

EXAMINING HOW DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE GAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines how decentralisation and local governance improve service delivery to the public in The Gambia. The study used “cross-sectional descriptive survey design”, through the administration of structured questionnaire of five-point Likert scale among the selected local government councils. Random sampling technique was adopted to calculate the sample size for the study. The study randomly selected five (5) institutions which included Kanifing Municipal Council, Brikama Area Council, Kerewan Area Council, Mansakonko Area Council, and the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government. Consequently, the sample size for the study was 325 from the study population of 2099 which included both administrative staff and service beneficiaries of the sampled local government councils and their line ministry in The Gambia. A total of 300 copies of questionnaire were retrieved from the field which represents a response rate of 92 percent. Primary data were collected through questionnaire administration and conduct of interviews. The questionnaire used semi-structured questions which were both open- and close-ended. The data were analysed using Stata version 13. Secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished policy documents, records, journals, relevant text books and the Internet to augment the study. The results of the study showed that decentralisation and local governance contributed immensely to improving service delivery. The study concluded that decentralisation as a strategy contributed a lot in improving local community participation in economic and political activities and empowered them to take ownership of their own community resources.

Keywords: Decentralisation, Local Government, Administration, Governance, Local Council, Central, Government, Service Delivery

JEL classification codes: H83, D78, G38, L38, L88

1. INTRODUCTION

For the past thirty years, decentralisation has been vigorously promoted and pursued as a way to bring decision making close to communities. It has been on the global agenda pushed forward by multi-lateral organisations including World Health Organisation (WHO), Local Development International (LDI) and World Bank (Mills, Vaughan, Smith, Tabibzadeh, & World Health Organisation, 1990). Local governance is a critical component of the mainstream public service in any viable democracy. Thus, the public service is an important public institution for delivering service and development. The

public service serves as a catalyst for public policy, particularly where the political leadership is fragile. It proffers continuity in governance and acts as a fountain of knowledge of past and present government decisions and processes. The public service supports the established government and creates the enabling environment that permits the public servants to contribute to good governance through effective service delivery (Omisore & Adeleke (2015; Ogbonnaya, 2018; Onah, Ugwuibe, Nwogbo, & Osadebe, 2022). Decentralisation is driven by the desire to empower localities to make decisions for themselves to meet their priorities and address their needs more effectively. “Decentralisation refers to the transfer of powers and responsibilities from a national to a sub-national level of governance” and that “decentralisation is often divided into sub-areas corresponding to functions of government: political, administrative, fiscal and institutional” (The World Bank, 2014: 4; and Batchelor, Smith & Fleming, 2014: 4). Decentralisation is initially pursued as an administration reform process to enhance service delivery and economic efficiency and improvement in service delivery, and decentralisation has become widely considered as an essential process for strengthening democratic practice in countries (Karmal, 2017). Similarly, Work (2002) described decentralisation as the transfer of responsibility to the lower levels of the central government for planning and management. For this, the central government allocates resources to the lower levels of the government. Decentralisation in The Gambia was conceived as a broad consultative process that involved broad local, national and international stakeholders. The Government of The Gambia has formulated the National Decentralisation Policy for Decentralisation Document in 2007 in close partnership with international donors such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Development Fund (EDF) of the European Commission, and World Bank. The 2007 policy document is now replaced by the “National Policy for Decentralisation and Local Development (2015-2024)” which is currently in use. Decentralisation is a widely accepted concept that can facilitate and ensure citizens’ participation in public decision making and taking the lead role in their own development and expedite development, devolution of powers, redistribution of responsibilities and adequate provision of essential resources to local councils/government; transparency and accountability at the lower levels of government and provision of quality services to the population among others; however, it needs to be handled with care (Faye, 2015).

Decentralisation and local governance in The Gambia derive their mandate from the “1997 Constitution of The Gambia”, “Local Government Act, 2002”, “Local Government Finance and Audit Act, 2004”, and “National Policy for Decentralisation and Local Development (2015-2024)”. The Government of The Gambia’s commitment to decentralisation has found expression in the 1997 Constitution of of The Gambia, especially Sections 193 (1) and 214(3) which embody the directive principles of state policy. The 2002 Local Government Act was enacted and implemented in 2002. The Act states that there shall be a Council for each Local Government Area which shall have such powers and function as are vested in it by the Act. According to this Act, each council will be a corporate body named City or Municipal Council as may be appropriate preceded by the name Local Government Area for which the council is established. Local governments are provided legislative and legal instruments that state clear directions for effective service delivery and are constitutionally mandated as enshrined in the 2002 Local Government Act to provide basic infrastructural services as are deemed necessary for the residents of the municipality. The Act also tasks these councils to exercise political and executive powers and functions to embark on community development initiatives to enhance the lives of the residents. The “National Development Plan (NDP, 2018-2021: 23)” emphasises that the “goal for decentralisation is: fully empowered and functional local government structures that stimulate and respond to the demographic and economic trends of The Gambia”. One of the major strategic goals of the NDP is necessitated by the need to respond to the challenges confronting the country following 22 years of tyrannical rule and the transition to democracy and good governance among others. The challenges include but not limited to “inadequate provision of vital infrastructure services such as

electricity, water and sanitation and waste management” (NDP, 2018-2021: 4), and “a deterioration in governance with the country’s ranking in the Mo Ibrahim index declining from 19th to 35th out of 54 African countries between 2009 and 2016 (World Bank, 2017, cited in NDP, 2018-2021: 4).

Furthermore, The Gambia National Policy for Decentralisation and Local Development (2015-2024) stresses the need for decentralisation to harness popular participation of local people at the grassroots level in national development. Equally, the 1997 Constitution of the Second Republic of The Gambia as a regulatory framework, prescribed a system of democratic governance that is “participatory at all levels of society, especially at the local level.” To this effect, Section 193(1) of the 1997 Constitution clearly states that “local government administration in The Gambia shall be based on a system of democratically elected councils with a high degree of local autonomy.” Local government administration is one of man’s oldest institutions. The earliest form of local government administration existed in the form of clan and village meetings. In fact, democracy itself originated and developed along the lines of local governance initiatives in the ancient Greek City State. It should be noted, however, that in most parts of the world, local governance developed along the people’s culture and expectations, and the system was tied to the norms and practice of the people (Aghayere, 1997; Mechebem, 2016).

The principal challenge to making decentralisation work better in the developing countries including The Gambia is “to promote a more sustainable, inclusive, and accountable system of governance and fiscal management that is appropriate for each country’s level of social and economic heterogeneity” (The World Bank, 2020: 45). Furthermore, the efficient and effective provision of basic amenities and social infrastructure for the people at the grass root level are key factors to the existence of any government. The local government councils are, thus, required to serve the public interest in the areas of constructing roads, public markets, health care, drainages, transportation, motor parks, and building primary schools, among others. This is because local government administration is the concern of the grass root people in the provision of social and economic amenities to the rural areas where they come from, making a government at the doorstep of rural inhabitants. These functions of local government are well known and popularised by the constitution of most countries. What seems to matter to the people at the grass root level is to see tangible results of their taxes, contribution, labour expended and the judicious use of local government grants and funds.

In the Gambian context, local government obtain their mandates and powers from the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, the Local Government Act 2002, and The Local Government Finance and Audit Act, 2004 as guiding legislative instruments to make local government councils more productive and respond better to the needs and aspirations of the local population. The local governments are granted political authority to perform their constitutional responsibilities in line with constitutional provisions. In many commonwealth countries, for example in Africa, traditional structures co-exist with elected local government. The role and extent of authority of these structures – Chiefs and Paramount chiefs etc. varies from country to country. In The Gambia, the mandates of traditional chiefs are enshrined in the 1997 Constitution. Many countries are striving to integrate chiefs into decentralised and local government systems and structures.

Decentralisation framework should result in equitable distribution of resources, diversity and inclusion, national unity, democracy and accountability and informed decision making (Olaiya, 2016). In the Gambian context, decentralisation faces some hurdles that impede its full implementation. Such challenges include institutional and organisational incapacities, and potentials of local government officials do not necessarily equip them with the competencies and capacities essential to allow total devolution of powers and resources to the local councils (Local Government Act, 2002). Furthermore, some local government councils in The Gambia do not have adequate revenue base to meet their obligations. An inadequate revenue collection mechanism also means that arrears of revenues not collected accumulate every year. The paper argues that the quality of decentralisation, local governance

and the capacity of local and central governments to deliver to services to the public are most probably one of the major factors that could enhance or hamper community development. It is argued that there is a possible link between decentralisation and service delivery, however, it is worth noting that empirical evidence regarding the link between decentralisation and service delivery to present continues to be inconclusive (Khan, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2005; Ghuman & Singh, 2013; Liwanag, 2019). The main gap identified for the study is that while decentralisation and local governance have been researched extensively from different perspectives by scholars (The World Bank, 2014; Omisore & Adeleke (2015; Ogonnaya, 2018; Oduola, Sawaneh, Ogunbela, and Babarinde (2019; The World Bank, 2020; Onah, Ugwuibe, Nwogbo, & Osadebe, 2022;), limited empirical findings discussed above have addressed how decentralisation and local governance in The Gambia improve service delivery to the public. Consequently, there is dearth of scholarship and empirical findings on whether the decentralisation policy setting of The Gambia has improved service delivery through the local governance, with a focus on selected councils. Hence, the study examines how decentralisation and local governance improve service delivery to the public in The Gambia.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concepts of Decentralisation and Service Delivery

Decentralisation can be in the form of political, administrative, legislative, fiscal, or market decentralisation (Rendinelli, McCullough & Johnson, 1989). In the public service sector, service components are often not physical entities, but rather are a combination of processes, people, skills and materials that must be appropriately integrated to result in ‘planned and designed’ service. Goldstein, Johnson, Duffy & Rao (2002) argue that service innovation has also been defined in a number of ways from a narrow view of being concerned with the “idea generation portion of the new service delivery”.

Service delivery refers to the actual delivery of service and products to customers or clients (Lovelock & Wright, 1999; Wright & Taylor, 2009). It is therefore concerned with the where, when, and how a service/product is delivered to the customers with a high degree of satisfaction, and whether this is fair or unfair in nature. The service concepts define the ‘how’ and ‘what’ of service design and help mediate between customer needs and an organisation’s strategic intent (Goldstein, Johnson, Duffy & Rao, 2002). According to Chen, Tson and Huang (2009), innovation in service delivery orientation refers to propensity to change through adopting new techniques, resources, skills and administrative systems. Innovation drivers are similar in product and services context at most differing in relative importance between the two environments. In the public service sector, service components are often not physical entities, but rather are a combination of processes, people skills and materials that must be appropriately integrated to result in ‘planned ‘and ‘design service.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Tiebout’s Model

The Tiebout model deliberates the “relationship among intercommunity mobility, voluntary community formation and efficient provision of public goods”. The Tiebout (1956) hypothesis “emphasised that in economic situation where it is optimal to have many areas offering competing bundles of public goods, the movement of consumers to areas where their needs are best satisfied and competition between jurisdictions for residents will lead to best market like results”. Individuals will vote and identify the community that offers the bundle of public services and taxes they like best. In equilibrium, people distribute themselves across communities on the based on their demands for such public goods and services. “Each individual receives his/her desired level of public services and cannot be made better off by moving. Hence, the equilibrium is Pareto efficient” (Oligbi, 2020: 96).

2.3 Empirical Review

Antonio (2018, cited in Olibi, 2020: 97) investigated “the impact of fiscal decentralization on accountability, economic freedom, political and civil liberties in the Americas”. The findings showed that “decentralization initially hampers but eventually enhances accountability and political and civil liberties, in line with the hypothesized positive correlation between greater fiscal autonomy and a more inclusive, participatory government”. Similarly, the empirical study of Olibi (2020: 95) found that, “fiscal decentralization has not encouraged macroeconomic stability that has significantly led to economic growth in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends the need for practical devolution of fiscal responsibility especially in the areas of revenue assignment”. Oduola, Sawaneh, Ogunbela, and Babarinde (2019: 21) conducted a study on “Revenue Generation in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State: A Correlate of Tax Mobilization and Utilization” and found that “The study concluded that tax mobilization of the council is not optimally explored as perceived money-spinning sources of tax revenue to local council because other components such as tenement rate, and shops and kiosks rate were not often mobilized. The study further established that expenditure priority of the local council threatens taxpayers’ commitment to paying taxes”.

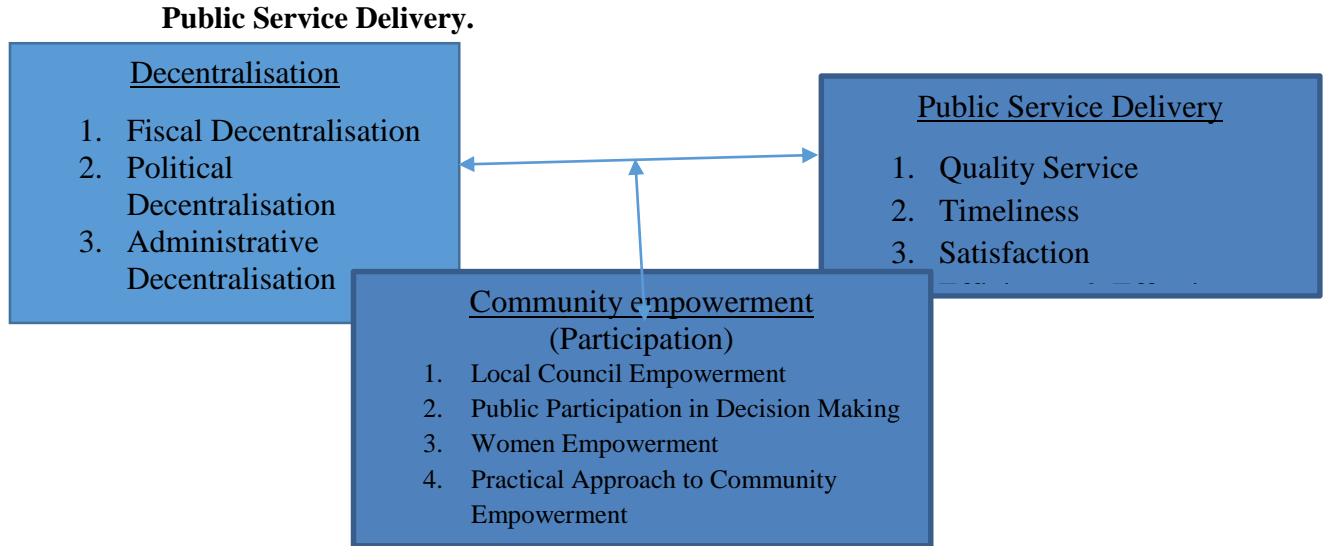
Ekpo (2008, p.2-3) explains that improving service delivery at the sub-national and lower levels of government can effectively deliver services such as water, education, sanitation and health. Also at the lower levels of a government, politicians and civil servants are more aware of the needs of the community because of their proximity to the local communities and are more likely to be responsive to provide such services. Khalegian (2003) views decentralisation through the prism of childhood immunisation in low and middle-income countries. He points out that decentralisation has had a positive impact on middle-income countries when it has a positive effect on childhood immunisation in lower-income countries. In a similar vein, Lewis (2016: 815-817) studied “the impact of local government expenditure on the delivery of service in Indonesia”, and his “empirical examination revealed that district expenditures had a positive influence on access to education, health, and infrastructures”. In their study, Wagana, Iravo, and Kihoro (2016: 313) have described the “relationship between decentralisation and service delivery in Kenya by using a descriptive survey design for the investigation”. They revealed a “significant positive relationship between fiscal decentralisation and service delivery”. Shen, Zhao and Zou (2014: 137) attempted to “explore the key issues and challenges in China’s decentralisation and public service delivery and financing system, and presented some important findings which “emphasised the necessity to promote local government responsible for the provision of good public services.” Faguet (2014) focuses more on the relation between decentralisation and policy-relevant outcomes such as education, health services, public investment, level of corruption, and national and subnational fiscal deficits. He opines that decentralisation does not allow local politicians to quit the responsibilities of their voters. Looking at the economic implications of decentralisation,

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the theoretical framework based on the models of Adams (2002), Martin & Terblancle (2003), and Von Braun and Grote (2000) to better explain the importance of collaboration and cooperation between various stakeholders in building a strong decentralisation programme and local governance structures. This aims to effectively implement decentralisation policies and programmes to respond to the needs and aspirations of local community members, and for the local government councils to provide efficient and effective services for local population.

Figure 1: The Relation between Decentralisation, Community Empowerment (Participation) and



Source: Adopted and Modified from Adams (2002), Martin & Terblancle (2003), and Von Braun and Grote (2000)

The model is based on three variables: decentralisation as an independent variable, public service as the dependent variable, and community empowerment (participation) as an intervening variable. So service delivery as a dependent variable depends on robust and smart decentralisation laws and policies to propel sound and efficient service delivery. According to the model, these are specific elements that to be encompassed and integrated with the decentralisation policy (Adam, 2002, and Von Braun & Grote, 2002). This concept or model further explains the systems theory as part of the theories which explain the importance of all the sub-components of the whole working as in a broader system; if one part malfunctions, it will adversely affect the others. This is because decentralisation depends on collaboration, cooperation and partnership amongst various stakeholders vital for its successful implementation. In this framework, decentralisation should be a concern of every government, local council and community member, as beneficiaries should be within the stay of the country’s decentralisation policy formulation and implementation to have effective and sound governance systems leading to proper accountability and eventually enhancing public service delivery in the country (Adam, 2002).

3.2 Research Design and Sampling

The study employed cross-sectional descriptive survey research design which involved eliciting data from respondents. Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative instruments like open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires. The study employed descriptive statistical instruments to analyse data.

The study population consisted of 2,099 individuals who were represented by both beneficiaries and administrative staff of the sampled local government councils in The Gambia which were divided using proportionate-to-size sampling technique. The population of the study comprised the senior management of the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government responsible for decentralisation programmes in the country through its Directorate of Local Governance. The selected five (5) local government councils include: Kanifing Municipal Council, with a total number of 1298 staff members with a sample size of 201; Brikama Area Council, with a total number of 429 staff members with a sample size of 66; the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government, with a staff of 51 members with

sample size of 8; Kerewan Area Council with a staff of 182 members with a sample size of 28; and Mansakonko Area Council with a population of 139 people with sample size of 22. In addition, senior officers of each of the five institutions and their beneficiaries were interviewed on service provision and consumption using convenient sampling. Beneficiaries for each organisation were purposively selected for the study to gauge their opinions and views on whether decentralisation and local government administration improve public service delivery or not.

Random sampling formula (Cochran, 1963) was adopted to calculate the sample size for the study. The study randomly selected five (5) institutions which included Kanifing Municipal Council, Brikama Area Council, Kerewan Area Council, Mansakonko Area Council, and the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government as the coordinating ministry responsible for formulating decentralisation programmes in the country. The respondents comprised senior officers from grades 8 to 12 of these institutions concerned with decentralisation and public service delivery and their beneficiaries to gauge their opinions on the effects of decentralisation on delivering services to the public. Cochran's (1963) random sampling formula was used to determine the sample size for the population, as shown below.

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

p = estimated proportion of the population (5%)

e = margin of error (0.05)

q = 1 - p

Z-value is found in a Z table

$$\frac{Z^2pq}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = 384.16$$

$$n_0 = 384.16$$

Due to its suitability for small populations, the study used Cochran's modified formula to calculate the sample size:

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + (n_0 - 1) / N}$$

Where:

n = new adjusted sample size

N = is the population size

n₀ = required return sample size according to Cochran's formula

$$n_0 = 384 / 1 - 1825 = 324.73$$

$$n_0 = 325$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study was 325 respondents which represent 15% of the population.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A total of 325 copies of questionnaire were distributed to selected respondents and 300 were retrieved from the field which represents 92 percent response rate. The results presented in Table 1 on the first assertion show that 257 respondents (85.67%) agreed that decentralisation enhanced timely and convenient access to service delivery to local council beneficiaries, while 19 respondents (6.33%) disagreed that decentralisation never led to timely and convenient access to service delivery to council beneficiaries, leaving 24 respondents (8%) who have undecided opinions. It is therefore affirmed that most of the respondents were in agreement and thus believed that decentralisation has a contributed positively to access service delivery.

The results presented in Table 1 on the second assertion indicate that 259 respondents (86.34%) agreed that decentralisation improves service delivery in their communities; the results also show that

10 respondents (3.33%) disagreed with the statement, and 16 respondents (5.33%) have undecided opinions on the subject matter. Therefore, most of the respondents (86.34%) confirmed this assertion to be true.

Regarding research statement three, a total of 259 respondents (86.34%) who agreed with the statement that decentralisation empowers people to participate in local governance in order to improve service delivery, while 12 respondents (4.00%) disagreed with the statement, leaving 29 respondents (9.67%) who have chosen to neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Consequently, the results conclude that the statement is accurate.

Concerning research statement four, Table 1 displays a total of 250 respondents (83.34%) who agreed with the statement that decentralisation is an effective mechanism to monitor local government councils’ service delivery in their communities, while 20 respondents (6.66%) disagreed with the statement, leaving 30 respondents (10.0%) who have chosen to neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Thus, the results confirm that the statement is accurate.

In relation to research assertion five, Table 1 displays a total of 249 respondents (83%) agreed with the statement that local government councils have the authority to plan and implement their own programmes in their jurisdictions, while 13 respondents (4.33%) disagreed with the statement, leaving 38 respondents (12.67%) who have chosen to neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Consequently, the results conclude that the statement is accurate.

On statement six, the results of study found that 203 respondents (67.66%) agreed that decentralisation, overall, has improved service delivery to the public in their local council areas, and that about 38 respondents (12.67%) disagreed with the proposition leaving 59 respondents (19.67%) who were undecided on the subject. The results revealed that about 203 respondents (97.66%) overwhelmingly confirm this statement to be accurate.

Table 1: Examining how Decentralisation and Local Governance Improve Service Delivery in The Gambia

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Assertion	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)	f and (%)
Decentralisation makes timely and convenient access to service delivery by council beneficiaries.	134 (44.67)	123 (41.00)	24 (8.00)	18 (6.0)	1 (0.33)
Decentralisation improves service delivery in your local council area.	134 (45.33)	123 (41.0)	27 (9.0)	10 (3.33)	4 (1.33)
Decentralisation empowers people to participate in local governance in order to improve service delivery.	152 (50.67)	107 (35.67)	29 (9.67)	12 (4.00)	00 (0.0)
Decentralisation is an effective mechanism to monitor local councils’ service delivery in your community.	140 (46.67)	110 (36.67)	30 (10.0)	16 (3.33)	4 (1.33)

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Local government councils have 140 the authority to plan and implement their own programmes in their jurisdictions.	(46.67)	109 (36.33)	38 (12.67)	9 (3.0)	4 (1.33)
Overall, decentralisation, has improved service delivery to the public.	(33.33)	100 (34.33)	59 (19.67)	29 (9.67)	9 (3.33)
Mean Score	133.67 (44.56)	112.5 (37.45)	34.5 (11.5)	15.67 (5.22)	4.4 (1.46)

The findings on the study objective revealed that decentralisation and local government administration are good strategies towards empowering local people to participate in the decentralisation process to improve service delivery. This is in line with the study conducted by Von Braun and Grote (2002) who observed that decentralised management of schools contributed to improvement in achievement scores in Nicaraguan local council areas. According to the findings from this study, most of the respondents affirmed the fact that decentralisation played a pivotal role in monitoring and evaluating the level of service delivery provided by local councils.

The results of the study revealed further that most of the respondents alluded to the fact that decentralisation and local government administration played a critical role towards timely and convenient access to public goods and service delivery. This, in turn, is corroborated by Faguet (2013) who found that decentralisation made some public investment in education and other services more responsive to local preferences and enhanced their lives as the local councils are located closer to them. Similarly, this study found that decentralisation empowered the beneficiaries to participate in decision making and enabled them to participate in decentralisation processes and participate effectively in political roles.

To complement the quantitative data, interviews were conducted with the officials from the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government and beneficiaries of decentralisation programmes of local government councils. In an interview conducted with the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry responsible for coordinating decentralisation programmes on his views on decentralisation, the PS agreed that decentralisation is a good policy framework formulated by the Ministry to “*ensure devolution of administrative, fiscal and political powers of local councils and become a centre stage where community needs and aspirations can be addressed by local people themselves*”. He also views decentralisation as a strategy to empower the local population to articulate their own development needs and be drivers of their own development through community driven projects.

In an interview with the Director of Services of Kerewan Area Council said “*limited understanding and knowledge of decentralisation, lack of political participation of local communities, unawareness of the role of local councils by the local population, and lack of ownership and autonomy from the central government affected the realisation of benefits of decentralisation.*”

Also, the beneficiary interviewees were unanimous in their views that decentralisation could facilitate and promote local community participation and decision making on matters that affect their lives, and that decentralisation could strengthen and promote transparency and accountability in the management of local community resources entrusted to the leadership on how their taxes are utilised and expensed by their local councils.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study revealed that decentralisation and local government administration played a key role in enhancing overall service delivery due to the implementation of national and

international legal strategies that were formulated to strengthen decentralisation and local governance in The Gambia. It was also discovered that this decentralisation framework created avenues to strengthen improvement of service delivery, facilitated community political participation, and enhanced decision making rights on matters that affected beneficiaries. The results of the study showed that decentralisation and local government governance contributed immensely to improving and enhancing service delivery through the formulation and implementation of sustainable environmental sanitation, effective waste management strategies by most of the local councils. The study concludes that decentralisation as a strategy contributed a lot to improving local community participation in economic and political activities and empowered them to take ownership of their own community resources.

The study advanced the following recommendations. First, the central Government of The Gambia should support the decentralised structures at the grassroots level to work with the councils. The government should conduct holistic assessment of community development needs and training and capacity development needs for local council staff in order to improve decentralised service delivery. Equally, the Government of The Gambia should fully review and enforce the 2002 Local Government Act, and Local Government Finance and Audit Act 2004. In addition, the government should fully enforce the National Policy for Decentralisation and Local Development (2015-2024) and any other legal instruments and policies on local governance to make decentralisation respond to needs and aspirations of the people at sub-national level. Second, facilitate and strengthen greater participation of women, youth and socially disadvantaged members of the society to ensure inclusiveness of all relevant stakeholders in the decentralisation process to achieve a balance in local fiscal policy. This will enable the government to encourage economic development and spread the benefits of decentralisation through appropriate measures of distribution of national wealth across the spectrum of the wider society.

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