

Examining Public Perception of the Efficacy of Local Government Administration in Enhancing Community Development in Ihiala Local Government Area

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Abstract

Community development (CD) through the implementation of primary education and primary healthcare policies by Nigerian local governments, especially Ihiala Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra State, is imperative, but under-researched. Consequently, the study examined the people's perception of the extent to which Ihiala LGA enhanced CD through the implementation of primary education and primary healthcare, and the challenges hindering Ihiala LGA from performing its CD roles. Survey design and efficiency services theory were applied. Out of an 87,796 population, 398 was derived through Taro Yamane's formula. After questionnaire retrieval, 133 became the data-producing sample. Findings showed that Ihiala local government administration has no significant effects on CD in terms of primary education, primary healthcare provision, and that there are significant challenges hindering effective performance of CD roles in Ihiala LGA. Addressing these problems demands improvements in institutional independence, inclusive participation, human resource development, and transparency and accountability to achieve meaningful and sustainable community development. Inter alia, the study suggested that Ihiala local government should adopt strict monitoring measures for local government projects and tighten financial controls to curb institutionalised corruption.

Keywords: Community development, local government, Ihiala Local Government Area, primary education, primary health care

Introduction

Anchored on efficiency services theory (EST), this study was set to find out the effect of local government administration in community development, especially in Ihiala local government area (LGA) of Anambra state. This is because the idea of local government administration in Nigeria has attracted serious attention since the local government reform of 1976. Despite this, scholars believe that local governments in Nigeria performed poorly (Chioke et al., 2020) due to a lack of funds and appropriate institutions (Page & Wando, 2022) that ensure improved primary education and primary health care. Education is meant to trigger societal transformation (Chioke et al., 2023) and community development at the local government level. However, the present study perceived that local governments in Anambra State, especially Ihiala LGA, through their primary education, have remained inactive in community development and societal transformation. Importantly, local government education authorities are to function through the local government education committee composed of the chairman of the local government council, the counsellor for education and a representative of the recognised teacher union in the local government area. The authority is responsible for the payment of salary, allowances and other benefits to all teaching and non-teaching staff in its area of jurisdiction (Okoli & Onah, 2002).

With community development initiatives, community dwellers can be more empowered to the extent that they can recognise and challenge conditions that negatively affect their wellbeing (Ife, 2016) through adequate implementation of educational policies. Significantly, primary education in Ihiala local government area has not been adequately taken care of as there are lots of dilapidated school structures. This leaves one with the worry as to the degree to which Ihiala local government has been effective in providing sustainable primary education that ensures the development of its rural communities. To this end, the task is to ascertain the extent to which local government administration affected community development in terms of primary education in Ihiala LGA.

While local government is expected to become more meaningful in facilitating community development at the grassroots level in terms of primary health care, primary health care in Ihiala local government area is perceived to be messy. The merit in involving the local communities' inhabitants as a focal point of good governance in the local government administration is that they serve as a point of contact between the local government and the grassroots (Zakari Ya'u, 2014). Anambra rural areas are equally characterised by an apparent lack of health institutions, as there are hardly any well-equipped hospitals, health centres, clinics and maternal homes. Therefore, there is a need to empirically interrogate the extent to which local government administration affected community development in terms of primary health care in Ihiala local government area.

There are challenges bedevilling community development encountered by several local government areas in Anambra State, which could greatly hinder community development. Ihiala local government area appears to be caught up in the web of problems facing local government areas vis-à-vis community development. Hence, in the past, communities in Nigeria have maintained a strong tradition in the area of self-help projects (ZakariYa'u, 2014). Thus, basic facilities such as roads, bridges, markets, health institutions, and primary and post-primary institutions have been provided in different parts of the country through self-help development programs. Due to a lack of supportive administration, many self-help projects have been abandoned, leading to backwardness in community development. Aside from this, security challenges that abound in Anambra State and Ihiala in particular (Anazodo et al., 2024) made it difficult to pursue community development through the local council. This study is thus poised to examine challenges hindering local government administration from performing its community development roles in Ihiala LGA from 2015 to 2022.

Based on the above critical problem, the specific objectives of this study were to: ascertain the extent to which local government administration affects community development in the area of primary education in Ihiala LGA; analyse the extent to which local government administration impacts community development in terms of primary health care in Ihiala LGA; and identify the challenges hindering local government administration from performing its community development roles in Ihiala LGA. To investigate this, the following research questions suffice:

RQ 1: How has Ihiala Local Government administration affected community development in the area of primary education?

RQ 2: How has local government administration impacted primary healthcare delivery in Ihiala local government area?

RQ 3: What are the challenges that hinder local government administration from performing its community development roles in Ihiala Local Government Area?

Notably, this research is important for the purpose of capturing how local government administration performs its role in primary education, primary healthcare delivery, and the challenges affecting its performance in Ihiala LGA.

Literature Review

Local government

The reason for the establishment of local governments is to decentralise the power of the central government or the state government and then bring development to the local level (Adah, 2022). Local government refers to a set of governmental bodies that are elected by the people to serve their communities (Ndreu, 2016) and created by laws with assigned specific functions

(ZakariYa'u, 2014). In line with efficient service theory, the specific functions include the implementation of primary education and primary healthcare policies in Nigeria. How far have Nigerian LGAs, especially Ihiala local government, gone in rendering services along these lines? This research interrogated these issues, considering their importance in today's local government debates. However, the question is: What is community development? The next paragraph provides a clear view of this puzzle.

Community Development

Community development focuses on enhancing a better standard of living for community members via their active involvement (Chioke, 2022a). Long-term results such as stronger and more cohesive communities can be attained at the community level through community development and empowerment programs, as demonstrated by improvements in social capital, civic engagement, social cohesion, and health (Campbell et al., 2007; Ife, 2016; Kenny, 2007; Wallerstein, 2006). Thus, this should be the focus at the grassroots of Ihiala LGA of Anambra State. Put differently, Kenny (2007) posited that community development is a holistic approach anchored on the principles of inclusion, empowerment, human rights, social justice, self-determination and collective action. This entails that for Ihiala LGA of Anambra State to usher in community development, such efforts should be guided by the principles stipulated by Kenny (2007). From observation, this has been made practically impossible given the presence of some issues/factors inimical to community development. Additionally, Smart (2017) rightly intoned that community development concentrates on the redistribution of power to address the reasons for inequality and disadvantage.

Primary Education

Primary education is the foundation for a child's learning upon which other levels of education depend (Onyeagba, 2006; Saidu, 2008; Sen, 2010). It has thus become the cornerstone of national development (Okpala, 2007) and the very foundation for qualitative higher education in Nigeria (Etor et al., 2013), especially the grassroots of underdeveloped local governments like Ihiala LGA. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the goals of primary education in Nigeria include:

1. To instil permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
2. To lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
3. To give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
4. To mould the character and develop a sound attitude and morals in the child;
5. To develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
6. To give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in society within the limits of the child's equality;
7. To provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality. (pp. 11 – 12)

The above goals, therefore, form the basis of any primary education in Nigeria (Okwori & Amenger, 2014). To achieve these goals, certain issues must be considered. The next paragraph,

therefore, focuses on the conditions that must be put in place and the problems militating against them in our study area.

Imperatively, instructional aids remain sacrosanct in the school system without which no meaningful learning can be achieved (Etor et al., 2013) at the primary, secondary and tertiary level of education. Be that as it may, primary education in Nigeria, especially at the grassroots, is not without significant challenges. Adesina & Ajayi (2006) observed that the problems in Nigerian primary education are: inadequate funding, policy inconsistencies, lack of motivation for teachers, inadequate facilities/learning materials, and inadequate school supervision. Aside from these, another critical problem that affects a good foundation in Nigerian primary schools is the number of subjects taught by a teacher (Etor et al., 2013). Visits to primary schools within Ihiala show that primary education policy implementation in the area is heavily clogged by these menaces and must be urgently addressed.

Primary Health Care

To start with, among the most essential human rights outlined in the World Health Organisation's constitution is the right to the best possible standard of health (World Health Organisation, 2008). The fundamental premise of primary health care is that all people, irrespective of where they are, have the right to achieve the highest attainable level of health (World Health Organisation, 2025 & n.d). According to Better Health Channel (n.d.), primary healthcare includes the delivery of medical services, such as the diagnosis and treatment of a medical issue, as well as assistance in managing long-term medical care, including chronic conditions. Primary health care is widely regarded as the most inclusive, equitable and cost-effective way to achieve universal health coverage (World Health Organisation, n.d). Additionally, primary health care places a strong emphasis on ongoing medical care that is individualised, family-centred, and person-centred rather than disease-centred (Alnaser, 2025). At this point, it must be added that:

Primary health care (PHC) is essential to the accomplishment of other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and offers the most practical path to accomplishing health-related SDGs. Because primary health care is so important, countries all over the world invest a lot of time and money in creating and sustaining efficient PHC systems. While foreign donations to enhance primary healthcare have been rising in Nigeria, domestic spending on the health sector has been falling (Alonge, 2020).

Despite the foregoing, Nigeria continues to have one of the poorest health systems in the world (Ananaba et al., 2018). In fact, "present realities show that Nigeria is a distance away from providing universal health coverage and efficient primary healthcare" (Alonge, 2020:88) needed for sustainable community development at Ihiala LGA of Anambra State due to issues derailing efficient service delivery at the grassroots in the state and beyond.

Generally, the situation of PHC in the state needs great improvement, given the existence of perennial problems. For instance, reports indicate that:

Various problems are threatening the provision of safe and efficient healthcare services in Anambra State's primary healthcare system. Many Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) lack functional restrooms, dependable water sources, and basic medical supplies, despite having some well-equipped consulting rooms and beds available. Poor working conditions and

a lack of staff, especially on weekends, further jeopardise the provision of healthcare. Only five of the 66 PHCs in the state have operational ambulances, a concerning scarcity of medical supplies and equipment. Oxygen, stretchers, and personal protective equipment (PPE) are examples of essential supplies that are hard to come by; half of the PHCs studied lacked at least four of the eighteen listed medical goods. Numerous accounts describe the difficulties healthcare professionals encounter as a result of equipment shortages (Oti, 2024).

Research by Ugwu & Okpala (2024) indicates that cultural beliefs significantly affect healthcare utilisation in Anambra State. Aside from the foregoing problems, there are other critical issues that are hindering the efficacy of local government in delivering PHC in Anambra state, especially Ihiala LGA. This issue formed the rationale for this quantitative investigation using Ihiala LGA as our study area.

Empirical Review of Literature

In Nigeria, there are studies relating to grassroots development vis-à-vis the cardinal drivers of this study, but these studies remain insufficient, leaving us with a gap which this study sought to fill. For example, Udeogalanya (2023) examined neonatal home-care practices of mothers in Ihiala LGA of Anambra State using a sample of 398 nursing mothers in a longitudinal survey to evaluate the newborn home-care behaviours of mothers in Ihiala, Anambra State. Data were analysed in tables of frequencies and percentages. Results showed evidence of subpar neonatal care practices in Ihiala LGA, and further suggested that neonatal practices are influenced by parity, age, occupation, education, and delivery location.

Chioke et al. (2024) studied the roles of local governments in community development, participatory theory and qualitative research design and found that local government is an agent of mass mobilisation and participation. Ezo et al. (2026) investigated the effect of local government autonomy on the availability of funds for development initiatives in Bayelsa and Delta States. The population for their study included 17,044 residents of LGAs in Delta and Bayelsa States. Their research adopted a survey research design and a triangulation of elite theory by Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michels and cancerous democratic theory by Stephen Chinedu Chioke. Using a 376-sample, the results indicated that local government autonomy has no significant effect on the availability of funds for development initiatives in Bayelsa and Delta States. These studies' critical gaps in the literature are what this current study investigated.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on efficiency service theory (EST). This theory arose because of the protest concerning democratic participatory theory as proposed by Mills and Bricks (Adah, 2022). The theory generally emphasises that public administration should aim at providing services that are both effective and efficient in meeting the needs of the community. It focuses on minimising resource wastage, ensuring equitable access to services, and improving outcomes for the community, particularly in essential sectors like education and healthcare. EST posits that local government acts as an efficient agent for providing services that are local in character (Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2014). This theory represents an ideal but not the real situation in Nigeria, as local government councils have not robustly proved that they are efficient agents for providing services that are local in character. However, Adamolekun (2009:19) posited that in the fourth republic, local governments are highly perceived as failed institutions because of several acts of corruption.

Viewed from EST, the extent to which they satisfy the yearnings of the populace is open to debate. Some scholars (Ezo et al., 2026; Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2014) would justify the failure of local government to perform optimally due to a lack of autonomy – an indication of local government as field administration. In this perspective, local governments like Ihiala LGA are merely agents of the Nigerian government, lacking the needed financial independence to perform creditably. The trajectory of Nigerian local government administration shows that these essentials of devolution have been absent and partly explain the failure of local government councils to perform well (Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2014).

In examining the first specific objective of this study, we look at the degree of effectiveness in primary education policy execution. This involves assessing how well the local government has been able to deliver educational services in Ihiala. Efficient services theory suggests measuring the efficiency of resource allocation (such as funding for schools, teacher training, infrastructure, and learning materials) and whether these have led to improvements in educational outcomes (e.g., literacy rates, school attendance, pass rates).

The theory could be used to analyse the extent to which local government administration impacts community development in primary health care in Ihiala. This involves evaluating the local government's role in providing healthcare services, particularly in primary healthcare. Efficient Services Theory suggests that an effective local government should have streamlined systems in place to deliver health services to all segments of the population. This could be assessed by examining how well the government has addressed health needs such as maternal and child healthcare, vaccination programs, and treatment for common diseases.

Lastly, the barriers to efficient service delivery in Ihiala would be analysed through the lens of this theory. Efficient services theory suggests that ineffective service delivery could stem from various issues such as poor resource allocation, corruption, mismanagement, insufficient training of personnel, and inadequate infrastructure. Additionally, the theory helps to identify the barriers to optimal service delivery, which could stem from issues such as political constraints and inadequate funding. Therefore, this framework allows for a detailed evaluation of the local government's role in community development and offers insights into potential areas for improvement.

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design. The justification for adopting this design is that the nature of the data sought for this study involves the use of a questionnaire to ascertain information relevant to the research. This study's population, as projected by the National Population Commission (NPC), according to the 2006 census, is 87,796 people. Taro Yamane's 1967 formula was adopted to arrive at 398 sample size for the study. The research employed the use of a structured questionnaire to elicit responses from the sample size. The questionnaire was structured on a 5-point Likert Scale. Meanwhile, quantitative data was complemented with secondary sources such as online reports and published research works. To ascertain the validity of the instrument, the instrument was subjected to content validity by other experts in the field of Public Administration. Consistent with the position of Chioke (2025) on the minimum benchmark for Cronbach Alpha reliability test (0.7), the study's reliability test is showed $\alpha = 0.756$, indicating the research instrument is reliable. The face-to-face method of distribution of the research survey was applied by the researcher.

Findings

Research Question 1: What is the extent to which local government administration affects community development in terms of primary education in Ihiala LGA?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on how local government administration affected community development in terms of primary education in Ihiala local government area.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Local government administration aids the establishment of Primary Schools in Ihiala local government area.	133	3.6090	1.38079	1.907
Local government administration enhances grassroots education in Ihiala local government area.	133	3.4812	1.20982	1.464
Local government administration provides pupils with political education in Ihiala local government area for the purpose of equipping future leaders	133	2.9774	1.32840	1.765
Local government administration promotes primary education through the employment of qualified staff in Ihiala local government area.	133	2.7068	1.36394	1.860
Local government administration plays a significant role in the maintenance of primary schools' structures in Ihiala local government area.	133	2.3910	.99113	.982

Local government administration positively affects the administrative management of primary schools in Ihiala Local Government Area.	133	3.6241	1.04882	1.100
Valid N (list-wise)	133			

Source: Field Data 2023

A benchmark of 3.50 was used for the study. Out of the six items that made up this cluster, four items were below the benchmark. Thus, the mean values for these items (2, 3, 4 and 5) indicate rejection, while items 1 & 6, with the mean values (3.6090 & 3.6241), which are below the benchmark, were accepted by the respondents.

Research Question 2: To what extent does local government administration affect community development in terms of primary health care in Ihiala LGA?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the extent to which local government administration affects community development in terms of primary health care in Ihiala local government area

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Local government administration promotes sustainable primary health care via door-step medical care delivery in Ihiala local government area.	133	2.1429	1.18796	1.411
Local government administration executes disease control projects in Ihiala local government area.	133	3.4812	1.26492	1.600
Local government administration ensures protection against environmental hazards in Ihiala local government area.	133	2.5263	1.48517	2.206

Local government administration implements community sanitation measures in Ihiala local government area.	133	3.5263	1.38487	1.918
Local government administration enhances primary health care through adequate budget allocation in Ihiala local government area	133	2.6090	1.55132	2.407
Local government administration affects primary health care in Ihiala local government area through adequate provision of medical personnel.	133	2.8195	1.12704	1.270
Valid N (list wise)	133			

Source: Field Data 2023

A benchmark of 3.50 was used for the study. Out of the six items that made up this cluster, five items were below the benchmark. Thus, the mean values for these items (1, 3, 4 and 5) indicate acceptance. Only item 2 with the mean value (3.141), which is below the benchmark, was not accepted by the respondents.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges that hinder local government administration from performing its community development roles in Ihiala LGA?

Table 3: Descriptive statistics regarding the challenges that hinder local government administration from performing its community development roles in Ihiala local government area.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Political interference makes Local government administration dependent and incapable of performing its community development roles in Ihiala local government area.	133	4.0075	1.19656	1.432
Diversion of local government funds leads to financial constraints in performing its community development roles.	133	3.5564	.92453	.855
Unhealthy rivalry among politicians in rural areas militates against the community development role of local government administration in Ihiala local government area.	133	3.6917	.91437	.836
Lack of participation of all rural dwellers affects community development programs in Ihiala local government area.	133	4.4060	1.10122	1.213

Institutionalised corrupt practices by some local government officials affect the community development roles of Ihiala local government area.	133	3.9098	1.13123	1.280
Valid N (list-wise)	133			

Source: Field Data 2023

A benchmark of 3.50 was used for the study. The mean values of all the items in this cluster were above the study's benchmark of 3.50. The mean values indicate acceptance. As such, they were all accepted by the respondents as the problems encountered by Ihiala local government in its quest for community development through local government administration.

Discussion of Findings

Results in Table 1 align with efficient service theory. To an extent, the results show that Ihiala local government administration adheres to the EST. For instance, while it increases access to basic education and needed administrative control, it failed to guarantee quality, sustainability, and all-encompassing service delivery, especially in areas like staffing and infrastructure development. Responding to item 1 in cluster one, the respondents accepted the idea that local government administration aided the establishment of primary schools in Ihiala local government area. However, the mean (3.4812) suggests that while it aided the establishment of primary schools, it did not enhance grassroots education in Ihiala LGA. It could thus be understood that the local government merely established primary schools, but failed to considerably aid grassroots education by increasing funding, providing skilled manpower, and providing instructional material. For teaching, Etor et al. (2013) maintained that these resources should be provided. It could thus be argued that this finding indicates a departure from the foundational basis of efficient service theory (EST), which posits that local government should provide services that effectively meet the needs of the community. With a mean of 2.9, the data collected for this study did not uphold that local government administration provided pupils with political education in Ihiala local government area for the purpose of equipping future leaders. This data showed that although it is the responsibility of the local council to act as a training ground for leadership positions at the national level (Eneanya, 2012: 19-20), Ihiala local government has not truly provided the enabling ground for this. . Again, this study ascertained that Local government administration did not play enough of a role in the maintenance of primary schools' structures in Ihiala local government area. This implies that Ihiala local government council has a poor maintenance culture and as such, there is a need for a rethink. However, with a mean of 3.6, this study revealed that local government administration positively affected the administrative management of primary schools in Ihiala local government area. Thus, the perception of the respondents is that Ihiala local government performed well in the day-to-day management of the operations of the schools within its jurisdiction. However, based on the average mean score (3.08) of this cluster which is not up to 3.5 benchmark, the implication of the findings regarding this research question aligns with the findings of an earlier study, which found that local governments in Southeast (Chioke et al., 2020) and Anambra state (Mbaebie, 2020), the domain of Ihiala LGA, have not performed well. This conclusion regarding Ihiala LGA is correct as respondents believe that it did not provide pupils

with political education (M=2.9), failed to enhance grassroots education (M=3.4), failed to employ qualified staff (M=2.7), and failed in the maintenance of primary schools' structures (M=2.3).

On the second cluster, it was revealed that out of the six items that made up this cluster, five items were below the benchmark. First, the researcher identified that local government administration promoted sustainable primary health care via door-step medical care delivery in Ihiala local government area. With a mean 2.1, the respondents did not accept that Ihiala LGA promoted sustainable primary health care by embarking on door-step medical care delivery. It therefore entails that the local council did not ensure proper healthcare through door-step method. Secondly, Local government administration executed disease control projects in Ihiala local government area. Thirdly, this study has proved that local government administration **failed to** ensure protection against environmental hazards in Ihiala local government area. Conversely, with a mean 3.5, the respondents accepted that the local government administration implemented community sanitation measures in Ihiala local government area. Like previous findings in this cluster, it was revealed that local government administration did not enhance primary health care through adequate budget allocation in Ihiala local government area. The implication of this is that in Anambra state, PHC, a significant lack exists in basic amenities as well as trash disposal infrastructure (Oti, 2024), given the lack of adequate budgeting for PHC.

Lastly, the data for this study revealed that the respondents did not accept the item that suggested that local government administration affected primary health care in Ihiala local government area through adequate provision of medical personnel. This finding is supported by a report which indicate staffing problems, especially on weekends (Oti, 2024), as a critical challenge in Anambra State PHC that has negatively affected healthcare delivery in Ihiala LGA. Summarily, data show that Ihiala LGA provides limited primary healthcare services. This further indicates that in Nigeria, the provision of primary healthcare services is appalling (Alonge, 2020). Therefore, concerning EST, Ihiala LGA performs poorly in providing comprehensive, easily accessible, and long-lasting primary health care services, yet it partially carries out its role in public health measures.

Every country has objectives it aims to achieve for the betterment of its citizens (Onah, 2020:1) through local government administration. However, with the critical issues troubling local government administration in the form of political interference, diversion of local government funds, unhealthy rivalry, lack of participation and institutionalised corruption, it is almost certain that the government cannot achieve those lofty goals through local government administration. For instance, with a mean of 4.0, the data for this study revealed that political interference made local government administration dependent and incapable of performing its community development roles in Ihiala local government area. In fact, the practice of the caretaker committee in Anambra State has greatly slowed the pace of development at the community/local level. Secondly, with a mean of 3.5, respondents accepted that diversion of local government funds leads to financial constraints in performing its community development roles. Diversion of funds amounts to corruption that is currently ravaging virtually all public bureaucracies in Nigeria, and Ihiala local government area has, through this investigation, been found to be among the bureaucracies troubled by diversion of funds. Buttressing this, it has been argued that administration as well as management of education in Nigeria are negatively impacted by mismanagement of funds, diversion of funds, and insufficient release of operating costs for the education sector (Chioke, 2022b).

In addition, this study's data suggest that unhealthy rivalry among politicians in rural areas must have militated against the community development role of local government administration in Ihiala local government area. Aside from these issues, Ihiala LGA has another serious community development inhibitor: a lack of participation. With a mean of 4.4, the respondents accepted that the lack of participation of rural dwellers affected community development programs in Ihiala local government area. This implies that the council may be devoid of responsive leadership, which, according to Chioke (2023a), must be characterised by innovation and social engineering. Suffice it to say that where there is no participation of rural dwellers, given the manifest lack of responsive leadership, the system lacks social engineering, which is a significant propeller of community development. Thus, leadership should be championed through political participation, starting from the grassroots to the federal level (Chioke, 2023b). Lastly, it was revealed that institutionalised corrupt practices by some local government officials affected the community development roles of local government administration in Ihiala. Specifically, this study suggests that these factors are equally responsible for the poor performance of Ihiala local government regarding community development in terms of primary education and primary health care delivery.

Conclusion

This research interrogated the effect of local government administration on community development in Ihiala LGA, with regard to primary education, primary healthcare delivery, and their challenges within the framework of efficient service theory (EST). A critical assessment of local government administration Ihiala LGA showed that the local government administration has been retarded by several factors, thereby hindering community development in the form of primary education and primary healthcare. From the framework of EST, the study portrayed that local government is expected to become more meaningful in facilitating community development at the grassroots level through the effective implementation of primary education and healthcare policies. The study concludes that local government administration has not significantly affected community development in terms of primary education and primary health care from 2015 to 2022.

The study established that local government capacity to engineer community development in Ihiala LGA is greatly constrained by governance and/or structural inefficiencies as the overall developmental outcomes in both education and health sectors remain significantly insufficient. Addressing these deficits demands improvements in institutional independence, inclusive participation, human resource development, and transparency and accountability to achieve meaningful and sustainable community development. Viewed from efficiency service theory (EST), the finding of this study corroborates the submission that there is need for further reforms aimed at strengthening local governments for effective community development (Chioke et al., 2024) for optimum service delivery, particularly in Ihiala LGA of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

1. Ihiala local government should concentrate on executing state policies that align with effective primary education at the grassroots level.
2. Modern primary health care centres should be built, equipped, and strictly monitored in each of the towns in Ihiala local government area. Likewise, all communal health care programs should be revisited to ensure healthy living among the citizens.
3. Ihiala local government should adopt strict monitoring measures to monitor local government projects and enhance tight financial control measures against institutionalised corruption.

This study's theoretical contribution is in the area of expanding the understanding of EST. Despite the novel contribution of this study, the research has its own flaws. The method of data collection is not adequate to source relevant information on the subject matter of this study. The use of qualitative data like focus group discussions and interview guides, was not employed, hence, qualitative data that ought to have buttressed the quantitative data are missing. We therefore suggest that other interested researchers should incorporate the use of a mixed method approach for a robust insight into the subject matter of this research.

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