

CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN YOLA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ADAMAWA STATE

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Abstract

Local government is expected to promote grassroots socio-economic development through the provision of basic infrastructure, social services and support for local economic activities. However, persistent gaps in roads, healthcare, education, water, electricity and livelihood support raise concerns about the extent to which local governments effectively improve living standards. This study examined the contribution of Yola North Local Government Council to socio-economic development in Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Specifically, the study identified the socio-economic development needs of rural communities and examined the role of the Council in improving residents' living standards. The study was anchored on Decentralization Theory. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, while primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Kobo Collect. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation. Findings revealed that rural communities identified education, healthcare, rural roads, electricity, clean water and agricultural support as major socio-economic development needs. The study also found that Yola North Local Government Council contributes to improving residents' living standards through the provision of social services, infrastructure and support for local economic activities. The study recommends increased investment in basic infrastructure and social services, as well as stronger community participation, accountability and monitoring of local development programmes.

Keywords: *Local Government, Socio-Economic Development, Grassroots Development, Decentralization.*

Introduction

Local government is widely regarded as an important instrument of grassroots governance and socio-economic development because it brings government closer to the people and enables public authorities to respond to local needs. Through the provision of basic infrastructure, social services, local economic support and community development initiatives, local governments can contribute to improved living conditions and greater participation in development processes (Akinyetun & Oke, 2021; Ogunnubi, 2022). Effective decentralised governance is therefore expected to enhance

responsiveness, accountability and service delivery at the local level. In Nigeria, local governments constitute the level of government closest to the grassroots and are assigned responsibilities that directly affect community welfare and development. These include the provision and maintenance of local roads, markets, sanitation, primary healthcare, water facilities and other community services. However, the capacity of local governments to perform these functions is often constrained by inadequate financial resources, weak administrative capacity, corruption and limited autonomy, which can undermine effective service delivery (Onah & Anikwe, 2021; Akinyetun & Oke, 2021).

In Adamawa State, socio-economic development remains closely associated with the availability of basic infrastructure and livelihood opportunities. Evidence from the state indicates variations in socio-economic development and access to essential facilities, highlighting the importance of effective local-level intervention (Anjorin et al., 2021). In Yola North Local Government Area, the Council has an important role in addressing the socio-economic needs of residents through infrastructure, education, healthcare, water supply, roads and support for local economic activities. However, concerns about the adequacy and effectiveness of these interventions make it necessary to assess the actual contribution of the Council to improving the living standards of its population. Against this background, this study examines the contribution of Yola North Local Government Council to socio-economic development in Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State, with particular attention to the socio-economic needs of the population and the role of the Council in improving living standards.

Statement of the Problem

Local government is expected to serve as the closest tier of government to the people and play a significant role in promoting socio-economic development through the provision of basic infrastructure and social services. However, the effectiveness of local governments in Nigeria has remained a concern because inadequate funding, weak administrative capacity, poor accountability and limited institutional autonomy often constrain service delivery (Akinyetun & Oke, 2021; Ogunmubi, 2022). These challenges are particularly relevant to Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State, where residents require adequate roads, healthcare, educational facilities, clean water, electricity and support for local economic activities. Although the Council has responsibilities for addressing these grassroots needs, existing evidence indicates persistent challenges in financing and delivering local government services in Yola North. Abdulrazak et al. (2024), for instance, identified financial constraints as an important problem affecting service delivery in Yola North Local Government. Similarly, Anjorin et al. (2021) reported variations in socio-economic development across Adamawa State, suggesting unequal access to development facilities.

The problem, therefore, is that despite the developmental responsibilities assigned to Yola North Local Government Council, there is insufficient empirical evidence on the extent to which its

activities have contributed to improving the socio-economic conditions and living standards of the population in the area. It is against this background that this study assesses the contribution of Yola North Local Government Council to socio-economic development, with particular attention to the development needs of residents and the Council's role in improving their living standards.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the role of local government on the socio-economic development. The specific objectives are to;

- i. Identify the socio-economic development needs for rural population in Yola North local government area.
- ii. Examine the role played by Yola North local government council in the improvement of living standards of the population in the study area.

Conceptual Clarification

Local Government

Local government is an important institution of grassroots administration and development because it provides a link between government and citizens and facilitates the provision of public services within a defined locality. Oikhala (2021) views local government as an institution concerned with managing public affairs and promoting development at the grassroots. Although this definition emphasizes grassroots development, it gives limited attention to the institutional authority, resource mobilisation and service-delivery mechanisms through which development is achieved. Ogunnubi (2022) similarly associates local government with decentralisation, local democracy and service delivery. While this perspective recognizes the political and administrative dimensions of local government, it pays less attention to the actual socio-economic outcomes of its activities.

Samuel et al. (2021) emphasize participation and collaboration between local government and community actors in the delivery of public services. The strength of this perspective lies in recognizing citizens as active participants in local development; however, it focuses more on local governance than on local government as a formal administrative institution. Onah and Anikwe (2021), on the other hand, emphasize local government primarily as an instrument of public service delivery. Although this highlights one of its major responsibilities, it does not fully capture its wider roles in infrastructure development, local economic promotion, community participation and development planning. Similarly, Akinyetun and Oke (2021) associate local government with the provision of essential services and allocation of resources to meet community needs. However, their perspective gives greater attention to service-delivery challenges than to the broader developmental functions of local government. The reviewed definitions therefore reveal a conceptual gap: while scholars variously emphasize grassroots administration, decentralisation, participation, service delivery and resource allocation, these dimensions are rarely integrated into a single definition that directly connects local government activities with socio-economic

development outcomes. This gap is important to the present study because the focus is not merely on the existence or statutory functions of Yola North Local Government but on the extent to which its activities contribute to the socio-economic development of residents. From the researcher's perspective, local government should therefore be understood as a legally established grassroots institution that exercises administrative and developmental responsibilities within a defined locality by mobilising and utilising resources, providing infrastructure and social services, supporting local economic activities, promoting citizen participation and implementing development programmes aimed at improving residents' socio-economic well-being. This broader conceptualisation recognizes that proximity to citizens alone does not constitute effective local government; rather, its effectiveness should be assessed by the extent to which its institutional responsibilities and interventions produce tangible development outcomes. This position is consistent with evidence that institutional capacity, resource availability, participation and effective service delivery influence local government performance (Akinyetun & Oke, 2021; Onah & Anikwe, 2021; Ogunnubi, 2022). Accordingly, in this study, local government refers specifically to Yola North Local Government Council and its activities in infrastructure provision, social service delivery, support for local economic activities, community participation, resource mobilisation and development planning, as these constitute the principal mechanisms through which it can contribute to socio-economic development.

Concept of Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic development is a broad concept referring to improvements in the economic and social conditions of individuals and communities. It goes beyond economic growth to include better access to education, healthcare, employment, infrastructure, income opportunities and improved living conditions. The World Bank (2022) associates development with improving people's welfare, expanding opportunities and reducing poverty and inequality, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) emphasizes human well-being, capabilities and people's ability to live productive and meaningful lives. These perspectives demonstrate that socio-economic development involves both material improvements and enhancement of human welfare. Anjorin et al. (2021) relate socio-economic development to the availability and spatial distribution of facilities and services that improve the conditions of communities. Although this perspective highlights the importance of physical and social infrastructure, it gives less attention to individual economic opportunities and household welfare. Similarly, Shelleng and Tabitha (2021) associate development with improvements in agricultural productivity and income among rural households. While this emphasizes economic welfare and livelihood improvement, it does not fully capture broader social dimensions such as education, healthcare, infrastructure and quality of life. Thus, the major gap in these perspectives is that socio-economic development is sometimes examined through either social facilities or economic outcomes, rather than their combined effects. From the researcher's perspective, socio-economic development should therefore be understood as a

continuous process through which improvements in economic opportunities, social services, infrastructure and living conditions enhance the overall welfare and quality of life of individuals and communities. This conceptualisation recognizes that increased income or economic activity alone does not necessarily constitute development unless it is accompanied by improvements in education, healthcare, infrastructure, employment and other dimensions of human well-being. This broader understanding is consistent with the human-development perspective of the UNDP (2022) and the emphasis on inclusive and sustainable development by the World Bank (2022). Accordingly, in this study, socio-economic development refers to improvements in the living conditions of residents of Yola North Local Government Area through better infrastructure, education, healthcare, employment and livelihood opportunities, local economic activities and general household welfare. These dimensions provide the basis for assessing the extent to which the activities of Yola North Local Government have contributed to the socio-economic well-being of its residents.

Theoretical framework

The paper is anchored on Decentralization Theory, which is associated particularly with Rondinelli, John and Shabbir Cheema, whose works emphasize the transfer of authority, responsibilities and resources from higher to lower levels of government to improve governance and development. The central idea of the theory is that decisions concerning local needs are more effectively made when authority is transferred closer to the people because local institutions are better positioned to understand community priorities and respond to them through appropriate programmes and services (Rondinelli et al., 1983; Rondinelli, 1981). In this sense, decentralization is expected to promote efficiency, participation, accountability and responsiveness in grassroots development.

The theory, however, has been criticized for assuming that transferring responsibilities to local institutions will automatically improve development outcomes. In practice, decentralization may produce limited results where local governments lack adequate financial resources, skilled personnel and administrative capacity. Weak accountability, corruption, elite capture and excessive interference by higher levels of government can also undermine local autonomy and service delivery (Smoke, 2015; World Bank, 2022). Thus, decentralization does not necessarily guarantee effective development unless local institutions possess the resources, authority and capacity required to perform their assigned responsibilities. Despite these criticisms, the major strength of Decentralization Theory is that it provides a useful framework for understanding local autonomy, citizen participation, responsiveness and grassroots service delivery. It recognizes that local governments can respond more effectively to community-specific needs when they have sufficient decision-making authority and resources. The theory is therefore particularly useful for analysing how institutional arrangements and the distribution of governmental responsibilities influence local development outcomes (Rondinelli et al., 1983).

The theory is directly applicable to this study because Yola North Local Government Council represents the level of government closest to the residents within its jurisdiction. The theory provides a basis for examining whether the council has adequate authority, financial resources and administrative capacity to perform its developmental responsibilities. It also enables the study to assess how decentralised decision-making and community participation influence the provision of infrastructure and social services, including roads, water, sanitation, education, healthcare and support for local economic activities. In this regard, the theory helps explain whether the transfer of responsibilities to Yola North Local Government has translated into meaningful socio-economic development. Therefore, the relevance of Decentralization Theory to this study lies in its ability to connect local authority, resource allocation, participation and service delivery with socio-economic development. The theory suggests that Yola North Local Government can contribute more effectively to socio-economic development when it possesses adequate decision-making powers, financial resources and institutional capacity and is responsive to the needs of its residents. The theory consequently provides an appropriate framework for assessing the extent to which local government contributes to improved infrastructure, social services, economic opportunities and living conditions in Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design because it is appropriate for assessing the contribution of Yola North Local Government to socio-economic development. The design enables the researcher to collect data from residents and other relevant respondents on their perceptions, experiences and assessment of local government activities in areas such as infrastructure, social services and local economic development. It is suitable for describing existing conditions without manipulating the study variables and provides empirical evidence on the extent of the local government's contribution to socio-economic development in the study area (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saunders et al., 2023).

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises the entire projected population of Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Based on the 2022 population projection of 307,900 persons reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), the population for 2025 was projected using an annual exponential growth rate of 3%, giving an estimated population of 336,842 persons. This projected population constitutes the target population from which the study sample will be drawn.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for determining reliable sample as presented below.

$$n = \frac{x^2 N p (1 - p)}{e^2 (N - 1) + x^2 p (1 - p)}$$

Where;

n = Sample size

N = Population size = 336,842

p = Population proportions (to be 0.5)

e = Acceptable error of sample size (0.05)

x^2 = Chi-square = 3.841 ($d_f = 1$ and reliability level 95%)

$$n = \frac{3.841 \times 336,842 \times 0.5 (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2 (336,842 - 1) + 3.841 \times 0.5 (1 - 0.5)}$$

$$n = \frac{1293810.122 \times 0.25}{842.1025 + 0.96025}$$

$$n = 383.6636$$

$$n \approx 384$$

Method of Data Collection

The study collected primary data through a structured questionnaire administered using the Kobo Collect App. The questionnaire was developed in line with the study objectives and pilot-tested to ensure clarity, relevance and reliability. Trained data collectors administered the questionnaires to selected respondents, while the researcher supervised the fieldwork to ensure adherence to established procedures, completeness of responses and overall data quality.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected were analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores ($\bar{x}$), and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' characteristics, responses and perceptions regarding the contribution of local government to socio-economic development in Yola North Local Government Area. The data were analysed using SPSS version 23.0

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	240	66.5
	Female	121	33.5
	Total	361	100.0
Age	18-25 years	107	29.6
	26-35 years	142	39.3
	36-45 years	67	18.6
	46 years and above	45	12.5
	Total	361	100.0
Educational Qualification	No Formal Education	48	13.3
	Primary	93	25.8
	Secondary	77	21.3
	Tertiary	129	35.7
	Other	14	3.9
	Total	361	100.0
Occupation	Farmer	126	34.9
	Trader	52	14.4
	Civil Servant	164	45.4
	Others	19	5.3
	Total	361	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 361 respondents. The results show that males constituted the majority (66.5%), while females accounted for 33.5%. Respondents aged 26-35 years formed the largest age group (39.3%), indicating a predominantly youthful sample. In terms of education, respondents with tertiary qualifications were the largest group (35.7%), suggesting a relatively educated respondent population. Regarding occupation, civil servants constituted the largest proportion (45.4%), followed by farmers (34.9%). Therefore, the respondents were largely economically active and sufficiently represented across key socio-demographic categories, providing a useful basis for assessing local government's contribution to socio-economic development in Yola North. This composition is consistent with the view that education, employment and demographic characteristics can influence citizens' engagement with and assessment of local governance and development initiatives (Anjorin et al., 2021; Onah & Anikwe, 2021).

Table 2: Socio-Economic Development Needs of Rural Communities in Yola North LGA

Socio-Economic Development Needs	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev.	Remark
Improvement of rural road networks to enhance transportation and market access	169 (46.8%)	127 (35.2%)	21 (5.8%)	31 (8.6%)	13 (3.6%)	1.87	1.086	Accepted
Provision of adequate healthcare facilities	183 (50.7%)	115 (31.9%)	11 (3.0%)	39 (10.8%)	13 (3.6%)	1.85	1.129	Accepted
Access to quality educational facilities	200 (55.4%)	91 (25.2%)	24 (6.6%)	27 (7.5%)	19 (5.3%)	1.82	1.168	Accepted
Availability of agricultural support services, including improved seeds, fertilizers and extension services	170 (47.1%)	118 (32.7%)	12 (3.3%)	40 (11.1%)	21 (5.8%)	1.96	1.214	Accepted
Provision of electricity and clean water supply	177 (49.0%)	111 (30.7%)	11 (3.0%)	40 (11.1%)	22 (6.1%)	1.94	1.230	Accepted
Overall Mean						1.89		Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 2 shows that all the identified socio-economic development needs were accepted by the respondents, with an overall mean of 1.89. Access to quality educational facilities ranked highest ($\bar{x}$ = 1.82), followed by healthcare facilities ($\bar{x}$ = 1.85) and rural road networks ($\bar{x}$ = 1.87). Provision of electricity and clean water ($\bar{x}$ = 1.94) and agricultural support services ($\bar{x}$ = 1.96) were also identified as important needs. The findings suggest that rural communities in Yola North require improvements in basic social services, infrastructure and livelihood support. This is consistent with Anjorin et al. (2021), who identified variations in socio-economic facilities across Adamawa State, and Shelleng and Tabitha (2021), who emphasized the importance of agricultural interventions in improving rural livelihoods in Yola North. The findings further highlight the importance of local government in addressing basic infrastructure and social-service needs at the grassroots level (Onah & Anikwe, 2021).

Table 3: Respondents' Perceptions of the Role of Yola North Local Government Council in Improving Living Standards

Role of Yola North Local Government Council	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean (x̄)	Std. Dev.	Remark
The Council has improved rural road networks, thereby enhancing transportation and market access.	169 (46.8%)	127 (35.2%)	21 (5.8%)	31 (8.6%)	13 (3.6%)	1.87	1.086	Accepted
The Council has contributed to the provision and improvement of healthcare facilities in the study area.	183 (50.7%)	115 (31.9%)	11 (3.0%)	39 (10.8%)	13 (3.6%)	1.85	1.129	Accepted
The Council has contributed to improving access to educational facilities in the study area.	200 (55.4%)	91 (25.2%)	24 (6.6%)	27 (7.5%)	19 (5.3%)	1.82	1.168	Accepted
The Council has supported agricultural activities through improved inputs and extension services.	170 (47.1%)	118 (32.7%)	12 (3.3%)	40 (11.1%)	21 (5.8%)	1.96	1.214	Accepted
The Council has contributed to the provision of electricity and clean water to improve living conditions.	177 (49.0%)	111 (30.7%)	11 (3.0%)	40 (11.1%)	22 (6.1%)	1.94	1.230	Accepted
Overall Mean						1.89		Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 indicates that respondents generally agreed that Yola North Local Government Council has contributed to improving living standards, as reflected by the overall mean of 1.89. The strongest perceived contribution was in improving access to educational facilities ($\bar{x} = 1.82$), followed by healthcare provision ($\bar{x} = 1.85$) and rural road improvement ($\bar{x} = 1.87$). Contributions to electricity and clean water ($\bar{x} = 1.94$) and agricultural support ($\bar{x} = 1.96$) were also accepted. The findings suggest that the Council's contribution is evident mainly through basic infrastructure and social services that directly affect residents' welfare. This supports Anjorin et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of socio-economic facilities in local development in Adamawa State,

and Onah and Anikwe (2021), who noted that effective local government service delivery is central to improving grassroots welfare. The finding also agrees with Shelleng and Tabitha (2021), who reported positive livelihood effects of development interventions in Yola North.

Summary of Findings

- i. The study found that rural communities in Yola North LGA have substantial socio-economic development needs. Respondents identified quality education, healthcare facilities, rural roads, electricity and clean water, and agricultural support services as major development needs, with an overall mean of 1.89, indicating general agreement. Educational facilities recorded the highest level of agreement ($\bar{x} = 1.82$), followed by healthcare ($\bar{x} = 1.85$) and rural roads ($\bar{x} = 1.87$).
- ii. The study found that Yola North Local Government Council has made a positive contribution to improving the living standards of residents, particularly through education, healthcare, rural road improvement, electricity and water provision, and agricultural support. The overall mean of 1.89 indicates respondents' general acceptance of the Council's contribution. Educational development recorded the highest perceived contribution ($\bar{x} = 1.82$), followed by healthcare ($\bar{x} = 1.85$) and road improvement ($\bar{x} = 1.87$).

Conclusion

The study concludes that Yola North Local Government Council makes a positive contribution to the socio-economic development and living standards of residents, particularly through education, healthcare, rural roads, electricity, water supply and agricultural support. However, the identified development needs indicate that important gaps in basic infrastructure and social services remain. Therefore, strengthening the Council's financial capacity, administrative effectiveness, accountability and community participation is essential for improving its contribution to sustainable grassroots socio-economic development in Yola North LGA.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- i. Yola North Local Government Council should prioritize investment in basic infrastructure and social services, particularly rural roads, healthcare facilities, educational facilities, electricity and clean water.
- ii. The Council should strengthen community participation and accountability in local development programmes. Regular consultation with residents, transparent allocation of development resources and effective monitoring of projects should be institutionalized to ensure that available resources address priority community needs and produce sustainable socio-economic benefits

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