

Original Research Article

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: This study examined the relationship between local government and rural development in Akwa Ibom State, with particular emphasis on educational development and agricultural development. The study adopted a case study approach; however, the unit of analysis was on a micro level with data drawn from respondents across 3 selected Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State. Tables and simple percentages were adopted in presenting the responses, while descriptive statistics tools and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation assisted in the analysis of data and test of hypotheses at 5% level of significance. The study findings revealed that local government has a significant positive correlation $E(r=0.786\{p=0.000<0.05\})$ with educational development in Akwa Ibom State and agricultural development in Akwa Ibom State. However, it was recommended that Local governments in Akwa Ibom State should increase educational budgets to facilitate teacher support programs, and improve school facilities in order to enhance educational development. Also, local governments in Akwa Ibom State should ensure that local farmers are empowered with farm equipment and crop seedlings to promote agricultural development.

Keywords: Local Government, Rural Development, Akwa Ibom State, Educational Development, Agricultural Development

INTRODUCTION

Local government and rural development are two closely related concepts that focus on the governance and improvement of rural areas. Local government refers to the system of governance at the local level, which is responsible for providing essential services and amenities to the community. On the other hand, rural development focuses on improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas (Gwom, 2023).

Although the local government council is the cradle of development, rural communities or dwellers are still facing challenges with development. Nigeria operates a federal system of government where the governmental powers are constitutionally shared among the three tiers of government that exist, which are the federal, state, and local governments. Among the three arms of government, it is the local governments that are the third-tier level of government and are the closest level of government to the grassroots.

The study on local government and rural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, serves as a focal point for understanding the complex interplay between governance structures, socio-economic challenges, and community development dynamics in a rural setting (Immaculata, 2013). The effectiveness of local governance mechanisms, policy formulation processes, resource allocation strategies, and citizen engagement initiatives directly influences the trajectory of rural development in Akwa Ibom State (Ubon, 2015). In the context of Essien Udim, Nsit Ibom and Mbo, Akwa Ibom State, local government plays a vital role in addressing the unique challenges and opportunities facing the area. By delving into the nuances of how local government authorities operate, researchers can uncover critical insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that shape the landscape of governance and development in the region (Sabet & Khaksar, 2024). Through a comprehensive examination of local government and rural development in Akwa Ibom State, this research aims to shed light on the intricate dynamics at play and offer evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the efficacy of governance structures and development programmes. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study seeks to inform policymaking, drive inclusive decision-making processes, foster community empowerment, and catalyse positive change that resonates with the aspirations and needs of the local population.

In essence, the exploration of local government and rural development in Akwa Ibom State not only serves as a scholarly endeavour but also holds practical implications for driving sustainable growth, promoting social equity, and building resilient communities that are equipped to thrive in the face of evolving challenges (Ojiako & Raphael, 2025). This study stands as a testament to the commitment to advancing knowledge, fostering collaboration, and championing solutions that address the pressing issues confronting rural areas in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the problem

Despite the critical role of local government in driving rural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, rural communities continue to grapple with entrenched developmental challenges, including pervasive rural poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to basic services. As stated in Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended. The functions of local government are supposed to include primary health care service delivery, educational development, rural electrification, rural water supply, agricultural development, rural tourism, and rural road infrastructure. However, other functions of local government are to bring government closer to the grassroots level, thus encouraging a sense of belonging among the local populace; to facilitate effective and

efficient government administration; to foster rapid socio-economic development of the communities they serve; to promote an effective and efficient communication link between the central government and the people at the grassroots level; to encourage greater public participation in governmental activities; to provide utility services and amenities to the local people; and to help the central government in the maintenance of law and order. But local government areas in Nigeria seem to be short of these operational functions.

It is assumed that the ineffective governance structures, inadequate funding, and lack of community participation have hindered the delivery of these essential services and developmental projects, exacerbating the socio-economic disparities between rural and urban areas. As such, it is presumably argued that some local governments in Nigeria have not really fared well in their responsibilities. This is attributed to the disconnection that existed between the people and the institutions of governance in the rural community. This situation has far-reaching implications for the well-being of rural communities, undermining their potential for self-sustenance, economic empowerment, and social mobility. Therefore, this study is imperative to investigate the extent to which local governments have contributed to rural development in Akwa Ibom State, with a view to identifying the underlying challenges, gaps, and opportunities for improving the livelihoods of rural dwellers and fostering sustainable development.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between local government and rural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. However, the specific objectives were:

1. To determine the relationship between local government and educational development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
2. To examine the relationship between local government and agricultural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

To achieve the objectives above, the following null hypotheses were tested:

1. H_1 : No significant relationship exists between local government and educational development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
2. H_2 : There is no significant relationship between local government and agricultural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Local Government Administration

Local government is the process of governing and managing local affairs within a defined geographic area, typically at the grassroots level. It encompasses the structures, processes, and activities involved in delivering public goods and services, promoting economic development, and ensuring the well-being of citizens at the local level. Effective local government requires a combination of institutional capacity, resources, and community engagement. It involves the coordination of various stakeholders, including

elected officials, public servants, community leaders, and citizens, to achieve shared development goals (Esedo, 2017). Local government must balance competing demands, manage scarce resources, and navigate complex regulatory environments to deliver results (Etebom & Wijaya, 2022).

Administration at the local government level plays a central role in bringing development closer to people in rural areas. Local authorities are responsible for building and maintaining rural roads, schools, and health centres. Effective leadership at that level means resources are delivered where they are most needed. If local authorities have decision-making powers with less interference from state authorities, then they can take swift action regarding problems such as poor roads, poor, unsafe water, or insufficient medical supplies. Evidence in Kaduna State shows that it is not the actual autonomy of local councils that limits rural development (Dance et al., 2024). Rural growth is mostly dependent on the availability of basic services on which people can live healthier lives, get an education, and farm well. Government functions that are local entail giving farmers access to fertilizers and insecticide chemicals, building feeder roads to transport agricultural produce, and offering clean water to drink (Okon, 2018).

Rural Development

Development refers to the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people, communities, encompassing social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Eyo, 2023). It involves addressing the unique challenges faced by rural areas, such as limited access to basic services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities. Rural development is critical for reducing poverty, inequality, and migration to urban areas, while promoting sustainable livelihoods and environmental stewardship for manpower development (Eyo et al., 2024).

Rural development means improving the lives of people in non-urban areas by developing food production, basic services, roads, and water supply, as well as schools. The current government activities in Nigeria suggest movement in that direction (Eyo et al., 2026). The Rural Access Agricultural Marketing Project Scale-Up (RAAMP-SU) aims at the rehabilitation and building of many rural roads so that producers have access to markets without losing products due to bad roads, states manage maintenance of roads in the long run, and new logistics centres arise near farming zones (Ayodele & Ojedokun, 2023). Most of the farmers are suffering because financing is costly, machinery is outdated, and climate change makes rainfall unpredictable. In northwestern Nigeria, water scarcity results in crop loss as rivers dry up for longer periods than in the past (Nwakamma et al., 2024). In the same manner, insecurity in the whole Benue region has decreased the quantity of food generated from both crop production and animal husbandry when people avoid farms or lose animals because of insecurity (Ijirshar et al., 2025).

Local Government and Educational Development

Education is another cornerstone of rural development. Local governments have the responsibility of facilitating educational services, including constructing and maintaining

schools, providing teaching materials, and recruiting qualified teachers. In rural areas, educational facilities are often less developed than in urban centres, and schools may lack basic infrastructure such as classrooms, libraries, and learning materials. The role of local government in addressing these challenges is fundamental, as education is vital for reducing poverty, empowering individuals, and fostering economic development. Lawal (2024) holds that local governments can implement policies to encourage school attendance, especially among girls and marginalized groups, and can also introduce vocational and technical education tailored to the needs of the rural economy. Education helps to reduce illiteracy, equip people with the necessary skills, and cultivate a workforce capable of driving rural development. When local governments focus on improving educational outcomes, they lay the foundation for long-term social and economic improvements, enhancing the ability of rural communities to innovate, adapt, and grow (Immaculata, 2013).

Local government also has a strong influence on the development of rural education by making schools available and close to the children's homes. Councils regularly approve funds for renovations of classrooms, building new blocks, supplying desks and furniture, and maintenance of school buildings (Kokona et al., 2023). Sufficient funding combined with control over resources at the local level has a direct bearing on the quality of teaching, teachers' needs and timely salaries, up-to-date textbooks, safe classrooms (Ayodele & Ojedokun, 2023). Once the local governments are given total financial autonomy, they will be better placed to hire or retain teachers, buy learning materials, fix school infrastructure. Vice President Kashim Shettima stated that a Supreme Court judgment giving total financial autonomy to local governments will strengthen Nigeria's universal basic education system.

Many challenges still hinder progress in the development of education in the local governments. There are instances where some schools are conducted under trees because of a lack of classrooms, even when funds have been disbursed to the local governments (Mohammed et al., 2023). Classrooms in other instances have perforated roofs, lack doors or have broken windows that make learning cumbersome. Delayed usage of funds from federal universal basic education programmes typically means projects fail to take off on time or are totally stalled (Nwakamma et al., 2024).

Local Government and Agricultural Development

Local government is largely recognized as an important mechanism through which central policies are adopted to suit the regional and rural context. In the area of agricultural development, local administrative bodies are mostly the first line of implementation and innovation, fashioning interventions to meet the specific needs and challenges of their communities. Local administration refers to decentralized systems of governance at the grassroots level and is characterized by its closeness to the people, which in turn makes for a deeper understanding of local socio-economic conditions. Scholars are of the opinion that such closeness makes room for more agile and context-sensitive policy making. Raharja et al. (2024) stressed how local-level management is critical in the agricultural context where natural resource management and community participation are important for sustainable

outcomes. Agricultural development involves increasing the efficiency, sustainability and productivity of agriculture which leads to food security and economic growth.

Local government can facilitate agricultural development by improving service delivery through offering of targeted extension services, manage rural infrastructure and enhance access to credit and technology which are factors that are crucial for modernizing agriculture. According to Mela and Bello (2023), local administration strengthens the link between policy and practice thereby encouraging the effectiveness of agricultural interventions. Unfortunately, while there are potential benefits of local government in agricultural development, many challenges remain. For instance, many local administrative bodies lack the human, technical and financial resources needed to effectively implement agricultural policies. In all, local government plays an important role in providing rural road infrastructure which is essential for rural development. Nwakamma et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of local government in providing basic services including roads to rural communities.

Local government has an added role to support rural agriculture to grow in Nigeria by making decisions that favours farmers. The majority of Local Government Areas makes provision of farm inputs like fertilizers, seeds and even equipments so that farmers are equipped with what they need before planting season (Kokona & Okafor, 2023). Also, local authorities negotiate with state ministries of agriculture to receive finance for extension services so that farmers are guided on the optimal way to plant crops or keep animals. A tangible effort of the local government is granting land for cultivation so that people without vast farms at least have a place to cultivate, plant food (Dance et al., 2024). Lagos Orile-Agege Local Council Development Area acquired five hundred hectares of land in Ogun so that the citizenry can cultivate crops and also animals to reduce hunger. Bayelsa has offered workshops for Local Government staff to train them in agro-investment skills so that staff empower farmers within their LGA to improve production, enhance sales (Kokona et al., 2023).

Theoretical framework

The Efficiency Services theory was adopted to consolidate the theoretical foundation of this study

Efficiency Services Theory

The Efficiency Services theory, introduced by economist Harvey Leibenstein in 1966, represents a notable advancement in the discussion of public administration and local service delivery. Leibenstein's seminal paper, "Allocative Efficiency," elucidated the fundamental concepts of the theory, positing that local governments are optimally equipped to execute specific responsibilities with maximal efficiency owing to their proximity to constituents and relatively controllable population levels (Leibenstein, 1966). This closeness allows local authorities to discern community needs and provide customised solutions, thereby improving the efficacy of service delivery.

The fundamental assertion of the Efficiency Services School is that local governments are the most efficient conduit for providing basic services to citizens (McKenzie, 1954, as referenced in Oluyole et al 2009). The notion asserts that the proximity of local government to citizens facilitates direct interaction, enhances comprehension of local issues, and enables swift responses to developing crises. Consequently, service delivery transcends mere bureaucratic function, becoming a client-centric approach designed to fulfil the requirements of local communities. The theory asserts that the efficacy of local government should be assessed chiefly based on its ability to deliver these services (Ibok & Akpan, 2014).

In the context of rural development in Akwa Ibom State, the Efficiency Services School provides a significant analytical framework for evaluating the performance of local government across sectors including primary health care, education, rural electrification, water supply, agriculture, tourism, and road infrastructure. Due to their grassroots focus, local councils are considered especially adept at efficiently and cost-effectively identifying and addressing sector-specific requirements (Ezeamama & Ofozoba, 2023). The approach emphasises the importance of providing local governments with sufficient resources and operational independence to facilitate responsive and innovative service delivery.

The theory's applicability encompasses the assessment of local governments' management of essential community services. In education and agriculture, their proximity to the community facilitates context-sensitive initiatives, such as culturally suitable educational and agricultural campaigns or locally pertinent curriculum improvements. In infrastructure development, local authorities are ideally positioned to prioritise initiatives that directly influence rural livelihoods and economic productivity. The efficiency service perspective highlights the interrelation of sectoral enhancements and their collective impact on overall rural development results.

This study utilises the Efficiency Services School as a solid theoretical framework. It emphasises the strategic benefits of local government in providing critical services and stresses the significance of efficiency as the primary criterion for evaluating rural development initiatives. This theory posits that local government and rural development are interrelated systems, facilitating the analysis of how improvements in education, infrastructure, agriculture and other areas collectively foster sustainable rural advancement.

Empirical Review

Ejeh, et al (2026). Local Government participation in the administration of primary Education in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The study investigated the extent of Local Government participation in the administration of primary Education in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. One research question and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. A 36-item researcher's structured questionnaire was developed and administered to 986 respondents. The sample of the study was 986 participants comprising of five (5) education secretaries, 282 head teachers and 699 teachers. The population of the study were studied as the sample size which was obtained through simple random sampling technique. Descriptive survey research design was

adopted. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A mean score of 2.50 was adopted as the cut-off-point or acceptable level for the items. The t-test statistic was employed in testing the three null hypotheses formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis of the findings showed that the respondents are of the view that the local government councils in Nsukka education Zone do not participate meaningfully in the administration and funding of primary education. Based on the findings the study recommended that the three tiers of government should combine to fund primary education to avoid it being abandoned by a particular tier, among others.

Igwe & Akumah (2025). Local Government Participation in the Administration of Primary Education in Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The study focused on Local Government Participation in the Administration of Primary Education in Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Five research questions and five null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was three hundred and twenty-nine (329) head teachers in the 329 public primary schools in Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The breakdown has one hundred and fifty nine (159) male headteachers and one hundred and seventy (170) female head teachers in the Onueke Education Zone of Ebonyi State. No sampling technique was adopted as the size is manageable. The Structural questionnaire tagged “Extent of Local Government Participation in the Administration of Primary Education Questionnaire (ELGPAPEQ) was for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two experts from the Department of Educational Foundations and one expert from the Measurement and Evaluation option of the Science Education Department, both in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The overall reliability yielded 0.88. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation with the aid of statistical package for SPSS while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that: Local governments participation in the areas of: funding of primary education, provision of infrastructures/ physical facilities in primary schools in primary schools in Onueke Education Zone are to a low extent while hypotheses results revealed there are no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female headteachers responses on the extent to which local government participate in the area of: funding of primary education and provision of infrastructures/ physical facilities in primary schools in primary schools in Onueke Education Zone. Based on the findings the study recommended that: Local governments should prioritize education in their budgets. Advocacy campaigns can be initiated to raise awareness about the importance of education funding and also encourage collaboration between local governments, non-governmental organizations or private companies to fund educational initiatives and projects.

Otu et al. (2025) examined local government and rural development in Eket Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State (2015–2023). It has been observed that the Local Governments in Nigeria appear limited in exercising their developmental functions, which seems to negatively affect the development of the rural areas. This study investigated the interplay between local government and rural development in Eket Local Government Area. The survey design was adopted for the study, with the population of the study being

the 220,600 indigenes of Eket Local Government Area. A sample size of 399 was drawn from this population. The simple random sampling method was adopted, with the questionnaire as an instrument for data gathering from the primary source. The simple percentage method was used for data analysis, as Chi-Square was used to test the three hypotheses formulated for the study. The findings of the study indicated that there is a positive impact of local government on rural development in Eket Local Government Area, with the local government's achievement on infrastructural development, educational development and healthcare development. The study therefore recommended that the Eket Local Government should prioritize the completion of ongoing projects and embark on new ones to address the infrastructural gap, increase funding on education to provide adequate resources for schools, establish programmes to attract and retain qualified teachers for basic education, prioritize the upgrading of healthcare facilities and equipment as well as establish monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that development projects are implemented effectively and efficiently in the area.

Eboh and Diejomaoh (2023) carried out an empirical study titled *Local Governments in Nigeria: Relevance and effectiveness in rural development*. The study was conducted in Nigeria, focusing on the role of local governments in promoting rural development across various communities. The study utilized both primary and secondary data collection techniques. Primary data were gathered through surveys with structured questionnaires distributed to local government officials, rural community leaders, and residents in selected local government areas. In addition, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gather qualitative insights from the respondents. Secondary data were sourced from government publications, official reports on rural development programmes, and academic literature. The data were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, and regression analysis. The methodology adopted in the study was a mixed-methods approach, combining survey research design and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of local governments in rural development. The data analysis tools included SPSS for quantitative data and NVivo for qualitative data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that local governments in Nigeria play a crucial role in the provision of basic infrastructure, such as roads, health services, and education in rural areas. However, the study also found significant challenges, including inadequate funding, poor governance, and lack of capacity within local government institutions. Furthermore, the effectiveness of local governments in rural development was found to be constrained by political interference, weak implementation of policies, and low levels of community participation in development planning. The limitations of the study included the limited scope of data collection, as it focused on specific regions within Nigeria. Additionally, challenges related to the reliability of responses from local government officials, as well as access to rural communities due to infrastructural challenges, were noted as limitations.

Jegede,. (2022) critically analysed the impact of local government administration on rural development: a focus on selected local government areas in Ondo state, Nigeria. The study used a straightforward survey research methodology, with questionnaire

administration, focus group discussions, and interviews as the methods for gathering data. Information was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. In each of the twelve (12) selected villages, questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with 10–15 participants were used to gather the primary data. The FGD is to explore issues related to the impact of the Agricultural Development Programme on farmers in the twelve (12) selected villages, how local government agricultural extension service has been of help to farmers in the study areas and what are the infrastructures put in place by local government. The secondary data came from a variety of sources, including books, journals, government documents, unpublished materials, and libraries. Using SPSS techniques, the gathered data were quantitatively analysed. In the twelve (12) villages that were chosen for the study, the local government's agricultural development programs had little to no effect on farmers, according to the study, which found no causal link between local government and rural development and social infrastructures. The result obtained on Local Government Agricultural Development Programme on farm infrastructure, farm output, farm asset and technology dimensions showed that the programmes were not well monitored and farmer's awareness was very poor. Within the study area, there is a very high degree of variation. A drastic shift in policy is necessary to address the issue of gap closing, while the programmes do not target the original farmers. Sustainable local government agricultural development programmes is unlikely to occur without serious attention from the government

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design, which was essential in systematically examining the primary variables related to local government and rural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population for this study is 7,200,000 (seven million two hundred thousand), which corresponds to the entire population of Akwa Ibom State as per the 2006 Nigerian national census estimate (Bureau of Statistics-2026). The sample size of the study was 400. It was determined using the Taro Yamane (n) Formula. In this study, data were mostly gathered using questionnaires, which were precisely written and methodically delivered to respondents to ensure the reliability and relevance of the information collected. This study employed the stratified sampling technique. The stratified sampling technique involved dividing the population of Akwa Ibom State into homogeneous subpopulations corresponding to its 3 senatorial districts to ensure equitable selection. The researcher intentionally chose one local government area among the senatorial districts of the state for data analysis. Frequency tables and simple percentages were employed to systematically organise and interpret responses to the research questions, allowing for clear presentation and identification of trends within the data. Additionally, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was utilised to rigorously test the study's hypotheses, providing a robust statistical measure of the relationships between variables.

Table 1: Population Distributions in Ten (10) Federal Constituencies of Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Senatorial Districts	Local Government Areas	No. of Respondents
1	Uyo	Nsit Ibom	134
2	Ikot Ekpene	Essien Udim	133
3	Eket	Mbo	133
	Total		400

Source: Field survey (2026)

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 2 below presents a summary of the questionnaires distributed to respondents during the study.

Table 2: Summary of questionnaire administered

Questionnaire	Number of questionnaires	Percentage (%)
Administered	400	100.00
Completed and returned	354	88.50
Not completed and returned	35	8.75
Rejected	9	2.25
Total	400	100.00

Source: Field survey (2026)

Table 2 shows that a total of 400 questionnaires were administered to respondents across the selected local government areas in Akwa Ibom state. Out of this, 354(88.5%) were correctly completed and returned, 35(8.75%) were not completed and returned while 9(2.25%) were not correctly filled, hence, were rejected.

Table 3: Percentage Analysis of Respondents' Responses Regarding Education Development

Education Development	Total	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
Local government allocates sufficient funds for basic education.	354 (100%)	203 (57.3%)	88 (24.9%)	49 (13.8%)	11 (3.1%)	3 (0.8%)
Schools have adequate infrastructure and facilities	354 (100%)	227 (64.1%)	73 (20.6%)	25 (7.1%)	13 (3.7%)	16 (4.5%)
Education outcomes are monitored and evaluated	354 (100%)	182 (51.4%)	107 (30.2%)	21 (5.9%)	23 (6.5%)	21 (5.9%)
Adult literacy programmes are promoted	354 (100%)	211 (59.6%)	78 (22.0%)	32 (9.0%)	9 (2.5%)	24 (6.8%)
Valid N (listwise)	354					

Source: Field survey (2026)

Table 3 shows that 203(57.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that local government allocates sufficient funds for basic education, 88(24.9%) agreed, 49(13.8%) were undecided, 11(3.1%) disagreed while 3(0.8%) of them strongly disagreed. Equally, 227(64.1%) of them strongly agreed that schools have adequate infrastructure and facilities, 13(3.7%) disagreed while 16(4.5%) of them strongly disagreed.

However, 182(51.4%) of them strongly agreed that education outcomes are monitored and evaluated, 107(30.2%) agreed, 21(5.9%) were neutral, 23(6.5%) disagreed while 21(5.9%) strongly disagreed. In the same vein, 211(59.6%) of them strongly agreed that adult literacy programmes are promoted, 78(22.0%) strongly agreed, 32(9.0%) were Undecided, 9(2.5%) disagreed while 24(6.8%) strongly disagreed.

Table 4: Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding agricultural development

Agricultural Development	Total	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
Local government supports farmers adequately.	354 (100%)	186 (52.5%)	91 (25.7%)	34 (9.6%)	16 (4.5%)	27 (7.6%)
Agricultural extension services are available.	354 (100%)	176 (49.7%)	83 (23.4%)	43 (12.1%)	23 (6.2%)	29 (8.2%)
Agricultural mechanization is promoted.	354 (100%)	178 (50.3%)	88 (24.9%)	36 (10.2%)	18 (5.1%)	34 (9.6%)
Agricultural development programmes are effective.	354 (100%)	190 (53.7%)	84 (23.7%)	31 (8.8%)	14 (4.0%)	35 (9.9%)
Valid N (listwise)	354					

Source: Field survey (2026)

Table 4 shows that 186(52.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that local government supports farmers adequately, 91(25.7%) agreed, 34(9.6%) were neutral, 16(4.5%) disagreed, while 27(7.6%) of them strongly disagreed. Also, 176(49.7%) of them strongly agreed that agricultural extension services are available, 83(23.4%) agreed, 43(12.1%) were Undecided, 23(6.2%) disagreed, while 29(8.2%) strongly disagreed.

Furthermore, 178(50.3%) of them strongly agreed that agricultural mechanization is promoted, 88(24.9%) agreed, 36(10.2%) were Undecided 18(5.1%) disagreed while 34(9.6%) of them strongly disagreed. In addition, 190 (53.7%) of them strongly agreed that agricultural development programmes are effective, 84(23.7%) agreed, 31(8.8%) were neutral, 14(4.0%) disagreed, while 35(9.9%) of them strongly disagreed.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Local government and Education development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Correlation between Local government and education development

	LOCAL_GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION		EDUCATION _DEVELOPMENT
LOCAL_GOVERNMENT_ ADMINISTRATION	Pearson Correlation	1	.786**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	354	354
EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT	Pearson Correlation	.786**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	354	354

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's computation (2026) using SPSS 25.0

Table 5 reveals a correlation coefficient 'r' of 0.786 and a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis. This shows that local government has a significant positive correlation with education development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis two

HH₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Local government and agricultural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Table 6: Correlation between Local Government and Agricultural Development

	LOCAL GOVERNMENT		AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Pearson Correlation	2	.947**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	354	354
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	Pearson Correlation	.947**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	354	354

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher's computation (2026) using SPSS 25.0

Table 6 reveals a Correlation Coefficient 'r' of 0.947 and a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis.

This shows that there is a significant relationship between local government and agricultural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective examined determine the relationship between Local government and educational development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. From the test of hypothesis two and data analysis the study revealed that there exist a strong positive correlation between local government and education development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient ($r=0.786$) indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that effective local government is closely tied to improved education development. This finding is not surprising, given the critical role local governments play in managing and maintaining educational infrastructure, providing educational resources, and supporting teachers. The significant p-value ($p=0.000<0.05$) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. Ejeh, et al (2026) Local Government participation in the administration of primary Education in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The result of the analysis of the findings showed that the respondents are of the view that the local government councils in Nsukka education Zone do not participate meaningfully in the administration and funding of primary education. The result revealed that: Local governments participation in the areas of: funding of primary education, provision of infrastructures/ physical facilities in primary schools in primary schools in Onueke Education Zone are to a low extent while hypotheses results revealed there are no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female headteachers responses on the extent to which local government participate in the area of: funding of primary education and provision of infrastructures/ physical facilities in primary schools in primary schools in Onueke Education Zone. Also Igwe & Akumah (2025) "Local Government and rural development in Nigeria: A Survey Study of Ezeagu in Enugu State", focusing on the role of local government in rural development in Nigeria, with a specific case study of Ezeagu Local Government Area in Enugu State. The findings of the study revealed that the rural communities in Ezeagu faced significant challenges, particularly in terms of inadequate infrastructure and poor service delivery in education infrastructure.

During our visit to public schools in the selected Local Government, we discovered that Local governments in Akwa Ibom State play a crucial role in educational development by providing funding for primary schools, managing day-to-day administration through Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), and implementing grassroots initiatives to support education. We also discovered that Local Governments provide Exercise books to both primary school pupils and secondary school students in Akwa Ibom state, like Essien Udim (St. Josephs Primary School, Ikot Essien Okon Clan (see appendix 2.1) and St. Anthony Primary School EkpenyoungAtai,1), Nsit Ibom (St. Lius Primary School Mbiokporo), Mbo (Community Primary School, Ikot Eko and Government Primary School (GPS) Ekpuk The Local government provides pipe-borne water in Mbo (Government Secondary School (GSS) Nkek, GSS Ewang).

The second objective aimed to examine the relationship between Local government and agricultural development. The study reveals a very strong positive correlation between local government and agricultural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The correlation coefficient ($r=0.947$) indicates a very strong positive relationship, suggesting that effective local government is closely tied to improved agricultural development. This finding is consistent with the expectation that local governments play a crucial role in supporting agricultural activities, such as providing extension services, inputs, and infrastructure. The significant p-value ($p=0.000<0.05$) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. This finding highlights the importance of local government's efforts to support agricultural development in the state. In agreement, Otu et al. (2025) examined local government and rural development in Eket Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State (2015–2023). The findings of the study indicated that there is a positive impact of local government on rural development in Eket Local Government Area, with the local government's achievement on infrastructural development, educational development and agricultural development. In disagreement, Jegede (2022) conducted a critical analysis of the impact of local government on rural development, focusing on selected local government areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that local government agricultural development programmes had little to no impact on farm infrastructure, farm output, farm assets, and technology dimensions. The programmes were found to lack adequate monitoring, and farmers' awareness of these initiatives was very poor.

From our field survey, our findings show that Local governments have created a sustainable environment for agricultural development by providing training to the farmers on livestock, fishery, bees, snails, and pig rearing. However, agricultural empowerment has achieved prosperity and financial freedom among farmers in the state. From our findings, below are the commitments of the Local Government on Agricultural Development:

- i. Nsit Ibom Local Government Area (LGA) donated land for a 50-hectare model farm project to promote mechanized farming and food production. The local government has been involved in enumerating farmers to create a comprehensive database, a key step in mobilizing and supporting the farming community in the Local Government Area. Nsit Ibom has participated in the distribution of agricultural inputs, such as cassava cuttings, pepper seedlings, and maize grains, through state programmes like AKCARES. The local administration is committed to achieving food sufficiency goals for the area, with the Abasi-Ikponke farm serving as an example of a local agricultural empowerment project(See appendix 5.3).
- ii. Essien Udim Local Government Area has a project where it cultivates its own farm, with the goal of boosting food security and economic empowerment, as outlined by the council chairman (See appendix 5.4). Essien Udim Local Government Area has focused on agricultural development through community-led reforestation projects. In May 2025, Midim Atan will be involved in planting 6,000 trees, with core components including community forest restoration and free seedling distribution.

- iii. Mbo Local Government Area's (LGA) have established a seafood processing factory in Ibaka, to provide a more efficient way for women to process seafood, which is a traditional occupation in the area. The Local Government also launched the Home Garden Scheme, which encourages all residents, regardless of land size, to cultivate food at home and receive guidance from agricultural extension officers.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between local government and rural development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The findings suggest that local government has a significant positive correlation with most of the rural development indicators examined, which were educational development and agricultural development. These results underscore the critical role that local government plays in promoting rural development in the state. The significant relationships between local government and most of the rural development indicators suggest that strengthening local government could be a key strategy for promoting rural development in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.

1. Local governments in Akwa Ibom State should increase educational budgets to facilitate teacher support programs and improve school facilities in order to enhance educational development.
2. Local governments in Akwa Ibom State should ensure that local farmers are empowered with farm equipment and crop seedlings to promote agricultural development.

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