

## **Corruption and Service Delivery in Local Government System in Nigeria: A Content Analysis**

**Egberi Anthony Ejue**

Political Science Department  
Federal University Wukari  
Taraba State, Nigeria

**Madubueze, Madumelu.C**  
**(M.Sc Research Fellow)**

Department of Public Administration  
Anambra State University  
Igbariam Campus  
Anambra State, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

*The existence of government is to deliver social services that will make life meaningful and worth living. Local governments as a tier of government were created to bring government closer to the people at the rural communities and for transformation of lives at that level. One of the ways of bringing government closer to the people at the grassroots is through the delivery of social services in a satisfactory, timely, effective and adequate manner. This Paper is thus, aimed at examining the effect of Corruption on Service Delivery in Local Government System in Nigeria. The paper argues that the Constitutional mandate of Local Government in terms of “performance” has not been translated into reality due to corruption in the system. Data for the study was generated from secondary sources, anchoring on ‘Principal- Agent Model’ as a theoretical basis. It was found amongst others that, due to the privileged position of the Public Servants (Agents) to public resources and information, they tend to abuse these privileges to the detriments of the ‘Principals’ (Nigerian citizens). The paper therefore recommended that local governments must make effort to overcome corruptions that have caused them to avoid their performance. It is only by this effort, can the local governments be positioned to render social services in a timely, effective, adequate, prompt and satisfactory manner to justify their continuous existence and the huge financial allocations to them.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, Service Delivery, Local government

### **Introduction**

Local Government generally, has long been recognized as a veritable instrument for the development of the local communities. This is because as a tier of government nearest to the grassroots, it is in a better position to know and addresses the problems of its residents. Indeed, the objectives of the government according to the 1976 “Guidelines for local government Reform” in Nigeria is to make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiative by devolving or delegating them to local representatives bodies; to facilitate the exercise of democratic self government close to the grassroots of our society, and to encourage initiative and leadership potential; and mobilization of human and material resources through the involvement of members of the Public in their development.

Regrettably, the realization of these objectives has been constrained by extreme corruption in Local Government. Corruption remains a major problem which has constrained local government especially in Nigeria from contributing meaningfully to the upliftment of the standard of living of the local people. This problem is manifest in almost every local government area in Nigeria. It is rife in the area of revenue declaration by collectors, to award of contracts, and embezzlement of local government funds by Chairmen, Councilors and other officials of local governments.

Ezeani (2004) while citing News Watch Magazine report (2001), revealed that no fewer than thirty-one Local Governments Chairmen from different parts of the Country were either under investigation, impeached or on suspension due to allegations of corruption.

Corruption in the form of fraud and embezzlement of funds has contributed to the present rampant cases of inability of local government to pay the salaries of their workers for many months, talk more of carrying out developmental projects.

Along this line Farida Waziri the former EFCC boss in Onwuemenyi (2008) as reported by Adeyemi (2012) lamented that: waste of government resources at council level had reached monumental proportions. The Local government Council in the Country couldn't explain the mismanagement of over ₦3.313 trillion allocated to them in the last eight years. A whopping sum of ₦3.313 trillion was allocated to Local government across the Country. Unfortunately, Local government officials have not left their hands unsoiled in this regard.

The corruption that pervades Local government today is widespread. Local government, have become so far removed from the lives of the people to a point where some Chief Executive of Local council no longer reside in the domain they are elected to administer. They drive to the council headquarters in their jeeps from State capitals, pay salaries and share other monies and disappear until it is time to share the next subvention.

Waziri went further to emphasize that the disconnect between the local government and the people at the grassroots was happening at a time huge volume of Public funds were allocated to local government council. According to her, the old argument that services cannot be delivered to the grassroots because of shortage of funds does not hold water anymore, in the face of so much subvention from the center. One of the fundamental problems of contemporary Nigeria is corruption. It has thrived, progressed, and flourished unabated. Corruption has been institutionalized to the point of accepting it as part of the system. The average Nigerian is not ordinarily corrupt, he has been attracted to engage in bribery and corruption by a society built on a lousy foundation of political, economy and, in fact, a social system that depends on corruption for survival. And for those who fail to flow with the tide of these times, they are tagged names such as "mumu", "jew" person, etc.

El-Rufai (2012), commenting on Corruption in Local government posit that, in the year 2011, the 774 Local Governments and the 6 Area Councils (LGAs) in Nigeria received almost ₦1trillion (about \$7billion) from the Federation Account, which is equivalent to the entire annual budgets of Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Burundi and Togo combined. These transfers were to enable them carry out their functions, which include the administration of primary education and primary health care, construction of markets and boreholes, and rural development in general. Most Nigerians would agree that is little or nothing to show for this huge transfer of free cash to the LGAs. It has not always been this bad.

Between 1955-1965, Local Government Areas (or Native Authorities as they were then called) were responsible for about 12 per cent of the public expenditure in the country, equivalent to almost 10 per cent of the GDP. But today, they gulp about 21 per cent of our national revenue without commensurate results for the subventions that they collect from the federation. And worst still, with few exceptions, they now entirely depend on transfers from the centre for their own expenditures. They no longer generate revenues like in the first republic and believe they are created simply to collect monthly allocations to spend on politicians, thugs and families. It would be an understatement to say that the LGAs performance of their core functions has been disappointing, nearly criminal.

Old societal values are crumbling and materialistic ambitions have become dominant, acquisition of money, whatever the means have become the chief motive. The acquisitive society breeds corruption. "Corruption is in a sense a product of the way of life of an acquisitive society, where money talks, where that which works is justified, and where people are judged by what they have rather than their industry, intellect, or integrity.

At local government level, corruption has been canonically accommodated, entertained and celebrated within the system. The deteriorating standard of living of majority of rural dwellers is evidence to the absence of good governance which is an antidote of corruption.

The much needed development has continued to elude the local communities across the Nation. It has been rural poverty instead of rural development. The prevalence and perverseness of poverty and absence of service delivery is still associated with the high level of corruption in Local government; these is evidence in the lack of basic necessities of life like food, shelter, and clothing and low access to essential services like health, education, power, water, good road network etc.

In view of the above, this paper will broadly examine the incidence of corruption on Service Delivery in Local Governments System in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper will x-ray the concepts of Corruption, Service Delivery, Local Government and The Effect of Corruption on Service Delivery in Local Governments in Nigeria.

### ***Conceptual Clarifications***

#### **Corruption:**

According to Klitgaard (1988) as quoted in Cavill & Sohail (2007), corruption occurs when an Agent betrays the Principal's interest in pursuit of one's own interest. Leys (1965) in Cavill & Sohail (2007) also refers to corruption as behavior that breaks some rule, written or unwritten, about the proper purpose to which a public office has been put.

Orukwogu (2012) view corruption as effort geared toward securing wealth and power through illegal means for private gains at public expense and peril. It is also a misuse of public power for private benefits, the violation of established rules for personal gains and profit.

Desta (2006) in Duruji et al (2013) also view corruption as "outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other misappropriation of state property, nepotism and the granting of favour to personal acquaintances and the abuse of the public authority to exact payments and privileges. Viewed from this angle, the general public is seen as the Principal victim and the public officials as the Agent.

USAID (2003), in Kayode et al (2013), also define corruption as the misuse of entrusted power for private gain. This definition agreed with earlier definitions- that corruption is a selfish and dishonest act that deprives a vast majority (apart from the perpetrators and their cohorts) of desire benefits i.e. social, economic, political, and other legitimate benefits.

It is obvious from aforementioned definitions, that corruption has emphasis on personal interest as against the public interest/good. The Principal-Agent theory thus will help in espousing how the perpetration of this selfish interest has affected the ability of the Agent (government, bureaucracy) in providing the necessary services to the consumers (i.e. Principals/Public), in an effective and efficient manner, in the right quantity and quality, in the right place and as at when necessary. The concern for this paper therefore is to examine the extent to which service delivery has been affected by the malaise of corruption perpetuated in Nigeria local government system and its consequences *on the citizens*.

#### **Service Delivery**

Kayode et al (2013), posits, Service Delivery to imply tangible and intangible goods and services provided by the government in order to improve the well being of the citizenry. Carlson et al. (2005) in Kayode et al (2013) also conceptualized Service Delivery as the relationship between policy makers, service providers and poor people. According to them, it encompasses services and their supporting systems that are typically regarded as a state responsibility. These include social services (primary education and basic health services), infrastructure (water, sanitation, roads and bridges).

Bello-Imam & Roberts (2001) quoted in Agba et al (2013), agree with this understanding of Service Delivery when they noted that local service delivery is the provision of services intended to alleviate human suffering and by extension, enhance the quality of life of the citizens.

According to Zakari (2010) as quoted by Agba et al (2013), the founding fathers of Nigeria local government's system had good intentions. Their major aim was for this third tier of government to positively affect the lives of the people at the grassroots. But the system, unfortunately, has been 'hijacked' by politicians and senior bureaucrats for personal enrichment. Thus local government in Nigeria can be sarcastically described as a place where the chairman and other key officials meet to share money monthly. Reasoning along this description, Agba (2006) in Agba et al (2013) opined that, the provision of basic social services such as education, health, maintenance of roads, and other public utilities within the jurisdiction of most local government in the country is both a myth and mirage; as the tenure of local government chairmen are primitively conceived as a period of wealth accumulation and not about service delivery to the people. The effect of this is that in spite of the fact that 70% of Nigeria population are found in the rural areas as Effiom (2001) quoted in Agba et al (2013) acknowledge, that average residents at the grassroots level are still suffering from lack of potable water, inadequate health facilities, poor hygiene condition and unemployment.

El-Rufai (2013) lamenting on poor service delivery stated that; the primary responsibility of local governments as enshrined in the constitution is rural, urban and community development. However, rather than working to reduce poverty by providing these services to their people, they end up just paying salaries of primary school teachers, and not much more.

While our LGAs contribute a negligible percent of our GDP and employ less than 2 per cent of the employed population, in the United States, counties, which are the equivalent of our local governments contribute about 20 percent of the GDP and employ about 10 percent of the employed population. Everything from elementary schools to international airports are developed and under the control of counties, municipalities and city councils in the US!

In South Africa and Indonesia, local council have the responsibility to provide an expansive range of services like those in Nigeria, but they are largely fiscally and political autonomous, as only about 14 percent of their revenue comes from central government transfers, compared to the almost 90 percent in Nigeria. The instances above, point to the direction of reform of our broken and dysfunctional Local Government system.

The overall performance of Local Government Areas has slipped considerably from about 40 per cent in 2005 when the average LG got N60 million monthly from the centre, to less than 10 percent in 2011, when they got an average of N100 million monthly from the Federation Account!. It is therefore no surprise that our rural areas are so underdeveloped.

### **Local Government**

Odion et al (2009) refers to Local Government as the public affair organ that is closer to the people. They went further to state that; in the conception of the guidelines to the 1976 Local government reform in Nigeria, local government is government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercised specific powers within defined areas. It serves as a tool for political education and participation as well as provides the basis for dispensing services in line with local needs.

Lawal & Oladunjoye (2010) opined that local government is fundamentally created to serve the rural communities. The local government is expected to mobilize and harness local resources and ensure their effective utilization, with the support of the state and federal governments.

Agagu (1997) quoted in Lawal & Oladunjoye (2010) conceives the local government as a government at the grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar needs of the people. In his analysis, he viewed local government as a level of government which is supposed to have its greatest impact on the people of the grassroots.

Ezeani (2004), also view local government generally as veritable agent of development and grassroots participation in the democratic process.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes the local government as a legal rational entity. Section 7 says:

The system of local government by democratically Elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every state shall, subject to section 8 of this Constitution, ensure their existence under A law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance, and functions, of such councils.

Oviasuyi, et al (2010), stressed that the Constitution goes further to establish the function of the local government in its fourth schedule of both the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the basic functions, which all local governments in Nigeria are established to perform, revolve around the following:

- (a) Functions in which success depends on communities' responsiveness and participation;
- (b) Functions which require detailed local knowledge for efficient performance
- (c) Functions which are of a personal nature requiring provision close to where the individuals affected live; and
- (d) Functions in which significant use of discretion or understanding of individuals are needed. Some of the other functions of Local Government Administration as stated by Awotokun (2005) in Oviasuyi et al (2010) are:
  - (a) The local government is authorized to consider and submit to a state commission or any other body on economic and social development as it affects the locality;

- (b) The economic functions of local government enable the authority to raise money through investments, taxes and other forms of levies;
- (c) The social and welfare functions of local government direct the authority towards the provision of such services as education, health, roads, and recreation grounds, etc, etc;
- (d) Local government administration also carries out informative functions such as enlightenment, development projects, administration, democratic and leadership initiative and maintenance of peace, law and order in the locality (Awotokun, 2005 in Oviasuyi, et al 2010).

In addition to the above, the local government administration also provides the following functions:

- i) Inspection of meat and abattoirs;
- ii) Provision of nursery, primary and adult education;
- iii) Provision of scholarship and bursaries award;
- iv) Provision of public libraries and reading rooms;
- v) Agricultural and animal health extension services and veterinary clinics, fire services;
- vi) Lighting and drainage;
- vii) Support for arts and culture;
- viii) Control of pollution;
- ix) Control of beggars and prostitution;
- x) Homes for destitute, the insane and orphans;
- xi) Public housing programmes;
- xii) Regulation and control of buildings;
- xiii) Town and country planning;
- xiv) Operations of commercial undertakings;
- xv) Control of traffic and parking;
- xvi) Pipe sewage systems (Aghayere, 1997 in Oviasuyi, et al 2010).

### ***Corruption and Service Delivery in Local Government System in Nigeria***

Government exists primarily to provide services that will make life worth living. It is the general agreement of most scholars and professionals that local governments in Nigeria have not justified the reasons for their creation through the delivery of cutting edge services to the rural people. This is glare in the assertion of ex-president Obasanjo in 2003 in *Agba et al (2013)* when he said inter alia.

What we have witnessed is the abysmal failure of the local government system. It is on record that at no time in the history of the country has there been the current level of funding accruing to the local governments from the Federal, yet the hope for rapid and sustained development has been a mirage as successive councils have grossly under-performed in their assigned responsibilities.

This observation shows among others that local governments have produced exactly opposite the original objectives for their creation.

Ukiwo (2006) in *Agba et al (2013)*, maintained that, instead of bringing government and development closer to the people, local governments have produced absentee local government Chairmen who are seen at council headquarters when the monthly 'Abuja Allocations' arrives and vamoose with their standby jeeps and mobile police escorts after superintending over the sharing of the local governments share of the national cake among relevant stakeholder.

The Nigeria State is characterized by prebendalism. This is a situation where public office is held first, for the interest of the officer and second, for the interest of the public. This situation has greatly encouraged corrupt practices at every level of government in Nigeria. Corruption means absence of accountability, transparency and civic engagement. It means selfish service; an attitude in public affair. An example of corruption at local government is using local government fund to finance political parties.

Aluko (2003), in *Izueke (2006)*, observed that collusion is also a powerful tool of corruption. He identified the following forms of collusion that are common to the local government system.

- a. collusion between supervisory ministries and local government chairmen;
- b. Collusion with citizen who benefit from the thieving public officers;
- c. Collusion with contractors to inflate contract prices or quotation.

From the above enumerated forms of collusion one can infer that service delivery is a far cry from local government system.

Corruption is also found in the award of contracts, promotion of staff, and dispensation of justice and misuse of public offices, position and privileges', embezzlement of public funds, publication, documents, valuable security, and account.

An analysis of the anti-graft laws in Nigeria shows that corruption will continue in spite of the laws because the perpetrators do not fear any consequences.

During the late 1970's Nigeria was regarded as the fastest growing country in sub-Sahara Africa in Adeyemi (2012). Yet it remains predominantly underdeveloped due to the scourge of corruption that has corroded it.

Corruption denies the ordinary citizens the basic means of livelihood, it worsen unemployment and erodes our image as a Nation and as individual (Danjuma, 2010) in Adeyemi (2012).

Health services are woefully inadequate, graduate unemployment is rising and so is crime rate in Adeyemi (2012). This culture of corruption which is rampant at National level constitutes a threatening force of development at the grassroots level. It has been a significant factor leading to the general failure of local government.

Arowolo (2008) in Adeyemi (2012) also opined that, hard earned and limited resources accrued to and raised by local government are always mismanaged. Priorities are misplaced; projects are done not according to or as demanded by the people but regrettable in tune with the selfish end and aggrandizement of political leadership in collaboration with senior bureaucrats at the local government level of Administration. Generally wide-scale embezzlement by officials of the grassroots has made the need development of grassroots a tall dream and has rendered them financially incapable to discharge their constitutionally assigned responsibility.

Oviasuyi, et al (2010) observed that "as in all levels of government in Nigeria, corruption is predominately widespread, undiluted and unambiguous in the local government". It is a fact that in the local government system, corruption has become all pervading, unabashed, uncontrolled and persistent. This perhaps explains the ineffectiveness in local governance Administration in Nigeria. The system has virtually become superfluous and redundant as (Oviasuyi et al, 2010) emphasized that some of the areas where corruption thrives in local government include:

- a. Inflation of prices of bought items
- b. Over estimation of cost of projects;
- c. The ghost workers syndrome;
- d. Award of contracts and subsequent abandonment; and
- e. Outright payment of huge sums of money to political godfathers.

Lawal & Oladunjoye (2010) stated that the effect of corruption on the polity could lead to destruction of democratic value: All values of democracy, such as responsiveness, accountability, participation and human development, are either subdued or neglected where corruption thrives. Development is hindered in a regime of corruption. Rather than utilizing the available resources for the upliftment and development of the council, they are directed to private use. Rule of law is also subverted and replaced by muscle power. In order to steal government resources, the officials in the local government system undermine the rules and regulations that guide their activities and ensure that whatever is stolen by them cannot be traced or tracked within their tenure in office. These have serious implication for service delivery as developmental projects may be abandoned without any necessary action. Also, in this ugly capacity, contracts are bound to be inflated, bribes and kickbacks are bound to be taken and contracts are also bound to be awarded to non-existent companies. Manpower development and capacity building becomes sluggish and discouraged in the arena of corruption.

Adeyemi (2012), writing on how corrupt local government system in Nigeria is, mention cases like; the former chairman of Ezeagu North East local government area council in Enugu State, Mr. Edwin Offor Nwatarali, has been charged before Enugu High Court by Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offence Commission (ICPC) for allegedly diverting the sum of ₦1, 109, 250, 00 belonging to the council to his personal use while in the office). In Bornu State, the former chairman of Monguno local government council, Alhaji Umar Shugaba Gan and Alkali Imam were convicted and sentences to (7) seven years imprisonment for corrupt practices. They were alleged for conspiracy and making false returns to the tune of One million, Five hundred Naira (Madu, 2009 in Adeyemi, 2012). Also sentenced for corrupt practices were Alhaji Gana Abbas, the former chairman of Dambon local government and the treasurer of the council, Alhaji Ali Abacha.

They were convicted and sentenced to 17 years imprisonment over misappropriation of public funds while in office as the chairman and treasurer respectively. They awarded contracts for the drilling of boreholes in Azir and Ngwalimi villages for the total sum of N12 million. The sum of N7 million was approved as mobilization fees for the contract to Galtis Nigeria Water Services. These two officers released only N1 million to the contractor and converted the remaining sum of N6 million to their personal use (Femi Gold, 2009 in Adeyemi, 2012).

ICPC also interrogated, the former chairman of Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State, Mr. Bako Shiga, he was alleged to have operated a single cash book and awarded contracts without due process which gave room for misappropriation of funds. The former chairman of Dekina local government area council in Kogi State, Adejo Akowe alleged to have collected money for security vote twice in one month, collected money for some sub-heads twice for the same project and conferred undue advantage to himself by virtue of his position (Mike, 2006 in Adeyemi, 2012).

ICPC also arraigned Saidu Musa, former chairman of Awe local government area council of Nassarawa State and two top principal officers Mr. Umaru Zanuwa, Director of Works and Alhaji Aso Safiyano, the Director of Finance over various corrupt practices involving ₦23, 503,940.00. Mr. Umaru H. Zannuwo, who was the Director of Works in the council, used his office to confer corrupt advantage upon himself by collecting the sum of ₦2, 430,000.00 for the electrification of Kanje/Kekura, a project which was financed and executed by Japanese Government. He was also accused of using his office as a Director of Works in the council to confer corrupt advantage upon himself by collecting the sum of ₦4, 522,000.00 for purported hiring of a bulldozer in the name of MICGA investment and converted the money to his personal uses. In a related development, he was alleged to have collected ₦818, 000.00 for construction of a bridge but converted the money to his personal use. Alhaji, Aso Safiyanu, was also alleged to have used his office as the Director of Finance in the council to confer corrupt advantage upon his relation by giving the sum of ₦500, 000.00 belonging to the council to his Brother Bala Safiyanu, who head the National Union of Road and Transport Workers (NURTW) for a service he did not render to the council (Ameh, 2008 in Adeyemi, 2012)

The former council chairman of Abeokuta North Local Government Council in Ogun State, Alhaji Morouf Ajisegun was convicted and sentenced to two years imprisonment with the option of ₦500, 000.00 fine for lavishing the sum of ₦260, 000.00 meant for printing of exercise books in the local government on Ileya gift (Ingobro, 2006 in Adeyemi 2012).

Fatile and Okewale (n.d), commenting on the level of corruption in Local Government, posit that “A cursory look at the level of corruption perpetrated by chairmen of local governments under Obasanjo civilian administration till date is a monumental waste. For instance, in 2001, the chairman Kachia LGA in Kaduna state awarded a contract of N2.5million for the rehabilitation and completion of women's centre and no work was done. Similarly, the chairman of Samga local government spent N6,495,605.70 as extra- budgetary spending. He awarded a contract of N3.171.375.00 for rehabilitation of his office which N906.044.00 would have been enough for the job. In Kwara State, the Chairman of Ilorin South LGA claimed to have built two staff residential apartment at Fufu the council headquarters at an inflated price of N20 million. The chairman also claimed to have paid N19 million to a contractor for the Ga-Akanbi and Niger roads which has been rehabilitated by the state government previous year. It was also reported that the chairman owned twelve personal cars (Aluko, 2006 in Fatile and Okewale, 2014)

In Benue state, continued Fatile and Okewale (2014), the Chairman of Ado LGA was reported to have spent ₦38,200,000.00 on maintenance of peace in the area where there was no crisis in the area since the Chairman assumed office. The Chairman also claimed to have spent ₦18 million on hospitality; the only LG Chairman in the country to have done so. Also, in Delta State, the Chairman of Okpe LGA was suspended by the, state House of Assembly on the allegation that he claimed have given ₦86 million to Niger Delta youths guarding pipeline installations. The chairman was further accused of mismanaging ₦400 million stabilization fund using his position to acquired 40 cars for himself and members of his family.

In Zamfara state, the chairman of sale local government was suspended for allegedly stealing ₦53 million. Presently, local government chairmen in the country have continue to soil their hands more. For instance, in March 2010, 12 out, of the 23 local government chairmen in the same Benue state have been recommended for' suspension for dipping their hands into the excess crude oil revenue. This followed reports submitted by three ad-hoc committees set up by the state House of Assembly.

Nine of them were recommended for three months suspension and directed to refund millions of naira they allegedly misappropriated, the chairmen of Gwer and Gwer Nest councils were to refund ₦56 million and ₦54 million respectively and stay out of office for six months. Their Ogbadibo counterpart, who was suspended from office sometime last year, was also suspended for six months for fraudulently enriching himself with the excess crude funds.(The News Magazine, 2010 in Fatile and Okewale, 2014).

In Oyo state, the level of corruption among local government chairmen is so high as observed by Lam Adeshina former governor of Oyo state recently when he averred that: "a few days ago, I got information that a chairman of local government in Ibadan city here built a hotel worth almost ₦400million and the state governor inaugurated the hotel for him. He further stressed, I have been saying it that most of the council chairmen in Oyo "State are corrupt. And Farida Waziri has not deemed it fit to send her officials here to probe them. I call on EFCC to send its officials to come and probe all the council' chairmen in Oyo State. The whole place is infested with corruption. There is no local government chairman in Oyo State today either the past or current who has not got one hotel, one fuel station or shopping complex. I'm disclosing this on my honour. This is a lead that I have given to the EFCC (News Star, 2010 in Fatile, and Okewale, n.d).

Nwanma (2008) in Fatile and Okewale (2014) also exposes a disheartening scenario in Yobe State, Nigeria, where a man walked to the headquarters of Jakusko Local Government Area and with his sharp machete, hacked seven people to death. A staff of the LGA, the man was said to have been owed "several months" salary by the local government authorities. The frustration that drove the man into this dastardly act represents the failure of the country's local" councils to meet the basic needs of the citizens, even in the face of overflowing revenues from the central government. Yobe's 17 Local Government' Areas received a total of 72.3 billion in eight years, from 1999 to 2007, according to figures from the office of the Accountant General of the Federation. One must have doubted this estimate if it has to be judged on the development status of different localities in Yobe State. So, corruption has really denied the public the dividend of their "social contract" In fact, grassroots administration in Nigeria is increasingly tarring into the fastest means of primitive accumulation. This is due to the fact that the more resources pumped into local government, the less the provision of essential services to the people at the grassroot level in Nigeria.

The above explanations are few examples of financial recklessness in local government councils in Nigeria. The consequence is an emasculating deprivation of basic amenities and a dangerous disconnection and disenchantment of the people with the three tiers of government; while the officials of the council celebrate their ill gotten wealth.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This paper is anchored on the Principal-Agent Theory. The Principal-Agent Theory adopted from Batley (2004) in Kayode et al (2013) examines organizational relationship as a tension between the" Principal" who demand a service and the "Agent" who provides it. The model assumes that actors are motivated by rational self interest. The issue in connection with this paper is how the Principal (in this case, the Nigerian citizens) can manage the self interest of those empowered to act on their behalf (i.e. the Agents: government officials, politicians, legislator, bureaucrats etc) so that it will aligned with the purposes that they (the principal) wish to achieve.

The problem arises not just from conflict of interest but also from the privilege access of the agents to information. The agent who has been employed to provide a service will tend to use their superior knowledge to divert benefits in their own direction.

Hague (1996) quoted in Kayode et al (2013) argue that Public Administration itself is prone to corruption, since officials exercise a substantial amount of power. There are possibilities for acquiring improper benefits by interpreting or bending rules in favour of certain groups or individual.

In a democratic polity, the ultimate principals are the citizens who are the consumers of specific service provided by the government. In the Political-Agent theory, they are Principal in the sense that politicians as Agents seek their mandate from and act as the representatives of the public.

The likely hood of the principal effectively controlling the Agent depends on how much information the principal has about the performance of the Agent, and how far the principal can structure the relationship so as to control the Agent or give incentives so as to make the Agents interest correspond to the Principals.

USAID report (2003) in Kayode et al (2013) stated that corruption is the misuse of entrusted power for private gain.

From the definition, one can see that corruption is a selfish and dishonest act that deprives a vast majority (apart from the perpetrators and their cohorts) of desire benefits i.e. social, economic, political, and other legitimate benefits.

This definition of corruption has emphasis on personal interest as against the public interest. The Principal-Agent theory thus, will help in espousing how the perpetration of this selfish interest has affected the ability of the Agent in providing the necessary services to the Principal, in an effective and efficient manner, in the right quality and quantity.

The framework will, therefore enhance scientific understanding and stands as an operational tool to further assess the role of corruption and poor service delivery in local government system in Nigeria;

### ***Conclusion***

It is apparent that most local government authorities are not functional. With the exception of few local governments in the country, others are mere shadow of themselves. In terms of meeting their core mandate they have been largely ineffective and inefficient. This explains why after many years of comprehensive and democratically minded local government reform of 1976, little social dividends can be found in most local government. There is no doubt that the high rate of corruption in the local government has great implication on service delivery. It is rather unfortunate that the citizens that are supposed to enjoy the benefits of these services are rather subjected to all forms of ridicule and frustration.

### ***Recommendations***

We thus, recommend that the local governments in Nigeria should be scrapped. The circumstance that has characterized poor service delivery at the grass root in Nigeria has been a colossal tales of one corrupt case to the other. The position here is in line with the opinion of the delegates in the just concluded National Conference. The idea is that since the creation of the third tier of government, the situation of grassroots development has gone from bad to worst. It is thus suggested that the local government should be made an administrative arm of the State Government rather than leaving it in the current situation where even the conduct of a free and fair democratically elected functionaries has become almost impossible. The few areas where elections are conducted, they seem not to be performing.

Again, the Financial Crime regulatory institutions should conclude all the outstanding financial fraud cases on the past Local Governments bosses that are all over the courts in Nigeria. This would help to some extent serve as a guide to upcoming politicians whom would be at the helms of affairs.

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