

# Review of: "Financial Autonomy: Panacea for Improved Service Delivery in Imo State Local Government System"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

There is a serious disconnection between the objectives of the study, the method, the results, and the conclusion.

## **Objectives:**

The objectives are poorly and/or vaguely stated.

Examples:

1. 'The information will help future research in history and other related fields.' How? - This part is missing.'
2. 'It will also help the general public to make sound appraisals of the local government councils in Imo State.' - How? - Besides, the language use is overall not adequate and, in most instances, not concise. For example, 'general public' ought to be just stated as 'public.'
3. 'This study is expected to provide information that will help local government managers to be prudent in handling local government finances.' - No data pointed to how local government managers misused relative funds - or did I miss something? I stand to be corrected. Besides, following this objective, it is not just about relative data, but suggested toward the said financial prudence. Relatively, such a suggestion would have been data-driven -not just assumptions. Were such methods of financial prudence tested? To what extent were the measures successful?
4. 'The study will provide the requisite data that will help the Federal Government and other stakeholders to design a workable framework for improved service delivery in the local government system in Nigeria.' Relative data for this dimension is adequately provided. However, the analysis ought to include tests of association and/or differences in allocation to the state and from the state to the local government. This is not the case.

## **Method:**

'The materials used in this study are sourced from available literature, interviews with stakeholders, and personal experience as a former member of the local government council.'

The implications for such an approach are thus:

- Available literature and interview excerpts ought to be coded into relevant themes for the applicable coherence of relative data presentation and analysis.

- Personal experiences, to be reported as part of research writing, ought to have been documented via an overt or covert participant observation guide.

- The process of selection of stakeholders is not stated. Also, validation and reliability tests ought to have been conducted towards some level of internal validity, as well as internal and external consistency.

**Also note the following:**

'The study is concerned with how to improve service to the rural populace.' - Provide justification for such a choice of potential significance.

'This study concentrated on 2012, 2013, and 2014, which were periods when the state government's interference in local government finance was very alarming.' Use of sensational words like 'alarming' is not appropriate. 'This will help us understand how service delivery suffered in Imo State's rural communities due to the absence of financial autonomy of the local councils.'

There is a mixture between research background, objectives, methods, and results - otherwise, how did the researcher know that poor rural development in Imo State is due to the 'absence of financial autonomy of the local councils'? There is much in the conclusion before research results.

**Correlation between research objectives and the said findings, thus:**

**Objective 1.** 'The information will help future research in history and other related fields.'

**Aspects of unmatched findings:**

'The major obstacles, according to the findings, include the overbearing influence of the higher tier, corruption, and inadequate funding.' Question: If this is a considerable part of history - that history and 'other fields' can leverage on, why not provide information about the causes of the 'overbearing influence of the higher tier'? Which data shows '... corruption'? Which data shows that '...inadequate funding'?

**Objective 2.** 'It will also help the general public to make sound appraisals of the local government councils in Imo State.'

**Aspects of unmatched findings:**

'The major obstacles, according to the findings, include the overbearing influence of the higher tier, corruption, and inadequate funding.' -Instead, data ought to show differences between levels of local government performance - irrespective of or despite deductions from the local government funds' allocations.

**Objective 3.** 'This study is expected to provide information that will help local government managers to be prudent in handling local government finances.'

**Aspects of unmatched findings:**

It is therefore the contention of the study that the local governments will heave a big sigh of relief if some level of financial autonomy is granted to them...' - Which data showed instances of correlation between the level of funding and local government rural development? What is the connection between financial autonomy and development? Is it possible that local government financial autonomy would equal more uninterrupted corruption at the Nigerian local government level? What is the meaning of 'big sigh of relief'? How 'big' is 'big'? And is the word 'big' necessary?

**Objective 4:** 'The study will provide the requisite data that will help the Federal Government and other stakeholders to design a workable framework for improved service delivery in the local government system in Nigeria.'

**Aspects of unmatched finding:**

'It is therefore the contention of the study that the local governments will heave a big sigh of relief if some level of financial autonomy is granted to them, and the result will be an astronomical improvement in service delivery.' Is there any therein test of correlation between available funds to the local government and service delivery, which would help show that more funds imply a higher chance of better service delivery?

**Overall Comment:**

The topic tends to suggest a correlation between levels of financial autonomy and improved service delivery in Imo State. However, the researcher ends up with the following objectives:

1. 'The information will help future research in history and other related fields.'
2. 'It will also help the general public to make sound appraisals of the local government councils in Imo State.'
3. 'This study is expected to provide information that will help local government managers to be prudent in handling local government finances.'
4. 'The study will provide the requisite data that will help the Federal Government and other stakeholders to design a workable framework for improved service delivery in the local government system in Nigeria.'

Only objective four is close to the research topic. However, the data presented is not addressed enough in this direction. The research should rephrase the topic to become 'Disparities Between Constitutional Imo State Local Government Funds Allocation and Imo State Government Deductions'. This is what the research has mainly presented. Relative data can then be re-analyzed to draw out some relative relevance. The research can further assess the actual development of respective local governments, in order to show the extent to which service delivery is related to proportionate levels of funding or otherwise.

Thank you.

