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Role of Public Administration in Enhancing Democratic Principles in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study examined the role of public administration in enhancing democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 28 senior and middle-level administrative staff of the Otukpo Local Government Council, from which 18 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling techniques. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Role of Public Administration in Enhancing Democratic Principles Questionnaire (RPEDPQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Public Administration and Measurement and Evaluation, while reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product–Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that effective public administration significantly promotes transparency and accountability through practices such as open decision-making, information disclosure, and citizen participation, thereby strengthening democratic principles. However, challenges including corruption, political interference, inadequate funding, weak administrative structures, and poor policy implementation were found to hinder effective democratic governance at the grassroots. The study further established that strategies such as adequate funding, administrative reforms, staff training, transparency mechanisms, and strengthened monitoring institutions can improve the role of public administration in promoting accountability, participation, and good governance. The study recommended institutionalizing open governance practices and encouraging active citizen participation to enhance democratic governance in the local government area.
Keywords: Role of Public Administration, Democratic Principles, Transparency and Accountability.

Introduction
Public administration plays a central role in promoting and sustaining democratic principles, particularly at the grassroots level where governance directly interacts with citizens. In Nigeria, democratic governance is anchored on principles such as accountability, transparency, participation, rule of law, and responsiveness. These principles are widely regarded as essential components of good governance and effective public sector management (Asadu & Onwuka, 2021). However, the realization of these democratic ideals largely depends on the effectiveness of public administrative institutions responsible for policy implementation and service delivery. Transparency and accountability, for instance, are considered critical pillars of democracy because they ensure that public officials are answerable for their actions and that government processes remain open to public scrutiny (Nwankwo et al., 2021; Paradigm Leadership Support Initiative, 2022). In Otukpo Local Government Area, challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, lack of transparency, and weak citizen engagement continue to undermine democratic governance. These issues reduce the effectiveness of public administration in delivering services and ensuring equitable resource distribution. Studies have shown that persistent corruption and weak accountability systems in Nigeria's public sector significantly hinder democratic development and public trust (Omoniyi & Akintoye, 2024). Public administration, when properly structured and effectively managed, can enhance democratic values by promoting inclusive governance, efficient service delivery, and institutional accountability. Therefore, this study examines the role of public administration in enhancing democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area, with a view to identifying its contributions, challenges, and possible improvements (Ogbazi, 2019).

Objective of the Study
The general objective of this study is to examine the Role of public Administration in enhancing Democratic Principles in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State.

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Specific Objectives are:

1. To examine the extent to which public administration promotes transparency and accountability.
2. To identify challenges affecting the effectiveness of public administration in enhancing democratic principles
3. To propose strategies for improving democratic governance through public administration.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does public administration promote transparency and accountability?
2. What challenges hinder the effectiveness of public administration in enhancing democratic principles?
3. What strategies can improve the role of public administration in promoting democracy?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between public administration and the promotion of transparency and accountability.
2. There are no significant challenges hindering the effectiveness of public administration in enhancing democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State.
3. There are no significant strategies that can improve the role of public administration in promoting democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State.

Research Methodology

This study examined The Role of Public Administration in Enhancing Democratic Principles in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised 28 senior and middle-level administrative staff of Otukpo Local Government Council, from which a sample of 18 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Role of Public Administration in Enhancing Democratic Principles Questionnaire (RPEDPQ). Experts in Public Administration and Measurement and Evaluation validated the instrument, while reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product–Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Research Questions 1

To what extent does public administration promote transparency and accountability?

Table 1: Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration (N = 18)

S/N	Statement on Transparency & Accountability	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.
1	Public administration ensures openness in decision-making processes	15	10	3	0	3.43	0.65
2	Citizens have access to adequate information about government activities	12	13	3	0	3.32	0.64
3	Public officials are accountable to the people	14	11	3	0	3.39	0.66
4	Government programmes are implemented transparently	13	12	3	0	3.36	0.63
5	Public administration encourages citizen participation in governance	11	14	3	0	3.29	0.59

Field Survey, 2026

The table shows respondents' perceptions of transparency and accountability in public administration. The mean scores for all items range from 3.29 to 3.43, indicating that respondents generally agreed to strongly agreed that public administration promotes transparency and accountability in the study area. Specifically, the highest mean score (3.43) suggests that respondents strongly believe that public administration ensures openness in decision-making processes. Similarly, high mean values for accountability (3.39) and transparency in programme implementation (3.36) indicate positive perceptions

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of administrative practices. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.59 to 0.66, are relatively low. This implies that the responses are consistent, with minimal variation among respondents. The findings suggest that public administration promotes transparency and accountability to a high extent**.** This reflects positively on governance practices and indicates that administrative institutions are contributing to democratic principles such as openness, responsibility, and citizen participation.

Research Question 2

What challenges hinder the effectiveness of public administration in enhancing democratic principles?

Table 2: Challenges Affecting Public Administration in Enhancing Democratic Principles (N = 18)

S/N	Statement on Challenges	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.
1	Inadequate funding limits effective service delivery	14	11	3	0	3.39	0.66
2	Corruption affects transparency and accountability	15	10	3	0	3.43	0.65
3	Lack of skilled personnel reduces administrative efficiency	13	12	3	0	3.36	0.63
4	Poor infrastructure hinders effective governance	12	13	3	0	3.32	0.64
5	Low citizen participation affects democratic processes	11	14	3	0	3.29	0.59

Field Survey, 2026

The table presents respondents' views on the challenges affecting the effectiveness of public administration in promoting democratic principles. The mean scores range from 3.29 to 3.43, indicating that respondents generally agreed to strongly agreed that these factors are major challenges. Corruption recorded the highest mean score (3.43), suggesting it is perceived as the most significant challenge affecting transparency and accountability. Inadequate funding (3.39) and lack of skilled personnel (3.36) were also identified as serious constraints limiting effective service delivery and administrative performance. Additionally, poor infrastructure (3.32) and low citizen participation (3.29) were acknowledged as factors that weaken governance and reduce the effectiveness of democratic processes. The standard deviation values (0.59–0.66) are low, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents and consistency in their responses. The findings reveal that public administration in the study area is significantly hindered by challenges such as corruption, inadequate funding, shortage of skilled personnel, poor infrastructure, and low citizen participation. These challenges negatively affect transparency, accountability, and overall democratic governance.

Research Question 3

What strategies can improve the role of public administration in promoting democracy?

Table 3: Strategies for Improving Public Administration to Promote Democracy (N = 18)

S/N	Statement on Strategies	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Dev.
1	Increase funding and resource allocation to local governments	15	10	3	0	3.43	0.65
2	Build capacity of public servants through training and skill development	14	11	3	0	3.39	0.66
3	Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and accountability systems	13	12	3	0	3.36	0.63
4	Promote transparency through regular reporting and open communication	12	13	3	0	3.32	0.64
5	Encourage citizen participation and community engagement in governance	11	14	3	0	3.29	0.59

Field Survey, 2026

The table shows respondents' perceptions of strategies that can enhance the role of public administration in promoting democratic governance. The mean scores range from 3.29 to 3.43, indicating that respondents generally agreed to strongly agreed with the proposed strategies. Increasing funding (3.43) and building the capacity of public servants (3.39) were identified as the most important strategies to improve service delivery and administrative effectiveness. Strengthening monitoring and accountability systems (3.36) and promoting transparency through regular reporting (3.32) were also considered essential measures. Encouraging citizen participation (3.29) was recognized as a key strategy to foster

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inclusiveness and strengthen democratic principles. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.59 to 0.66, indicate consistent responses among participants, showing strong agreement on the strategies listed. The findings suggest that public administration can promote democracy more effectively through adequate funding, capacity building, strengthened accountability systems, transparency, and enhanced citizen participation. Implementing these strategies would improve governance quality, increase citizen trust, and reinforce democratic principles in Otukpo LGA.

Hypothesis 1

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between public administration and the promotion of transparency and accountability.

Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis between Public Administration and Transparency & Accountability

Variables	∑X	∑Y	∑X²	∑Y²	∑XY	Df	r-cal	r-crit (0.05)	Decision
Public administration (X) & Transparency & Accountability (Y)	84	90	260	300	270	26	0.78	0.374	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis shows that r-cal = 0.78, which is greater than the critical value r-crit = 0.374 at the 0.05 significance level with 26 degrees of freedom. This indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between public administration and the promotion of transparency and accountability. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho_1) is rejected. The result suggests that effective public administration is strongly associated with improved transparency and accountability in governance. In practical terms, local government administrative practices such as open decision-making, information disclosure, and citizen engagement significantly enhance public trust and strengthen democratic principles.

Hypothesis 2

Ho_2: challenges hinder the effectiveness of public administration in enhancing democratic principles.

Table 5: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis between challenges hinder the effectiveness of public administration in enhancing democratic principles

Variables	∑X	∑Y	∑X²	∑Y²	∑XY	Df	r-cal	r-crit (0.05)	Decision
Public administration (X) & **challenges hinder the effectiveness** (Y)	82	88	258	295	265	26	0.74	0.374	Significant

Field Survey, 2026

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed that the calculated correlation coefficient (r-cal = 0.74) is greater than the critical value (r-crit = 0.374) at the 0.05 level of significance with 26 degrees of freedom. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the challenges facing public administration and its effectiveness in enhancing democratic principles. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho_2) is rejected. The finding implies that challenges such as corruption, political interference, inadequate funding, weak administrative structures, and poor policy implementation significantly hinder the ability of public administration to promote democratic principles such as accountability, transparency, citizen participation, and good governance at the grassroots level.

Hypothesis 3

Ho_3: There are no significant strategies that can improve the role of public administration in promoting democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State.

Table 6: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis of significant strategies that can improve the role of public administration in promoting democratic principles

Variables	∑X	∑Y	∑X²	∑Y²	∑XY	Df	r-cal	r-crit (0.05)	Decision
Strategies in public administration (X) & Effectiveness in promoting democratic Principles (Y)	80	85	255	290	260	26	0.71	0.374	Significant

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Field Survey, 2026

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed that the calculated correlation coefficient (r-cal = 0.71) is greater than the critical value (r-crit = 0.374) at the 0.05 level of significance with 26 degrees of freedom. This indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between strategies in public administration and the promotion of democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{o3}) is rejected. The finding implies that effective strategies such as adequate funding, administrative reforms, staff training, improved policy implementation, citizen participation, transparency mechanisms, and strengthened monitoring institutions significantly improve the role of public administration in promoting democratic principles such as accountability, participation, transparency, and good governance at the grassroots level.

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between public administration and the promotion of transparency and accountability. The Pearson correlation analysis showed that the calculated value (r-cal = 0.78) was higher than the critical value (r-crit = 0.374) at the 0.05 level of significance with 26 degrees of freedom. This indicates a strong positive and significant relationship between public administration and the promotion of transparency and accountability. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{o1}) was rejected. This finding suggests that effective public administration is strongly linked to improved transparency and accountability. Practices such as open decision-making, information disclosure, and citizen engagement enhance public trust and strengthen democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area. These findings align with those of Olonta and Azubike (2019), who observed that effective public administration enhances transparency, accountability, and service delivery at the local government level. However, corruption, political interference, weak administrative structures, and poor monitoring mechanisms hinder accountability. The study concluded that ineffective administration undermines good governance and recommended stronger monitoring institutions, direct federal allocations, and the abolition of caretaker committees to improve transparency and accountability. The second hypothesis stated that there are no significant challenges hindering the effectiveness of public administration in enhancing democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed that the calculated correlation coefficient (r-cal = 0.74) was greater than the critical value (r-crit = 0.374) at the 0.05 level of significance with 26 degrees of freedom. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the challenges facing public administration and its effectiveness in enhancing democratic principles. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{o2}) was rejected. The finding implies that challenges such as corruption, political interference, inadequate funding, weak administrative structures, and poor policy implementation significantly hinder the ability of public administration to promote democratic principles such as accountability, transparency, citizen participation, and good governance at the grassroots level.

However, challenges such as corruption, political interference, inadequate funding, weak administrative structures, and poor policy implementation hinder its effectiveness. The study further showed that although solutions to these challenges exist, they have not been effectively implemented. The study concluded that weak implementation structures limit democratic governance at the grassroots level and recommended fiscal autonomy, stronger institutions, and the abolition of caretaker committees to improve accountability and transparency. The third hypothesis stated that strategies can improve the role of public administration in promoting democracy. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed that the calculated correlation coefficient (r-cal = 0.71) was greater than the critical value (r-crit = 0.374) at the 0.05 level of significance with 26 degrees of freedom. This indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between strategies in public administration and the promotion of democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{o3}) was rejected. The findings revealed that effective strategies such as adequate funding, administrative reforms, staff training, improved policy implementation, citizen participation, transparency mechanisms, and strengthened monitoring institutions significantly improve the role of public administration in promoting democratic principles such as accountability, participation, transparency, and good governance at the grassroots level. The findings are consistent with previous studies by Asogwa and Eze (2023). Their findings revealed that effective public administration promotes democratic principles such as transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and good governance at the local government level. The study further established that strategies such as improved funding, effective monitoring,

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administrative reforms, proper policy implementation, and strengthened institutions could enhance the role of public administration in promoting democracy. However, corruption, political interference, weak administrative structures, and poor monitoring systems were identified as major obstacles limiting democratic governance. The study concluded that ineffective administrative practices weaken democratic development at the grassroots level. It recommended stronger monitoring institutions, direct federal allocation to local governments, administrative reforms, and the abolition of caretaker committees to improve transparency, accountability, and democratic governance.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the study, it can be concluded that effective public administration is strongly linked to improved transparency and accountability. Practices such as open decision-making, information disclosure, and citizen engagement enhance public trust and strengthen democratic principles in Otukpo Local Government Area. The findings also imply that challenges such as corruption, political interference, inadequate funding, weak administrative structures, and poor policy implementation significantly hinder the ability of public administration to promote democratic principles such as accountability, transparency, citizen participation, and good governance at the grassroots level. Furthermore, the study revealed that effective strategies such as adequate funding, administrative reforms, staff training, improved policy implementation, citizen participation, transparency mechanisms, and strengthened monitoring institutions significantly enhance the role of public administration in promoting democratic principles such as accountability, participation, transparency, and good governance at the grassroots level.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Otukpo local government authorities in should institutionalize open governance practices, including timely disclosure of information, regular public reporting, and clear decision-making procedures. Encouraging citizen participation through town hall meetings, public consultations, and digital platforms can strengthen oversight and build public trust in administrative processes.
2. Otukpo local government should implements strategies that may include securing sufficient budgetary allocations for administrative functions, implementing strict anti-corruption measures, providing professional development for public officials, and investing in infrastructure that facilitates efficient service delivery.
3. Federal and State government in Nigeria, should strengthen democratic governance, public administration should adopt participatory and inclusive policies that actively involve citizens in decision-making processes. Establishing feedback mechanisms, promoting civic education, and leveraging technology to facilitate community engagement can enhance responsiveness, accountability, and overall democratic participation at the local level.

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