The theory is regarded as monistic because the emphasis is not in dualistic sharing of powers but in recognition of diversities of any sociopolitical system.

Among the foremost theorists of the sociological or monistic theory is Livingstone (1971) who explains federalism as a device by which the federal qualities of a society are articulated and protected. The federal qualities consist in various forms of diversity and multiple loyalties to which people of a federal state are prone to. Scholars in this category argue that federalism goes beyond the simple division of legislative powers or arrangement of institutions. Livingstone for instance avers that the essential nature of federalism is to be sought for not in the shading of legal and constitutional terminology but in the forces of economic, social, political and cultural (systems) that have made the outward forms of federalism necessary. The essence of federalism lies not in the institutional or constitutional structure, but in the society itself. A federal government is merely a device by which the federal qualities of society are articulated and protected (Livingstone, 1971).

While paying attention to qualities that can make a country consider a federal arrangement, this model apparently fails to address the issue of tier system and the configuration in which the sociological qualities could be recognized in a federal structure. On the surface, one can adduce that Livingstone's conception does not contradict the essentials of the dualistic model, but rather emphasizes those factors (federal qualities of a society) that make power division inevitable. The federalizing procedure (legal or constitutional sharing of powers) advocated by the institutional or constitutional theorists therefore seems to be central to the idea of federalism Steytler (2005). However, Steytler (2005) observes that the practice of constitutionalisation of local government is a new phenomenon, beginning only after the Second War with Germany as the first country to do so in 1949. Nigeria's Second Republic constitution of 1979

recognized the local government as third tier level government, so has the 1999 constitution under which the present fourth democratic dispensation was initiated. Many countries today including both federal and unitary ones make constitutional provisions regarding the nature, functions and finance of local governments as a ploy to provide guaranteed autonomy and local power devolution that goes beyond the wishes or laws of higher-level governments. But there is no end yet to scholarly debate on the value of this practice especially in federal systems (Gboyega, 2001).

2.1.3 Constitutional Framework for Democratic and Autonomous Local Government in Nigeria

The 1976 Guidelines for Local Government Reforms was designed to end extensive experimentation with different theories and patterns of local government by various state governments (Isa, 2016). Agranoff, (2006) underscores some of the significances of the reforms:

- i. It is the first time in the political history of Nigeria when the federal government initiated local government reform for all the state governments in Nigeria;
- ii. A uniform system was introduced for all the states of the federation;
- ii. Local governments started to be recognised as a third tier of government, with its attendant implications;
- iv. The articulation and institutionalization of the nature of local government expected, including local democracy, number, names, functions, funding etc.
- v. Institutionalization of statutory allocations to local governments.

Keuffer, (2018) describes the 1976 reform guidelines as the first bold attempt at realizing the national objective of unity and integration as envisaged by the federal government, which also hoped by so doing to protect the system from the states' stifling controls. The provisions of 1976 reforms were transcribed into the 1979 Constitution used by the military to midwife the Second Democratic Republic (1979 to 1983) and thereafter retained in subsequent editions of 1989 and 1999. Some key provisions concerning the local government system as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution include:

- i. Establishment of democratically elected Local Government Councils (LGCs) in chapter one, Part II, Section 7)
- ii. Provisions of a complex procedure for creating new local governments by both the State House of Assembly and the National Assembly (section 8:3:5:6)
- iii. Provision of names of states and their local governments (Part I and II of the First Schedule) making it difficult to create local governments without constitutional amendments;
- iv. Provision of basic functions for the local governments in the Fourth Schedule.
- v. Provision that Statutory Allocation from the Federation Account shall be made to the local government and details of how this should be made by the National Assembly through the State Joint Local Government Account (162: 3,5,6).

- vi. Provision that each state shall pay to LGCs in its area of jurisdiction such proportions of its total revenue on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly (162:7);
- vii. Provision that amount standing to the credit of LGCs of a State shall be distributed among the LGCs on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of the State (162:8)

From the above, it can be observed that constitutional democratically elected LGCs and relative financial and administrative autonomy are provided for the „local governments and protected in such a way that their existence, names, type of government to be established (democracy), funding and so on derive from the Constitution, rather than another level of government as Agunyi et al., (2013) stipulates that parties to a federal arrangement should. Nonetheless, the implication has been some kind of ambivalence in the control of local governments that manifests the underlying centripetal and centrifugal tensions between the federal and state forces in Nigerian federalism. For instance, while the constitution provides for the existence of “democratically elected local government”, the onus of realising this lies with the state legislation since it provides that “the government of every, state shall...ensure their existence under a law” (Sect. 7).

Similarly, though states are empowered to create new local governments (Sect. 8,3), the National Assembly has to “make consequential provisions with respect to the names and headquarters of State or Local government areas as provided in section 3 of this Constitution and in Parts I and II of the First Schedule to this Constitution” (sect 8, 5). Thus, in the case of creating new Local Governments by any state, the returns of such new local government should be made to the National Assembly and will necessarily lead to modification of the constitution (Ozman,2014).

Invariably, the constitutional provisions on local government clearly remove the local government system in Nigeria from being creations of the state governments. But this ploy has not led to the desired autonomy and local democracy (Yahaya, 1989). Therefore, why has the problem of abuse and disregard of such provisions by many state governments over the years been persistent in Nigeria despite opportunities to either modify or strengthen the provisions in subsequent revisions of the Nigerian Constitution? Why has the fate of local governments as third tier, freestanding democratically constituted level of government been uncertain for 30 years since the 1976 reforms that introduced it, in spite of consistent retention in subsequent Constitutions of the country? The next section attempts to show that the constitutionalisation of local government in Nigeria has only increased competitiveness between the federal and state governments (Benz and Broschek, 2013).

2.1.4 Constitutional and Divergence of Local Government practice in Nigeria

Disregarding constitutional provisions on establishing democratically elected councils and other guidelines on local government by the state governments has been a prominent feature of Nigeria’s democracy following the 1976 Reforms. The Second Republic provided the laboratory for testing the provisions of the 1976 local government reform as transcribed in the 1979 Constitution. Dellavalle, (2017) describes Nigeria’s Second Republic (1979 to 1983) as “a testing period in which the State and the Federal Government contested the control of Local Government Policy with each other.” Clear evidence of this

contest showed that “throughout the Second Republic no election was held into the Local Government Councils; only Sole Administrators were appointed” (Dellavalle, 2017).

Many of the states created local governments contrary to provisions that the bill creating local government should only be passed by the National Assembly. Allocations to local governments were cornered through the Joint Local Government Accounts, and states engaged in many other actions that subverted the autonomy of local governments. Enemu, (1999) describe the period as one in which the local governments were most neglected, abused, politicized and marginalized in the scheme of things in Nigeria. Indeed, State-Local relation constituted a major political turmoil that led to military takeover of government in December 1983. This was why the emergent Military Administration in the December 1983 coup d’etat, the Buhari-Idiagbon Military Junta, quickly set up the Ibrahim Dasuki Committee to look into the problems of local government administration and recommend solutions. The regime reversed most of the actions of state governments in the Second Republic such as creation of new local governments (Ibietan, 2011).

The succeeding Military Junta led by Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (1985 to 1993) more significantly continued with finding new ways of taming state dominance in the control of local government. Ogunna (1996) documents the following actions of the Federal Military Government under General Ibrahim Babangida:

- i. Abolishment of State Ministries of Local Governments
- ii. Increase in the statutory allocations to local government from the Federation Account and from state internally generated revenue;
- iii. Introduction of the Presidential system of government with full separation of powers with elected chairman as the head of the executive arm and elected legislative council of as the legislature as the uniform practice for all local governments in the country
- iv. Direct allocation of due local government federal allocations to Local Government Councils rather than through State Local Government Joint Accounts.

Thus, the various Military governments in the country had towed the line of concretizing the third-tier status of the local government. But concealed in this military paternalism for local democracy and autonomy was a more fundamental objective of tilting the power relations between the federal government and the federating units, which enables the federal government to appoint sole administrators to the local governments during military governments, conduct elections into the local governments during transitions, and roll out reforms of the system at will (Ibietan, 2011).

With the return to democratic rule in 1999, the contest between the federal and state government through outright neglect of constitutional provisions on local governments remerged. Cases of arbitrary creation of local governments without following the procedure for getting the bill passed by the National Assembly, refusal to conduct elections into local government councils, appointing various types of nondemocratic councils, and tampering with the allocations of local governments, have become the convention rather than

an exception. Lagos, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Enugu Ebonyi and Kastina states for example, embarked on creating new local governments within the first four years of return to democratic rule. The celebrated case of Lagos state creation of new local governments between 2002 and 2004, which led to the withholding of federation allocation to the state's local governments by the Obasanjo Administration in 2006 provides a typical example of the controversial nature of dealing with local governments by high level governments (Lobao, 2016).

2.1.5 Theoretical Framework

Federalism represents a principle for the organization of decision-making in an association of groups of people within a nation state. The peculiarity of this association is that such groups are endowed with a special function in central decision making. Furthermore, the group possesses a relative autonomy that is constitutionally recognized. Thus, a federal system of government recognizes and respects the co-existence of concurrent governments with well-defined autonomy. Therefore, unlike Unitary States, the national government does not play any dominating role in its relationship with the other units of governance (Macmahon, 1962).

Federalism therefore, emphasizes the sharing of power in political system with each level of government exercising its power within constitutionally approved limit. It is commonly accepted today that an important characteristic of American Federalism (widely regarded as the model of modern Orthodox federalism) is the relative autonomy of the state to govern them; but this autonomy itself, governed by Constitutional limitations. Thus, a Federal system in the American sense of the world, allow for the constituents to articulate their dependent political will and at the same time participate in an ordered and permanent way in the formation of the central entity's will. In essence, the major distinctive characteristics of federalism are non-centralization (Cited in Lukman, 2008). Vincent Ostrom (1994) argues that the (American) federal system of government is characterized only by command and control but it is noted for providing multiple structures " that have reference to diverse methods of problem solving". The methods in question permit people within the society to achieve peaceful conflict resolutions. Even though, people have diverse interest, they pursue 'interdependent communities' interest". He argues from American experience that the federal style is such that people govern through the institutions which they put in place and not that any "government' governs. To Ostrom, this should be a reflection of a true democratic society and a society that practice federal system of government. With reference to Nigeria, we confirm that the structures reflecting alternative are being put in place from time to time to serve the interest of people, these institutions are expected to co-operate with each other. Federalism is essentially a mechanism for managing conflict in a multi-culture state between two types of national self - determination which guarantee security for all in the nation state on the one hand and self-determination of the component groups to retain their identities on the other hand. Also, a technique for managing conflict among heterogeneous group in a state through a system of constitutional division of power which provide for 'shared rule' while also allowing for 'self-rule' at the subnational level. He further stated that federalism, assures the delineation of powers between tiers of government that thus provide for 'shared rule' among the important units of the federation and also make provision for autonomy and 'self-rule' at the sub-national level as groups seek to protect their local identities.

Elaigwu, et al., (2005) looks at the pre-colonial antecedent of federalism in Nigeria and investigates the pattern of social and political organization of selected ethnic groups and the nature of inter-group relations that took place between them during this period with the view of making known those social forces which propelled us towards the adoption of a federal form of government. Also, went further into the root of Nigerian federalism by looking into the colonial period up till Nigeria's experience as a federation since its independence in 1960. Eliagwu also went into the exploration of the dynamics of federalism and intergovernmental relations and the machinery for inter-governmental relations as well as the problems of federalism in most countries. Williams Livingston (Cited in Eghosa,1994) looks beyond the narrow confines of legal formulations to the general systemic view and saw federalism as the product of interaction of socio-cultural and political factors. He explained that the essential nature of federalism is to be sought for not in the shading of legal and constitutional terminology out in the forces, economic, social, political and cultural that has made outward forms of federalism necessary. The essence of federalism lies not in the constitutional or institutional structure but in the society itself. Federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected. He distinguishes a federal constitution and a federal society which necessitates the federal constitution and federal constitution to him is the arrangement incorporating the federal cleavages which are patterned along geographical lines.

A federal society is thus, one with a plurality of ethnic groups with different historical, cultural and linguistic background but in which each ethnic group occupies a marked and distinct geographical location from the others. Federalism therefore, becomes a device for compromising unity and diversity. Livingston however emphasized the need for common political tradition if federalism is to survive (Cited in Eghosa, 1994).

According to Akinyemi (2004), federalism implies the existence of differences, that are perceived to be so fundamental as to have a capacity of blossoming into conflict, but which if properly handled, will not develop into irreconcilable conflict. He further stated that for federalism as a structural system to be considered, those in charge of the management of the system must perceive that there are differences among the groups enclosed by the system and they must perceive that these differences are not minuscule in nature as to pose very serious problems that could put in jeopardy the whole existence of the system. Also, they must perceive that if properly managed, this difference can be accommodated through the granting of sufficient autonomy and if preserved, the system will be beneficial to all parts of the system, not just a section of it. It is this mutuality of benefits that justify the expense, the energy and the frustrations incurred in operating the system.

Federalism provides a technique of constitutional organization that permits action by a shared government for certain common purpose, together with autonomous action by constituents' units of government for purpose that relate to maintaining their distinctiveness, with each level directly responsible to its own electorate. Indeed, taking account of such examples as Canada, the United States and Mexico in North America, Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina in South America, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain and Russia in Europe and Australia, India, Pakistan and Malaysia in Asia and Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa in Africa. Some 40 percent of the world's population today lives in countries that can be considered or claim to be federal and many of these federations are clearly multicultural or even multi-

national in their composition (Ronald, 1996). For the purpose of the study the power centered theory of federalism is employed for analysis in order to give more meaning to the facts that would be presented and further explains and present a systematic view of power sharing arrangement as well as the relations amongst and between the units of governance in a federal system of government.

The theory has come to assumed different meanings to different analysts and it founded upon the idea that the existing structure of societal conflict, consensus and resources can be organized. Usually into "two communities" to which citizens belong - the state (regional) or local and the federal (national) or central. A federal system is characterized by at least two pattern of communities One all-inclusive and the other composed of several mutually exclusive communities. The geographical nature of the community pattern, especially the location of boundaries among the sub-communities, and around the whole community are crucial to the federal system. To achieve unity in diversity and provide check and balance against the dominance and intrusion of either of the two communities each is provided with the government which is assumed to be distinct, independent or autonomous in matters of resources, acclaims or control of institutions.

However, the main focus of power centered theoretical postulation is on explaining where in most cases power resides in a federal system between central and state governments or to what they called balance of power approach. The latter postulation of balance of Power will be focus in this study, the conception advocates that power should be balancing among the autonomous units of governance because it allows parity. The exponent of the theory includes K.C. Where, John Taylor posited that federalism in a democratic society presupposes the law of equilibrium or almost equality of the federating units, that is, accepting neither one units/components becoming too powerful to dictate or dominate to the whole federation nor to the center becoming too strong to be able to dominate or superimposed its wishes on the other units.

Similarly, it can also be defined in terms of the division of Sovereignty within the state, the existence of independent and autonomous government within a single political system and a union of territorial communities. Therefore, federalism is seen as a device to curb the evil use of power by dividing them among a number of competing power units (federal, state, and local government). In other words, federalism encourages multiple centers of power. Nevertheless, federalism as a principle is primarily and exposes solution to the problem of governmental organization, especially in a diverse society, and is not only a principle but a methodology usually used in a diverse society in other to bring about what is called "limited union" aimed at providing limited unity. As a methodology of sharing power, it expresses a define and generally acceptable allocation of power first between the central government and the other federating units and then among the federating units and it actually a pragmatic methodology of organizing power and distributing power and resources in a diverse society. It also expressed in different ways in most cases with reference to historical content of the federal system that is being explained.

In a federation therefore, there are constant interaction between and among the different social aggregates on one hand and the different levels of government on the other hand. Each social aggregation or level of government (federal, state, and local) goes into interactive process with the primary objectives of ensuring

that the power game (allocation of resources and functions) does not play to its disadvantage especially the third tier and the lowest level of government in the maze of intergovernmental relations or existence towards the attainment of autonomy, grass root administration and development.

3.1 HYPOTHESES TESTING

H0₁: The current status of local government autonomy within the federal framework in Adamawa State is not characterized by adequate autonomy and broad decision-making powers.

3.1.1 Table: T-test analysis to test how characterized the current status of local government autonomy within the federal framework in Adamawa State is by adequate autonomy and broad decision-making powers.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Autonomy/broad decision-making	345	3.05	1.407	40.208	344	.000

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The results of the t-test analysis presented in Table 3.1.1 provide critical insights into the status of local government autonomy within the federal framework in Adamawa State. The hypothesis (H0₁) posited that the current status of local government autonomy is not characterized by adequate autonomy and broad decision-making powers. The findings, however, provide evidence to reject this null hypothesis, indicating that local government autonomy in Adamawa State is indeed characterized by a certain level of autonomy and decision-making capabilities.

The mean score for the variable "autonomy/broad decision-making" is 3.05, suggesting a moderate level of perceived autonomy and decision-making power among local governments. The standard deviation of 1.407 indicates some variability in the responses, reflecting diverse experiences and perceptions among the 345 respondents. Despite this variability, the mean score surpasses the neutral midpoint of 3.0, hinting that respondent, on average, recognize some degree of autonomy within the current framework.

H0₂: The level of local government autonomy in Adamawa State is not significantly influenced by the division of powers between the federal, state, and local governments, the adequacy of the legal framework, or the political and administrative environment.

3.1.2 Table: Regression Analysis to assess the influence of division of powers, the adequacy of the legal framework, and the political/administrative environment on the level of local government autonomy.

Variable	Coefficients	Std. Err.	Mean t	P-value
(Constant)	2.688	.287	9.361	.000
Division of Powers	.132	.052	2.552	.011
Political/Administrative environment	.112	.054	2.081	.038
Legal framework	-.110	.050	-2.192	.029
R ²	0.046			
R ² - Adjusted	0.038			
F-statistics	5.533			
P-Value	0.001			

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The regression analysis presented in Table 3.1.2 provides valuable insights into the factors influencing local government autonomy in Adamawa State. The null hypothesis (H₀) stated that the level of local government autonomy is not significantly influenced by the division of powers between different levels of government, the adequacy of the legal framework, or the political and administrative environment. However, the results of the analysis suggest that this hypothesis should be rejected.

The division of powers between the federal, state, and local governments emerges as a significant positive factor influencing local government autonomy. With a coefficient of 0.132 and a p-value of 0.011, the analysis indicates that a clear delineation and appropriate allocation of powers across different tiers of government contribute positively to the autonomy enjoyed by local governments in Adamawa State. This finding aligns with the principles of decentralization and the recognition that local governments should have a degree of decision-making authority over matters within their jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the political and administrative environment also plays a crucial role in determining local government autonomy. The positive coefficient of 0.112 and a p-value of 0.038 suggest that a conducive political climate and efficient administrative structures foster greater autonomy for local governments. This could include factors such as the level of political interference, the effectiveness of local governance mechanisms, and the availability of resources and support from higher levels of government.

Interestingly, the analysis reveals a negative influence of the legal framework on local government autonomy, with a coefficient of -0.110 and a p-value of 0.029. This counterintuitive finding may indicate that the existing legal provisions and regulations governing local governments in Adamawa State might be

hindering their autonomy rather than facilitating it. It is possible that the legal framework needs to be reviewed and amended to better align with the principles of decentralization and local self-governance.

While the regression model is statistically significant, as indicated by the F-statistic of 5.533 and a p-value of 0.001, it is important to note the relatively low R-squared and adjusted R-squared values of 0.046 and 0.038, respectively. These values suggest that the three independent variables included in the model explain only a small portion of the variation in local government autonomy. Other factors not accounted for in the analysis may also contribute significantly to the level of autonomy enjoyed by local governments in Adamawa State. The regression analysis provides valuable insights into the factors influencing local government autonomy in Adamawa State. It highlights the importance of a well-defined division of powers, a conducive political and administrative environment, and the need to revisit and potentially revise the legal framework governing local governments in the state.

H0₃: Federalism has no significant impact on the effectiveness of local governance in Adamawa State.

3.1.3 Table: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Analysis to assess the impact of `Federalism on the effectiveness of local governance in Adamawa.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.824	4	6.456	3.284	.012
Within Groups	668.390	340	1.966		
Total	694.214	344			

P > 0.05 (Not Significant)

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) presented in Table 3.1.3 provides valuable insights into the impact of federalism on the effectiveness of local governance in Adamawa State. The null hypothesis (H0₃) stated that federalism has no significant impact on the effectiveness of local governance. However, the results of the ANOVA analysis suggest that this hypothesis should be rejected. The ANOVA analysis compares the means of multiple groups representing different levels or categories of federalism, although the specific groups are not explicitly mentioned in the given information. The significant F-statistic of 3.284 and the corresponding p-value of 0.012 indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the effectiveness of local governance among these groups.

The ANOVA analysis provides evidence that federalism has a significant impact on the effectiveness of local governance in Adamawa State. This finding highlights the importance of carefully considering the federal structure and the distribution of powers and responsibilities when evaluating and enhancing the performance of local governance institutions.

H0₄: Local governments in Adamawa State do not face significant challenges in exercising autonomy under the federal system.

3.1.1 Table: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Analysis to assess the impact of challenges on local governments exercising autonomy under the federal system in Adamawa State.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.829	4	6.457	3.425	.009
Within Groups	640.937	340	1.885		
Total	666.765	344			

$P > 0.05$ (Not Significant)

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) presented in Table 4.10 provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by local governments in Adamawa State in exercising autonomy under the federal system. The null hypothesis (H04) stated that local governments do not face significant challenges in this regard. However, the results of the ANOVA analysis suggest that this hypothesis should be rejected. The significant F-statistic of 3.425 and the corresponding p-value of 0.009 indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the level of challenges experienced by different groups or categories of local governments in exercising autonomy under the federal system. This finding suggests that local governments in Adamawa State do indeed face challenges that hinder their ability to exercise autonomy effectively. The ANOVA analysis provides evidence that local governments in Adamawa State face significant challenges in exercising autonomy under the federal system.

3.2 Summary of Major Findings

This study investigated issues related to Nigerian federalism and local government autonomy in Adamawa State. Based on the data analysis and hypothesis testing, the following are the major findings:

1. The current status of local government autonomy in Adamawa State is characterized by some degree of autonomy and decision-making powers, though there is variability in perceptions among respondents.
2. The level of local government autonomy is significantly influenced by the division of powers between different levels of government, the political and administrative environment, and the existing legal framework. A clear delineation of powers and a favorable political climate foster greater autonomy, while the legal framework was found to negatively impact autonomy.
3. Federalism has a significant impact on the effectiveness of local governance in Adamawa State, suggesting that the federal structure and distribution of powers play an important role in shaping local governance performance.
4. Local governments in Adamawa State face significant challenges in exercising autonomy under the federal system. Financial constraints, lack of qualified personnel, political interference, and inadequate accountability mechanisms emerged as major obstacles hindering local autonomy.

5. Key recommendations for enhancing local government autonomy include amending the legal framework, increasing financial allocations, implementing capacity-building initiatives, establishing robust accountability mechanisms, reducing political interference, and streamlining administrative processes.

These findings highlight the complex interplay between federalism, local government autonomy, and the effectiveness of local governance in Adamawa State. While some elements of the federal system support autonomy, others pose challenges that need to be addressed through targeted reforms and interventions to empower local governments and enhance their performance in service delivery and governance.

4. Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the study shed light on several critical aspects of local government autonomy within the context of the federal system. Firstly, it's evident that although the legal framework acknowledges the autonomy of local governments, its practical implementation remains a formidable challenge. This is evidenced by the diverse perspectives among the respondents, indicating a gap between legal provisions and on-ground realities. Moreover, the level of local government autonomy appears to be intricately linked to various factors such as the distribution of powers, the prevailing political and administrative environment, and the overarching legal framework. These findings underscore the complexity inherent in navigating the dynamics of federalism, where a delicate balance must be struck between national cohesion and local empowerment.

Federalism emerges as a pivotal factor shaping the efficacy of local governance structures. The study underscores the necessity of crafting a federal structure that carefully calibrates national unity objectives with the imperative of granting local authorities adequate autonomy. This suggests that the effectiveness of local governance is contingent upon the nuanced interplay between federal and local dynamics. Furthermore, the examination of local governance in Adamawa State reveals a myriad of challenges impeding the exercise of autonomy by local authorities. These obstacles range from financial limitations and capacity deficiencies to political interference and the absence of robust accountability mechanisms. Such hurdles collectively undermine the ability of local governments to fulfill their mandate of delivering effective governance and services to citizens.

Addressing these challenges and enhancing local government autonomy within the federal framework demands a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. This includes undertaking legal reforms to strengthen the autonomy provisions, augmenting resource allocation to bolster local capacities, implementing capacity-building initiatives, establishing robust accountability mechanisms, curtailing political interference, and streamlining administrative processes. Only through such concerted efforts can the aspirations of effective local governance within a federal structure be realized.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Undertake a comprehensive review and amendment of the legal framework governing local government operations to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and autonomy, ensuring alignment with the principles of decentralization and local self-governance.
2. Implement measures to increase financial allocations and resources available to local governments, enabling them to exercise their autonomy effectively and provide quality services to their communities.
3. Establish capacity-building programs and training initiatives for local government personnel to enhance their skills, knowledge, and competencies, thereby improving their ability to exercise autonomy and deliver effective governance.
4. Strengthen accountability mechanisms and reduce political interference by introducing measures such as independent oversight bodies, transparent processes, and strict adherence to the rule of law.
5. Streamline administrative and bureaucratic processes associated with the federal system to reduce delays, inefficiencies, and obstacles hindering the effective exercise of local government autonomy.

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