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Local Government Autonomy and Grass-Root Development: A Study of Ikeduru LGA, Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examined local government autonomy and grass-roots development: a study of Ikeduru LGA, Imo State, Nigeria. The researcher used decentralization theory as the framework of analysis. Descriptive survey was applied and data were collected through primary source (questionnaire). The population of the study covered the entire 208, 100 people in Ikeduru LGA of Imo State. From the number above, a sample size of 399 was selected. Though only 379 copies of questionnaire was returned and used. Data analysis was done using percentage, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0). The study found out that there is significant impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State, administrative autonomy influences primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State and there is significant effect of political autonomy on rural security in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State**.** Based on the forgoing, this study concluded that the achievement of rural development as it concerns road maintenance, security, and health care services depends on the extent the local governments enjoy autonomy in finance, administration, and political aspects. It was recommended that the local governments should receive direct allocation from the federation account so as to achieve rural road maintenance.

Keywords: Local Government Autonomy, Grass-Roots Development, Financial Autonomy, Political Autonomy Rural Road Maintenance, Administrative Autonomy, Primary Health Care, Rural Security.

Introduction

Before the 1976 local government reforms, each region in Nigeria operated different local government system through which it administered the rural communities. However, the 1976 local government reform brought unification in the local government system in Nigeria. The 1976 Local Government Reform provided very practical measures which if properly implemented would have significantly transformed the Local Governments in Nigeria. Among the innovations put in place by the 1976 reform to sustain Local Government administration were the third tier government, democratization of Local Government and statutory revenue allocation among others. Ademolekun (2019) observed that the reform "recognized Local Government as a third tier government constituting a distinct level of government with definite boundaries, clearly stated functions and provisions for ensuring human and financial resources. That is why Njoku (2009) observed that local government is the third tier of government established to enhance development at the rural community level. Agbani & Ugwuoke (2014) succinctly put that the essence of the above Constitutional provisions is to make the local government council a tool for grassroots development in Nigeria, since it is very close to the people.

Furthermore, Agu (2024) added that with this development: the erstwhile master - servant relationship between state and local government was modified significantly in the direction of the two-tier government being regarded as partners in progress. Here, the local government was basically introduced to enhanced development at the grassroots in different rural communities (Agina, 2025; Adaba, 2021). Notwithstanding the benefits of the 1976 local government reform, the Nigerian Local government administration has been faced with series of developmental and economic challenges where different policies have rendered the councils incapacitated to discharge their constitutional mandates. This has been traced to the unjust treatment and annexation of local government revenues by state governors in the name of State Joint Local government Accounts. This has therefore affected the level of grassroots development; hence the challenges of local government autonomy.

The issue of local government autonomy in Nigeria has its roots in the constitutional development of the country. The **1979 Constitution** marked a significant milestone by formally recognizing local government as a **third tier of government**, alongside the federal and state governments. This constitutional recognition was intended to strengthen grassroots administration and promote rural development through democratically elected local councils with defined functions and statutory funding. However, the implementation of the 1979 Constitution was short-lived, as it was **suspended following the military coup of 1983**, leading to the erosion of constitutional governance and local government autonomy under prolonged military rule. Although the **1989 Constitution** attempted to reintroduce democratic structures and further clarify the status of local governments, it was **never fully implemented**, as the transition programme was aborted.

Consequently, local governments continued to operate under military decrees, which subjected them to significant control by state and federal authorities, thereby limiting their autonomy and capacity to drive rural development. The return to democratic governance in 1999 brought renewed constitutional backing for local governments. The **1999 Constitution**, particularly **Section 162**, reintroduced provisions for the funding of local governments through the **Federation Account**, establishing the State–Local Government Joint Account. While this arrangement was designed to ensure equitable distribution of national revenue to local councils, it has also generated debates about the extent of local government autonomy, as state governments often exercise substantial control over local government finances. In the same vein, the Nigerian Constitution (1999) provides that every local government in the country shall participate in the economic planning and development of its own area of jurisdiction. To strengthen this great task bestowed on the local governments, Ajayi (2018) reminded Nigerians that local government were not created to pay salaries only, but to ensure collective participation in governance, motivate physical and economic development, create the condition for development opportunities and provide social services which can improve the well-being of the rural people. For the local government to achieve its development needs for rural areas (especially in Ikeduru of Imo State), there is need for local government autonomy. Local government autonomy is a situation where the local governments are allowed to function effectively and take decision for its development through administrative, financial and political autonomy (Ubah, 2019). Therefore the categories of local government autonomy cover administrative, financial and political autonomy.

The Supreme Court judgment on local government autonomy is a significant milestone in promoting rural development, good governance, and democratic decentralization in Nigeria (Ibe, Yusuf, Musa & Ezenwajiobi, 2024). The Supreme Court ruled that the 774 local government councils in the country should independently manage their own funds (starting points for the actualization of local government autonomy). Since Local government is the third tier of government, its focus is on rural development. The practical actualization of local government autonomy (political autonomy, administrative autonomy and financial autonomy) is likely to add positive values to rural development. In this study, rural development is the achievement of improved infrastructural and human capital development in rural communities.

Statement of the Problem

In the local government system in Nigeria, there are persistent challenges posed by the lack of genuine administrative, financial, and political autonomy, which hinder the local government's capacity to deliver essential services and foster sustainable development. Despite constitutional provisions and a landmark Supreme Court ruling in July 2024 granting financial autonomy, state governments, including in Imo State, allegedly continue to interfere with or hijack funds meant for Ikeduru LGA through mechanisms like the State-Local Government

Joint Account (Okororie, 2023). This financial dependence restricts the LGA's ability to plan, authorize its own budget, execute independent projects, and manage its internally generated revenue, leading to incomplete or poorly executed development projects and a general paucity of funds for essential services. In addition, Imo state LGAs including Ikeduru LGA reportedly struggles with weak institutional frameworks, including a lack of qualified professional staff and inefficient bureaucratic processes, often resulting from undue external interference in recruitment and administration. This lack of control over its personnel and internal operations has led to administrative inefficiencies, poor service delivery, and a diminished capacity for policy implementation aligned with local needs.

The political autonomy of the local government has been undermined by practices such as the appointment of caretaker committees by state governors instead of conducting elections for democratically elected local government officials, as well as general political interference. This lack of genuine political freedom leads to poor accountability, as leaders often feel more compelled to cater to state interests rather than the local populace, thereby eroding public trust and discouraging community participation in governance.

The cumulative effect of these autonomy deficits is the failure of the LGAs to perform their statutory duties and meet the basic needs of its residents as it concerns rural road maintenance, primary health care, primary education, and other infrastructural facilities at the grassroots level. The area continues to face significant developmental challenges, including inadequate infrastructure (poor roads, water supply, and electricity), insufficient healthcare facilities, and limited educational opportunities, perpetuating poverty and underdevelopment in the community.

Ultimately, the problem is that despite the existence of the local government system as the third tier of government meant to be closest to the people, its potential as a catalyst for socio-economic development in Ikeduru LGA has been severely hampered by ongoing struggles for autonomy, leading to a gap between the expected and actual levels of grassroots development between 2020 and 2025.

Research Questions

Based on statement of the problem, the following research questions are raised in the course of the study:

1. What is the impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State?
2. To what extent does administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine local government autonomy and grass-root development: a study of Ikeduru LGA, Imo State, Nigeria 2020-2025. The specific objectives are:

1. Investigate the impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State;
2. Ascertain the extent administrative autonomy influences primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following research questions emerged from the objectives of the study:

Ho1. The financial autonomy does not have impact on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo state, Nigeria.

Ho2. The Administrative autonomy does not influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State, Nigeria

Local Government

Ezeani (2006:253) posits that "local government is generally seen as a veritable agent of development and grassroots participation in the democratic process". Akpan in Effiom (2020:87) describes local government "as the breaking down of the country into smaller units or localities for the purpose of administration in which the inhabitants of the different units or localities concerned play a direct and full part through their elected representatives who exercise powers and undertake functions under the general authority of the state or National Government". The National Guidelines for Reform of Local Government (1976:1) defines local government as:

> *Government at (the) local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the councils substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal governments in their areas and to ensure through active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiatives and responses to local needs and conditions are maximized.*

Looking at Local Government from its objectives, Odenigwe (2018) defined it as a system of Local Administration under which Local communities and towns are organized to maintain law and order, and provide limited range of social services and public amenities and encourage co-operation and participation of the inhabitants in joint endeavours towards the improvement of their condition of living. Odenigwe's view revealed a partial support for Local Government service delivery.

In the words of Oguonu (2023), the definition of local government is problematic. To him, in most cases, the term is wrongly used as a result of the varied interpretations of the local government. Agu (2024) states that the 1976 Guidelines on Local Government Reforms in Nigeria defined Local Government as government at local level exercised through representative Council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas,

these powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff institutional and financial, to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal Government in their areas and to ensure through devolution of functions to the councils and through active participation of the people and their traditional institution that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized".

Local Government Autonomy

Local government autonomy is a situation where the third tier of government in Nigeria enjoys financial, administrative and political autonomy, just like states and federal governments in Nigeria. This is to prove that the local government is a component unit after the federal and state governments. Over the past decades, local governments have been almost crippled in most states where the governors seize their federal allocation and only release funds to them on piecemeal, a practice which barely keeps them going (Okpi, 2022; Ibe, Yusuf, Musa &Ezenwajiobi, 2024). As a result of this, former President Muhammadu Buhari in one of the interviews with Arise Television during his tenure expressed his indignation about the state of local government system in the country, where he narrowed down the question about restructuring to the treatment of local government. To that effect, the then President in, May 2020 signed executive, order 10 granting financial autonomy to local governments in Nigeria, together with state judiciary and House of Assembly.

Interestingly, the particular executive order was met with strong resistance as it fell apart due to the governors' objection to it (Wale, 2022). Thus, the Supreme Court nullified the executive order 10 by declaring that the then Nigerian President overstepped his powers by promulgating such a rule (Olusegun, 2018; Ibe, Yusuf, Musa & Ezenwajiobi, 2024). However, on July 11th, 2024, the Supreme Court of the Nigeria being an Apex court of the country in a suit brought by the Federal Government of Nigeria through its unanimous judgment affirmed the financial autonomy of the Nigeria's 774 local governments to strengthen their independence in the country. In addition, the Supreme Court made some other far-reaching decisions to reposition local government administration in the country.

Grassroots Development

According to Udo, Madu and Chukwu (2024) Grassroots development **is a bottom-up approach to improving communities**, focusing on empowering local people to identify and solve their own problems through active participation, capacity building, and self-governance, rather than relying solely on top-down strategies. It aims to build community resilience, ensure projects are culturally relevant, and foster a sense of ownership, leading to more sustainable social, economic, and political progress from the ground up. In essence, grassroots development recognizes that true, lasting progress comes from the ground up, leveraging the collective power and wisdom within a community to create meaningful, locally owned change (Okororie, 2023).

Adelemo (2024) sees the concept of grassroots development to include resettling displaced communities or adopting new types of housing unit. He continues that grassroots development should include alongside land-use development, economic factors such as land carrying capacity for each area of farmland, irrigation improved farming method and finance.

Seer (1993) perceived grassroots development to involve creating and widening opportunities for individuals to realize full potential through education and share in decision and action which affect their lives. Others like Mustapha, (2019) view grassroots development as means for the provision of basic amenities, infrastructure, improved agriculture productivity and extension services and employment generation for rural dwellers. Olatunbosun (2024), Lele (2019) and Ogunfiditimi (2020) viewed rural development from various perspectives. However, there is a consensus among them about the need for improvement in rural living conditions and standard of living of the rural populace.

1. Local government financial autonomy and grassroots Road Maintenance

One of the challenges of development in Nigeria today is poor infrastructure, especially road (Uhegbu, 2017). Any country that wants to achieve development, especially at the neglected rural areas must always improve its road network. Here, road infrastructure entails maintenance of existing road network, construction of new roads, and providing other road infrastructure for public use (Bakare, 2018). Here, local government financial autonomy is likely to achieve good road infrastructure and development (Ubah, 2019). When the local government leadership receives financial allocation directly from the federation account, and generate their own internal revenue without state government interference, the implication is that many bad rural road network will receive government attention. There is need to allow the local government enjoy financial autonomy so as to improve rural road construction, and rehabilitation (Gbenga, 2024).This is because transportation forms an intrinsic part of rural development strategies, serving as a mechanism and catalyst for rural transportation through the reinforcement of rural development and contributes to poverty reduction by enhancing equity and efficiency outcomes (Adedeji, Olafaji, Omole, Olanibi& Yusuf, 2014). Maintenance of rural roads goes a long way to ease the challenges of road transportation which contributes immensely to rural development. As it is known, agriculture is the major occupation of the rural communities.

2. Administrative autonomy influence primary health care development

The provision of adequate primary health care is paramount to the overall development of rural communities (Osakede, Ijimakinwa & Adesanya, 2024). Administrative decisions relating to approval for the development/construction of primary health care facilities, working with the rural communities to build primary health care centres, employing primary health care workers for the communities, and providing equipments for the primary health care system are not done by the local government authorities shows lack of administrative autonomy which has hindered primary health care development (Fatile, Fajonyomi & Adejuwon, 2017).

Based on lack of administrative autonomy for the development of primary health care system in the local governments, most rural dwellers sought for medical treatment in the cities because

of lack of adequate medical provisions in the rural communities. Many doctors who work in the rural areas live in cities and could not answer emergencies in the night due to insecurity. Onwujiariri, Nwachi and Nkwocha (2017) strongly assert that the goal of the National Health Policy (1987) was to provide a comprehensive health care system based on primary health care that is proative, protective, restorative and rehabilitative to all citizens, within available resources so that individuals and communities can be assured of productivity, social well-being and enjoyment of living. Sanni (2010 cited in Onwujiariri, 2017) writes that the essence of health care to the local government is to make the management of primary health care serious, more effective, affordable and closer to the grassroots. So there is need for local government to enjoy administrative autonomy so as to enhance its impact on primary health care service development sustainability.

Empirical Review

Here, the researcher summarized some past studies that related to the subject matter.

Alemoh (2025) examined the role of local government in community development in Nigeria using Isiala Mbano LGA of Imo State as the focal point. The study was carried out to determine the significant contribution of local governments in promoting human and infrastructural development in Nigeria. The researcher utilized only secondary sources of data; hence information was sourced from journal articles, facebooks and online publications. Basic resource theory and growth centred theory were employed. Based on the literature work consulted, the study discovered that the role of local governments in community development include maintenance of roads, rule, provision of pipe borne water, human empowerment and maintenance of rural market square etc. But, the problem of over politicization, lack of fund, and low level of education are the problems affecting local governments from playing their functions well. The study therefore concluded that the effectiveness of local government in community development depends on availability of resources especially finance. The study recommends that autonomy should be granted to local governments in such a way and manner that enhances its performance of constitutional and ancillary roles; local governments should strive to raise and maintain revenue that would enable her deliver projects and services that guarantee quality living to the grassroots and local governments should be more people-center in approach.

Udo, Madu and Chukwu (2024) studied on local government autonomy and poverty reduction at the grassroot level. The study employed survey method and data were collected through interview source. The staff of Isiukwuato LGA of Abia State were utilized as population/sample; hence the data were analyzed using mean statistics. The study discovered that non implementation of Local government autonomy can encouraged high poverty rate in the local government and therefore should be discouraged.

Okororie (2023) examined revenue generation and local government development using Mbaitoli LGA of Imo State as the focal point. The researcher used system theory and bargaining theory for the study. Survey research design was used and questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed

using simple percentage and hypotheses were tested using chi-square. The major findings of the study include that local governments are not politically and financially independent as the state government interfere in all the activities of local governments which negatively affects local government development; the local governments in most cases do not perform their development functions in the rural areas as it should be because of the problem of external influence and lack of finance. Based on the findings, we recommends that there should be total re-orientation and enlightenment of the people of Mbaitoli L.G.A on the importance of paying taxes to the government; and the state and local government authorities should provide environment for private investors to come into Mbaitoli L.G.A and invest to improve the economic state of the local government.

Chukwu (2019) wrote on state local government system and poverty reduction at the grassroots level. The study employed survey method and data were collected through interview source. The staff of Isiukwuato LGA of Abia State were utilized as population/sample; hence the data were analyzed using mean statistics. The study discovered that joint account system has encouraged high poverty rate in the local government and therefore should be discouraged. The study recommends for local governments to receive their allocation directly from the federation account.

Akidi (2017) investigated revenue sources of local government and challenges of joint account system in Enugu State local government council. The study used quasi experimental method and data were collected through questionnaire instrument; hence the use of survey method. The study utilized the entire staff of local government service commission in Enugu State as the study population from where 20 people were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Simple percentage and chi-square were employed for data analysis. The study discovered that market, motor parks, and business investments etc are the major revenue sources for local governments. However, the existence of joint account system has reduced the financial allocation from federation account to local government, and this has been the focus of state governments since 1999. The study recommended for strong IGR sources in the local governments.

Gap in Literature

The gap could be summarized thus:

Gap in the variables: Past studies have been done in related aspects of local government, local government autonomy, grassroots development and many others. Here, most of the past studies covered some aspects of local government autonomy (mainly financial autonomy like the study by Adejuwon and Fajonyomi 2025), without specifically focusing on all aspects of local government autonomy. This means that the exact independent variable and dependent variable of this study have not been covered previously.

Gap on the location: Most of the existing studies were not specifically conducted in **Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State**. While some of the studies were carried out in other parts of Imo State, others were conducted in different states within Nigeria or entirely outside

the country. Consequently, there remains a contextual gap in literature concerning Ikeduru Local Government Area.

Gap on the indices: The indices adopted in this study differ from those employed in previous research works. Specifically, the researcher used financial autonomy, administrative autonomy and political autonomy to measure local government autonomy while rural security, rural road maintenance, and primary health care were used to measure rural development.

Decentralization theory

Decentralization theory evolved through the contributions of various scholars and political theorists such as Alexis de Tocqueville 1977, John Stuart Mill 1965, Dennis Rondinelli: (1981) and Charles Tiebout in 1956. Decentralization theory explores the process of distributing authority, power, and decision-making away from a central body to lower levels, such as local governments, regional units, or individual employees, aiming to improve efficiency, responsiveness, and participation by bringing governance closer to the people. It is applied across political science (devolution), public administration (delegating tasks), business (empowering local managers), and technology (distributed systems).

Local government autonomy in Nigeria, though constitutionally provided for, is largely undermined by state government control, hindering grassroots development despite decentralization theories suggesting it improves service delivery and participation. State interference, especially over finances via the State Joint Local Government Account, creates dependency, while constitutional gaps and political factors prevent true autonomy, leading to inefficient service provision and calls for constitutional reform for direct funding and independent governance. Decentralization theory posits that transferring power to lower government levels (like local councils) enhances service delivery, promotes democracy, and fosters grassroots development by bringing governance closer to the people.

State governments control funds, often withholding allocations and preventing direct access to federal funds, undermining financial independence. Governors interfere in local administration, appointing caretaker committees instead of elected officials, and controlling decision-making processes. While the 1999 Constitution guarantees local government existence, it lacks strong provisions to enforce autonomy against state. To secure financial and administrative independence, including eliminating the State Joint LG Account, suggests this article. A 2024 ruling mandated direct funding to LGs, but implementation remains stalled, according to this YouTube video. In essence, while Nigeria embraces decentralization in principle, the practice falls short, with state governments acting as major impediments to achieving the autonomy needed for effective local governance.

Decentralization theory posits that moving power to local government (Ikeduru LGA) boosts grassroots development by improving service delivery through greater administrative, financial, and political autonomy, yet in 2020-2025 Nigeria, state interference via joint accounts and caretaker committees often undermines this, limiting local financial independence and accountability, despite constitutional provisions for devolution; studies

show autonomy in roads, health, and security hinges on bypassing joint accounts, strengthening local capacity, and ensuring direct federal funds for genuine grassroots growth. Shifting authority from central/state to local levels (like Ikeduru) enhances efficiency, responsiveness, and citizen participation, leading to better service delivery (roads, health, water) and development.. LGAs should manage their daily operations, staff, and service delivery (e.g., primary healthcare, local infrastructure) without state interference. State governments often appoint caretaker committees, bypassing elected officials, and control local bureaucracy, hindering effective administration and service implementation in areas like health. Ikeduru LGA needs direct access to its share of the Federation Account (FA) and power to generate and manage its revenue (taxes, fees).The State-Local Government Joint Account (SGLGA) acts as a major bottleneck, with states often controlling and diverting funds meant for LGAs, severely crippling their ability to fund projects, maintain rural roads, and ensure fiscal independence. Ikeduru should have the right to elect its leaders via independent local government elections and make independent policy decisions. State electoral commissions often lack independence, leading to manipulated elections, caretaker committees, and a general lack of genuine local political self-governance, undermining democratic principles and local buy-in. Limited autonomy (especially financial) stunts this potential, leading to poor infrastructure, weak service delivery, and reduced citizen empowerment, despite constitutional ideals.

Decentralization theory suggests that if Ikeduru LGA enjoyed full administrative, financial, and political autonomy (bypassing joint accounts, ensuring fair elections, direct funding), grassroots development would flourish; however, state-level interference (caretaker committees, SGLGA) "Between 2020-2025 significantly curtails this autonomy, hindering development and confirming the theory's predictions about the need for true devolution.

Research Methodology

This study adopted survey research design.

The population of this study is the entire people of Ikeduru LGA of Imo state which is 208, 100 (source, NPC, 2022 Projection). The population was used since the study focused on grassroot democracy and youths empowerment in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State, 2020-2025.

The sample size was mathematically derived using Taro Yamane Formula and it gave 399.

The researcher used primary and secondary data. The questionnaire served as the primary data. The major instrument used here is the questionnaire. Anyanwu (2016) points out that questionnaires are a printed list of questions to be answered by a number of people especially as part of a survey research. Questionnaire is the list of questions framed from the research questions, objectives and hypotheses and focused on addressing the problems of the research. In addition to questionnaire, the researcher also used secondary data through textbooks, journals and other published information.

The data collected for this study were analyzed using simple percentage, mean statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) at 0.05 level of significance through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23.0).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretations

It should be noted that out of 399 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 379 copies were properly filled and returned.

Data Analysis

Research question one: What is the impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State?

Table 1: The impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State

S/N	Indicators	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	N	∑X	X	Dec.
1	Our local government enjoys financial autonomy	23 (6.1%)	26 (6.8%)	106 (28%)	224 (59.1%)	379 (100%)	606	1.6	Negative
2	Financial autonomy will enhance rural roads maintenance in IkeduruLGA	231 (61%)	109 (28.8%)	18 (4.7%)	21 (5.5%)	379 (100%)	1308	3.5	Positive
3	I will recommend for the implementation of supreme court judgment in Nigeria LGAS	113 (29.8%)	219 (57.8%)	29 (7.7%)	18 (4.7%)	379 (100%)	1185	3.1	Positive
4	There is possibility of improving rural roads even with the present situation	175 (46.2%)	190 (50.1%)	5 (1.3%)	9 (2.4%)	379 (100%)	1289	3.4	Positive
5	The state government should allow Ikeduru LGA to generate its internal revenue and use it for rural road rehabilitation.	209 (55.2%)	150 (39.6%)	8 (2.1%)	12 (3.1%)	379 (100%)	1314	3.5	Positive
	Grand mean							**3.0**	

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Table 1 revealed that items 1 to 5 were not all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 1.6, item 2 has a mean of 3.5, item 3 has a mean of 3.1, item 4 has a mean of 3.4 and item 5

has a mean of 3.5; since the grand mean scores is more than the criterion mean 2.5. It is therefore concluded that there is significant impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

Research question two: To what extent does administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State?

Table 2: The extent administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State

S/N	Indicators	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	n	∑X	X	Dec.
1	There is need to improve administrative autonomy for Ikeduru LGA so as to enhance primary health care system	222 (58.6%)	149 (39.3%)	2 (0.5%)	6 (1.6%)	379 (100%)	1345	3.5	Positive
2	to a large extent, Ikeduru LGA enjoys administrative autonomy	4 (1%)	3 (0.8%)	232 (61.2%)	140 (37%)	379 (100%)	629	1.7	Negative
3	the leadership of Ikeduru LGA has helped significantly to improve primary health care system	136 (39%)	67 (17.7%)	120 (3.7%)	56 (14.8%)	379 (100%)	801	2.1	Negative
4	The state government has not been interfering in the leadership of the Ikeduru LGA and such has impacted good on primary health care in the LGA	45 (11.9%)	68 (17.9%)	107 (28.2%)	159 (42%)	379 (100%)	757	2.0	Negative
5	The existing primary health care in Ikeduru are based on the efforts of the state government and international organization	105 (27.7%)	198 (52.2%)	33 (8.7%)	43 (11.4%)	379 (100%)	1123	3.0	Positive
	Grand mean							**2.5**	

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Table 2 revealed that items 1 to 5 were not all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.5, item 2 has a mean of 1.7, item 3 has a mean of 2.1, item 4 has a mean of 2.0 and item 5

has a mean of 3.0. Since the grand mean scores is same as the criterion mean 2.5. It is therefore concluded that administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses one

H_0: There is no significant impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

H_1: There is significant impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

Table 3: Test of hypotheses 1

To test hypothesis 1, data in tables 1 were used.

H_i1	There is significant impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State	Grand mean = 3.0 Pearsons' Correlation = 0.81 Sig = 0.05 N = 379	**Positive**

Source: Data in table 1

Table 3 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation is 0.81 which indicates that there is significant impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

Hypotheses two

H_0: Administrative autonomy does not influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

H_2: Administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

Table 4: Test of hypothesis 2

To test hypothesis 2, data in tables 2 were used.

H_i2	Administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.	Grand mean = 2.5 Pearsons' Correlation = 0.70 Sig = 0.05 N = 379	**Positive**

Source: Data in table 2

Table 4 indicates that the Pearsons' Product Moment Correlation is 0.70 which implies that administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State.

Discussion of Findings

Test of hypotheses one revealed that there is significant impact of financial autonomy on rural road maintenance in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State. This finding is in line with Alemoh (2025) research that there is need to allow the local government in Nigeria to enjoy full autonomy so as to enhance rural development, especially on rural roads etc. More so, the result is in tandem with Ubah (2019) assertion that financial autonomy will make the LGAs to have the required fund for all round development.

Test of hypotheses two revealed that administrative autonomy influence primary health care development in Ikeduru LGA, Imo State. This finding is in support of Okororie (2023) study that poor level of financial and administrative autonomy is a major challenge for the local government contributions on primary health care provision. The findings from Osakede, Ijimakinwa & Adesanya (2024) opined that the roles of local government can be achieved when the third tier of government can effectively take its decision on all round development especially on education and health.

Conclusion

In Nigeria todays, the state governments have continued to make local governments to perform below expectation hence the issue of lack of financial, administrative, and political autonomy. . This condition calls for supports in the amendment of the 1999 Constitution and for the state governors to abide by the Supreme Court ruling of July 11th, 2024 to address these anomalies and thereby return the local governments to financial, administrative, and political autonomy. This study therefore concludes that the achievement of rural development as it concerns road maintenance, security, and health care services depends on the extent the local governments enjoy autonomy in finance, administration, and political aspects.

Recommendations

This research recommends thus:

1. **Financial autonomy for local governments:** in line with the last Supreme Court judgment, the local governments should receive direct allocation from the federation account so as to achieve rural road maintenance.
2. **Administrative autonomy:** the local governments should be allowed to enjoy administrative autonomy without state government interferences**.** Such will help to improve primary health care provision in the local communities.

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