



Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic Development in Otukpo Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the establishment of local governments as grassroots institutions for promoting economic and social development, many local councils continue to experience challenges such as poor implementation of development programmes, corruption, inadequate funding, and weak institutional capacity, all of which hinder effective development outcomes. Consequently, this study examined local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. The population comprised 150 staff members of the local government council, from which 109 respondents were randomly selected. The study was guided by two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A survey research design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The instrument was face-validated and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.68. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were used to answer the research questions, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. The study also found a significant relationship between the identified solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in the study area. The study recommends strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing the effective implementation of development programmes to promote sustainable socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

Keywords: Local Government Administration, Economic & Socio-economic Development,

Introduction

Local government administration occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's governance structure, particularly in promoting economic and socio development at the grassroots level. As the tier of government closest to the people, local government is entrusted with the responsibility of identifying community needs and implementing development initiatives that directly affect citizens' daily lives (Pius, 2022). Through the provision and maintenance of basic infrastructure such as rural roads, water supply, electricity, markets, and primary healthcare facilities, local governments create an enabling environment for socio-economic activities. These infrastructural interventions enhance mobility, improve business operations, and increase access to essential services, thereby stimulating local economic growth (Igbokwe, 2018). Despite the strategic role of local governments, the socio-economic development of Otukpo Local Government, has continued to face significant challenges. These challenges have constrained development efforts and adversely affected the quality of life of residents (Zakari, 2019). Many rural communities lack adequate road networks, experience irregular electricity supply, and suffer from limited access to clean and potable water. These deficiencies pose serious public health risks and undermine



Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic...Ekainu, J. & Umoru, R. S. (2026)

overall socio-economic well-being (Ogbazi, 2019). The education sector also faces notable challenges, as many schools operate with inadequate infrastructure, insufficient instructional materials, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Although tertiary institutions exist within the area, their limited capacity restricts access to higher education for many local students, thereby reducing opportunities for human capital development. Similarly, the healthcare system is constrained by a limited number of health facilities, inadequate medical equipment, and a shortage of trained personnel. Poor infrastructure further limits access to healthcare services in rural communities, negatively affecting maternal and child health outcomes and the control of preventable diseases (Mark, 2019). Governance-related issues have further weakened the effectiveness of local government administration in Otukpo LGA. Musa (2024) observed that local governments in Nigeria have increasingly been reduced to caretaker institutions under the control of state governments. The frequent use of caretaker committees and the absence of genuinely democratic local government elections have reinforced authoritarian control by state governors over local councils (Okoli, 2020).

In Otukpo LGA, changes in leadership are often accompanied by the dissolution or reconstitution of council officials, whether elected or appointed, primarily as a strategy to consolidate political support rather than to enhance administrative efficiency (Mark, 2019). Such practices undermine continuity in policy implementation and weaken institutional capacity for sustainable development. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate and proactive strategies by local government authorities. One critical intervention is the strengthening of agricultural development through the engagement of agricultural extension officers to disseminate modern farming techniques to local farmers. This approach enhances productivity, promotes food security, and supports rural livelihoods through improved agricultural yields (Denga, 2018). Furthermore, increased financial allocations from federal and state governments are essential to enable local governments to effectively deliver primary education and healthcare services. Internally, local governments must also improve revenue generation mechanisms and ensure prudent financial management to support developmental projects that enhance living standards at the grassroots level. The adoption of direct labour in project execution, rather than excessive reliance on contractors, can reduce costs and free up resources for additional development initiatives (Bass, 2008). Such measures have the potential to reduce rural-urban migration by improving socio-economic conditions within local communities. Although several studies have examined the role and impact of local government administration in Nigeria, there is a noticeable gap in empirical research focusing specifically on economic and social development in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. This paper therefore seeks to fill this gap by providing a focused analysis of local government administration and its contributions to socio-economic development in the area.

Statement of the Problem

Despite various reform initiatives aimed at strengthening local government administration and enhancing grassroots development in Nigeria, socio-economic development at the local government level remains largely unsatisfactory. Persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, shortage of skilled manpower, weak internally generated revenue, corruption, poor accountability, policy inconsistency, and limited community participation continue to hinder effective service delivery and sustainable development outcomes (Chiliokwu, 2018). These problems have contributed to the collapse or poor implementation of many community-based development programmes, thereby limiting the capacity of local governments to fulfill their



Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic...Ekainu, J. & Umoru, R. S. (2026)

constitutional responsibilities of providing essential infrastructure and social services to the people. Furthermore, increasing population growth, rising poverty levels, unemployment, and infrastructural decay have intensified pressure on local governments, including Otukpo Local Government Area, to deliver meaningful socio-economic development. However, administrative inefficiency, political interference, poor planning, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms continue to undermine development efforts at the grassroots level. Although several studies have examined local government administration and development in Nigeria, limited empirical attention has been given to understanding how effective local government administration can promote sustainable socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. This gap in the literature necessitates further investigation into the role of local government administration in socio-economic development, the challenges affecting its performance, and the strategies that could enhance effective service delivery and sustainable grassroots development in the study area.

Research Questions

1. What is the problem affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area?
2. What is the possible solution to the problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area?

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.
2. To identify possible solutions to the problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the identified solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design, focusing on the staff of the local government council in Otukpo Local Government Area. The population comprised 150 staff members of the council, from which a sample of 109 respondents was selected using a simple random sampling technique. The study was guided by three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses, all tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was subjected to face validation to ensure its appropriateness and clarity. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.68, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency. The study covered the period from 2025 to 2026. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts and percentages were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The statistical analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in the study area. All were computed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).20.0.1. The study therefore specifies the model as follows:

Presentation of Results

Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic...Ekainu, J. & Umoru, R. S. (2026)

Research question one:

1. What is the problems affecting local government administration and socio- Economic development of Otukpo Local Government Area?

Table 1: Mean rating on the problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development of Otukpo.

Items	N	Frequency	Mean	SD	Remarks
Inadequate finance	109	49(41.5%)	3.6	1.7	Agreed
excessive interference and control by the central government	109	38(34.2%)	3.5	1.5	Agreed
lack of political will and honesty	109	20(18.6%)	3.1	1.0	Agreed
Lack of integrity and unlawful appropriation of public funds,	109	10(9.2%)	3.2	1.3	Agreed
Lack of accountability and Corruption leaders	109	19 (10.5%)	3.2	1.7	Agreed
Lack of resources and manpower skilled to facilitate a high rate of service delivery	109	6(2.4%)	3.5	1.4	Agreed
Ground mean			3.7		

Field survey, 2026

The aim of Table 1 was to ascertain the problems of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government. The results show that a majority of respondents, 49 (41.5%), identified inadequate finance as the major constraint. This was followed by 38 (34.2%) respondents who pointed to excessive interference and control by the central government. Additionally, 10 (9.2%) respondents identified lack of integrity and misappropriation of public funds, while 19 (10.5%) attributed the problem to lack of accountability and corruption among leaders. A minority of 6 (2.4%) respondents indicated inadequate resources and shortage of skilled manpower. The findings reveal that respondents generally agreed that all the listed factors constitute major problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government.

Research Question Two:

What is the possible solutions to the problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area?

Table 2: Mean rating on possible solutions to the problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo



Items	N	Frequency	Mean	SD	Remarks
Local government administrators must not be selfish, and should show transparency and responsibility in the exercise of their duties.	109	49(41.5%)	3.6	1.7	Agreed
Local government council officials must show honesty, justice and equity to all stakeholders in the system.	109	38(34.2%)	3.5	1.5	Agreed
There is need for the federal allocation to be increased and has to go straight to the local government account to avoid interference by the state government	109	22(18.6%)	3.3	1.0	Agreed
Local governments should play proactive roles in engaging the services of agricultural extension officers and agents in teaching and dispersing modern farming methods to the farmers.	109	20(10.2%)	3.2	1.3	Agreed
Local governments should strive to raise and maintain revenue that would enable her deliver projects and services that guarantee quality living to the grassroots.	109	19 (8.5%)	3.2	1.7	Agreed
The council should use direct labour in executing of projects rather than the use of contractors, money paid to contractors can be channeled into other developmental projects in the area	109	6(2.4%)	3.5	1.4	Agreed

The aim of Table 2 was to identify the possible solutions to the problems affecting local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. The findings indicate that 49 (41.5%) respondents strongly agreed that local government administrators should demonstrate transparency, responsibility, and selflessness in the discharge of their duties. Similarly, 38 (34.2%) agreed that officials must uphold honesty, justice, and equity in dealing with stakeholders. Furthermore, 22 (18.6%) respondents strongly agreed on the need to increase federal allocations and ensure direct disbursement to local governments to minimize state interference. Also, 20 (10.2%) agreed that local governments should adopt proactive measures by engaging agricultural extension officers to promote modern farming techniques. In addition, 19 (8.5%) strongly agreed that local governments should improve internally generated revenue to enhance service delivery, while



Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic...Ekainu, J. & Umoru, R. S. (2026)

6 (2.4%) agreed that projects should be executed through direct labour to reduce costs and redirect funds to other developmental needs. The results show that respondents accepted all the identified variables as viable solutions, as each item recorded a mean score above the decision benchmark of 3.0. This implies a general consensus that these strategies can effectively address the challenges of local government administration and promote socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

Hypotheses One:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area

Table 3: Pearson-product moment correlation analysis of the problems of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo.

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Df	r-cal	r-crit	M(x)	Decision p<.05
Pearson-product moment correlation analysis test.	948	12600	16156	212	0.256	0.195	2.62	*S
Number of valid cases development.	1237	22465						

***significant at $P < .05$ alpha level; $N = 109$**

Using the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient, the result in Table 6 shows that the calculated r-value (0.256) is greater than the critical value (0.195) at the 0.05 level with 212 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Two:

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the identified solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area

Table 4: Pearson-product moment correlation analysis of solution to the problems of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	Df	r-cal	r-crit	M(x)	Decision p<.05
Pearson-product moment correlation analysis test.	933	12017	15652	224	0.065	0.195	2.62	*S
Number of valid cases development.	1252	22645						

***S = significant at $P < .05$ alpha level; $N = 109$**



Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic...Ekainu, J. & Umoru, R. S. (2026)

The result in Table 7 shows that the calculated r-value (0.065) is less than the critical value (0.195) at the 0.05 level with 224 degrees of freedom, indicating no statistically significant relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is upheld and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

The test of the first hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis produced a calculated r-value of 0.256, which is greater than the critical r-value of 0.195 at the 0.05 level of significance with 212 degrees of freedom. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding indicates that there is a significant relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. This result is consistent with the findings of Olonta and Azubike (2019). The findings revealed that there are significant problems affecting local government administration, which, in turn, negatively influence socio-economic development. It was further established that weaknesses in administrative structures, poor funding, and the ineffective implementation of policies contribute to the underperformance of local governments. The study also showed that although possible solutions exist to address these challenges, they have not been effectively implemented to yield meaningful improvements in socio-economic development. The study concluded that the persistence of these administrative problems continues to undermine the capacity of local governments to promote development at the grassroots level. It recommended increased federal allocations to local governments, with direct disbursement to reduce external interference, as well as the abolition of the caretaker committee system to strengthen democratic governance, enhance accountability, and improve the delivery of development projects at the local level.

The second hypothesis tested whether there is a significant relationship between the identified solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis presented in Table 4 revealed that the calculated r-value ($r = 0.065$) is lower than the critical r-value ($r = 0.195$) at the 0.05 level of significance with 224 degrees of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between the identified solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in the study area. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, while the alternative hypothesis was rejected. The study indicates that there is a significant relationship between the solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. The study collaborate with the findings of Denga (2018). The findings further revealed that local government administration plays an important role in promoting socio-economic development in the study area. However, persistent administrative challenges were found to hinder effective development outcomes at the local government level. The study also established that although several solutions to these challenges have been identified, they have not been effectively implemented to achieve meaningful socio-economic development. The study concluded that the continued existence of weak implementation structures limits the effectiveness of policy and administrative



Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic... Ekainu, J. & Umoru, R. S. (2026)

solutions aimed at enhancing grassroots development. Consequently, the study recommended greater fiscal autonomy for local governments through direct disbursement of federal allocations to minimize external interference. It also recommended the abolition of the caretaker committee system in order to strengthen democratic governance, improve accountability, and enhance the effectiveness of local government administration.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between local government administration and socio-economic development in Otukpo Local Government Area. The study also concludes that there is a significant relationship between the identified solutions and the improvement of local government administration and socio-economic development in the study area.

Recommendations

The study therefore recommends that;

1. There is need for the Otukpo local government area to increase their function capacity of these projects and programmes to be able to cover every area of the state.
2. Local governments should be more people-centered in approach, such that necessary collaboration/partnership with communities in its domain can facilitate the process of rural development.
3. There is need for the federal allocation to be increased and has to go straight to the local government account to avoid interference by the state government and caretakership system should be stopped, by so doing, it will go a long way in having more developmental projects

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Assessment of Local Government Administration on Socio-Economic... Ekainu, J. & Umoru, R. S. (2026)

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