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Investigation of government efforts to improve the quality of life of coastal dwellers in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The contemporary human settlements are encountered with myriad of challenges that are capable of hampering good quality of life, the principal among them is the absence or inadequate access to basic infrastructure such as potable water supply, power, improved sanitation, transportation, health services among others. In view of foregoing, the paper appraised government efforts at proving basic infrastructure that could enhance quality of life in the coastal area of Ondo State. The sampling frame for the study was 247,407 while the sample size was 504, and systematic technique was adopted in administering the questionnaire, which was the research instrument. Meanwhile, the response rate was 98.4%, which amounted to 496. The study revealed poor spatial distribution of government infrastructure, lack of basic services, inadequate funding, project abandonments and poor budget performance. The study recommended redistribution of government projects to reveal equity, adequate funding of government projects, and provision of basic infrastructure that will enhance the quality of life in the study area, thereby meeting the global agenda of sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Infrastructure, development, wellbeing, livability, growth

1.0. Introduction

Infrastructure is essential for promoting a nation's economic growth and prosperity. It improves trade and connectivity, encourages economic inclusion, and raises productivity and growth. A major factor in achieving the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) is infrastructure. For instance, improving access to energy in both urban and rural areas will result from the growth of electrical distribution networks. Infrastructure related to transportation will link people, ease the flow of goods, and

promote trade, all of which will boost a nation's economy (Asaju, 2023).

The economic literature has extensively established the role of infrastructure improvement in promoting economic growth (Estache, 2006). Again, sustainable development goals has placed priority on the dominance of infrastructure as a panacea for nations of world to develop and improve the quality of life of people (Davies, Nwankwo, Olofinnade and Michaels, 2019). Without investments in infrastructure such as telecommunications, transportation, electricity, water, health, housing, and education, development in any form cannot lead to a decent and healthy living environment neither improve quality of life. Infrastructure improves the quality of growth while lowering poverty and economic inequality. Direct infrastructure investment can provide positive externalities by lowering trade transaction costs, opening up production facilities, and creating jobs for the populace and consequently enhance their quality of life (Game, 20210).

On the other hand, a lack of infrastructure poses a major threat to development and sustainability and may even make poverty worse. A study by Srinivasu and Rao (2013) have shown a favourable correlation between infrastructure development and economic growth. According to this research, infrastructure spending has a direct impact on economic growth. Therefore, the only option available to a nation to achieve a respectable potential for growth is to allocate resources towards the construction of infrastructure, including decent roads, operational railway networks, water and power systems, homes, schools, and hospitals that will promote good quality of life.

The weak state of infrastructure development have impeded expected growth and consequently, good quality of life across the nation. Also, rapidly declining growth performance in the nation has been attributed to a significant fall in the development of its physical infrastructure. In order to keep up a steady growth momentum in productivity and raise the standard of life for everyone, infrastructure investment is necessary. In view of the foregoing, the study focused the investigation of government efforts in improving quality of life of coastal dwellers in Ondo state, Nigeria with a view to curtailing its attendant problems.

2.0. Literature Review

Government or public sector has been considered to be the principal provider of basic infrastructure as Economic literature provides theoretical justifications for government or public sector supply of critical and basic infrastructure services.

The word "infrastructure" refers to a broad range of tasks as well as the fundamental buildings and facilities required for a nation to run smoothly. In the language of economics, they are frequently referred to as "social overheads." Public utilities including buildings, transportation, energy resources, roads, telephones, pipe-borne water supplies, trains, urban transportation, ports, waterways, airports, etc. are all considered to be part of infrastructure. It is intended to be the entirety of fundamental physical infrastructure, on which all other economic activity inside a system is predicated (Michael and Chatham, 2022).

The global community has recognized the significance of infrastructure, as a fundamental foundation upon which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be achieved. The UN has outlined 17 fundamental objectives that developing countries must accomplish in a set time. Among these are the eradication of

poverty, well-being and health care, high-quality education, gender equality, access to affordable and clean energy, clean water and sanitation, industry, innovation, and infrastructure, as well as the decrease of inequality. Achieving all of these objectives without rapid and continuous infrastructure development worldwide, particularly in emerging nations, may prove challenging and unsustainable (Asaju, 2023).

The relevance of infrastructure to nation building and development cannot be overemphasized. Any country that aspires to real economic and social progress must invest in infrastructure, which is particularly capital-intensive due to its pivotal role in driving economic growth and development (Davies, Nwankwo, and Olofinnade, 2019). The absence of infrastructure investment will inevitably result in an infrastructure deficit with grave implications for human welfare and the advancement of the nation. For instance, transportation network is a crucial piece of infrastructure that links one region to another or one economic centre to another (Asian Development Bank 2020)

The engagements of households, communities and economic output depend heavily on infrastructure services including power, transportation, telecommunications, water and sanitation supply, and proper waste disposal. This fact becomes all too painfully apparent when roads, bridges, telephone lines, canals, water mains, power plants, and other infrastructure are destroyed or rendered inoperable by natural disasters or civil unrest. The productivity and quality of life in communities are drastically and swiftly decreased by major infrastructure breakdowns. On the other hand, raising infrastructure standards improves wellbeing and promotes economic expansion (Davies, Nwankwo, and Olofinnade, 2019).

Asaju (2023) noted that infrastructure is crucial to the advancement of every country. Infrastructure development is a necessary for any country that aspires to real economic and social progress. This is because infrastructure is crucial for influencing economic growth and development. Infrastructure development has helped nations like Brazil, China, Singapore, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and others turn around their economies. Thus, a country's level of modern infrastructure determines the health, viability, and sustainability of its economy. This suggests that in order for developing nations like Nigeria to compete with established ones, the nation must make adequate investments on basic infrastructure

The Nigerian government has made significant investments in infrastructure development throughout the years, but there hasn't been a corresponding return. Nigeria's infrastructure deficit is still a serious issue (Ogunlana, Yaqub and Alhassan, 2016). According to statistics, Nigeria is thought to have an annual infrastructure deficit of more than \$100 billion. This is more than the government budget, making up 189.77% (Proshare, 2020). The government recently bemoaned the fact that, in order to solve the issue of the infrastructure deficit, the nation will need to spend a staggering \$1.5 trillion in the next ten years and \$3.0 trillion in the next thirty (Ukpe, 2021).

Nigeria's infrastructure development remains well short of expectations, even with a variety of institutional and legal frameworks, promises, and interventions from state and non-state players. The nation's efforts to achieve socioeconomic development are hampered by the condition of the infrastructure. In almost every economic area (such as transportation, energy, communication, aviation, education, health, etc.), the lack of essential infrastructure has a negative impact on both economic

growth and attempts to raise the general public's standard of living. Data over time have demonstrated the nation's severe infrastructure deficiencies (Onwuamaeze, 2022).

The yearly estimated infrastructural deficit in Nigeria is \$100 billion. According to estimates, this is 100% more than the nation's annual infrastructure spending for the previous 20 years (Onwuamaeze, 2022). Currently, Nigeria's infrastructure development accounts for 35% of GDP, but in industrialized nations, it accounts for 70% of GDP (ISD, n.d.). Over the next ten years, the nation needs to spend \$1.5 trillion to close the infrastructure gap (Umunna, 2022).

The figures above demonstrate even more how woefully little infrastructure is invested in Nigeria in relation to its population and land area. According to the 2019 Global Competitiveness Index published by the World Economic Forum, Nigeria was rated 116th out of 141 countries. The low quality of the nation's infrastructure may be the cause of the subpar performance. The situation is even worse in Nigeria's rural areas, where there has been almost no infrastructural development. According to a study, more than \$100 billion is needed to solve Nigeria's infrastructure gap (Adesina et al., 2021). The number of initiatives that are abandoned in Nigeria is also concerning. The government abandons numerous ongoing initiatives over extended periods of time.

Aside non provision of basic infrastructure, the number of abandoned projects in Nigeria is also of a great concern. Record shows that government of Nigeria neglects numerous ongoing project initiatives for long periods of time. Consequently, the government will have to spend more money. The cost of abandoned projects in Nigeria was estimated to be 12 trillion Naira (₦) as of August 2021 (Business Elites Africa, 2020). There are around 56,000 abandoned projects by the federal and state governments in Nigeria, according to research by the Nigerian Institute of Quality Surveyor (NIQS) (Business Elites Africa, 2020). A significant amount of money was spent on some of these initiatives before they were shelved due to insufficient funding.

If Nigeria's infrastructural deficit continues, then the quest to eliminate poverty and hunger, ensure and improve good health and wellbeing, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation, and infrastructure, and finally reduce inequality, may be a mirage. Given the significance of infrastructure for a country's development, the majority of developed nations have made significant investments in infrastructure development in order to scale productive activities, settlements vibrancy, promote livability and improve quality of life.

3.0. The study area

The study area is in the extreme southern part of Ondo State as shown in figure 1. This is the Niger Delta Area and the oil producing region of Ondo State. It is bounded in the west by Ogun State, in the North by Okitipupa and Irele Local Government Council Area, in the East by Edo State, in the South-East by Delta State and the Atlantic Ocean. An expansive coastline, 180km-long is its southern boundary, thus making Ondo State the state with the longest coastline in Nigeria (Atitaye 1993). The region extends from longitude 4° 28''E to longitude 5° E and from latitude 5° to 45'' N to latitude 6° 25'' N. The region is inhabited by three ethnic nationalities. These are Ilaje, Apoi, and Arogbo-Ijaw as shown in figure 2. The Ilajes are the dominant ethnic group accounting for about 60% of the population. This is followed by the Arogbo-Ijaws

a population of about 26%. The Apois occupy the third position, accounting for modest 14% of the population (NPC, 2007).

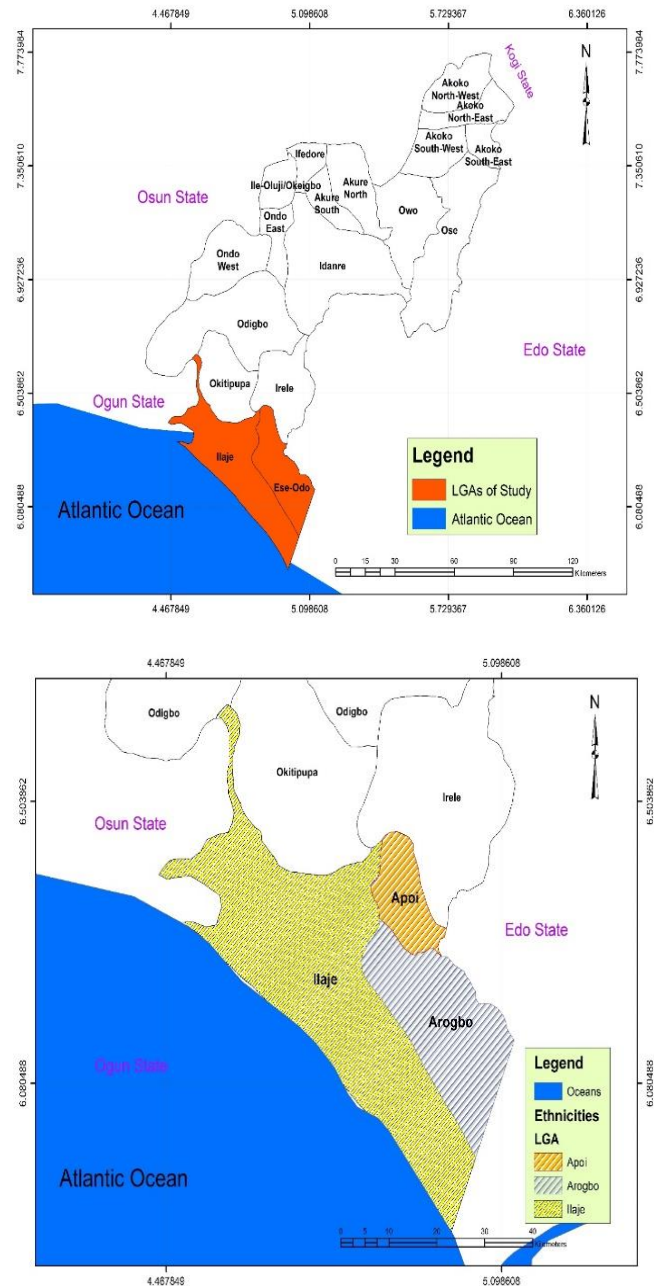


Figure 1&2: Map of Ondo State indicating the study area and Map of the study area reflecting the three ethnicities

Source: Ondo State ministry of physical Planning and Urban Development

4.0. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a quantitative approach as the aim of the study was to investigate role of government in improving quality of life through basic infrastructural provision in the coastal area of Ondo State, Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission (1991) the coastal area of Ondo State composed of a regional population of 287,023 and in 2020, with 3.2% growth rate, the coastal area had an estimated research population of 715,548. According to the same source, the study area comprises of 292 settlements, distributed such that Ilaje people inhabit 59% of the total settlements, Arogbo people occupies 26%, and Apoi people accounts for 15% of the settlements respectively. The Ilajes are the

dominant ethnic group accounting for about 60% of the population. This is followed by the Arogbo-Ijaws a population of about 26%. The Apois occupy the third position, accounting for 14% of the population. On the basis of the above, 26 settlements were selected purposively and the human population of the 26 communities constituted the sampling frame, which was 247,407. The sample size for this study was 0.2% of the sampling frame, which will amount to 504 human population. The sample size was hinged on sample determination for finite population as propounded by (Krejcie and Morgan 1970). The response rate of the administered questionnaire was 98.4%.

5.0. Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Table 1. Government efforts at improving quality of life in the coastal area

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very Available	120	24.2
Partially available	136	27.4
Not available	240	48.4
Total	496	100

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023

As depicted in table 1, 24.2% of the coastal residents claimed that the efforts of government at improving the quality of life of coastal dwellers were conspicuously very available in their area. In the same vein, 27.4% of the coastal inhabitants were with the view that government efforts at enhancing quality life in the study area were partially available. Meaning that, what was available was in serious short-fall. However, 48.4 percentage of the coastal dwellers said that the effort of government at improving quality of life was not available at all. The implication of this is that majority of the coastal inhabitants were not feeling the presence of government effort at improving their quality of life. It means that the effort of government in enhancing quality of life in the study area was grossly inadequate and could not cope with the peoples' demand.

Impact of governance in the Coastal area

Figure 3 revealed that 3.6% of the total respondents benefited from Federal government programs. 25.5% benefited only from State government and 19.6% benefited from Local Government in their area. Again, 51.6% benefited from the impact of the various intervening organizations such as Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC) and Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

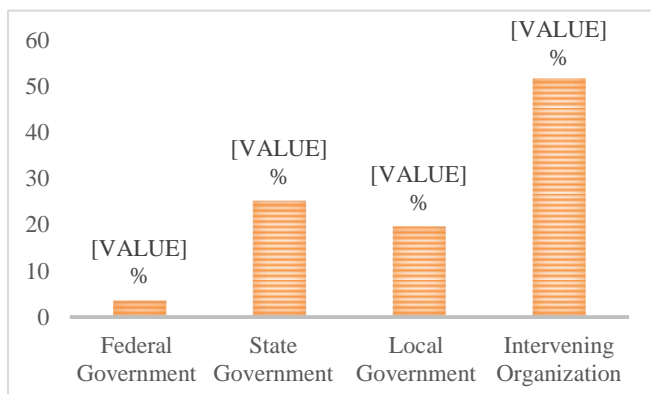


Figure 3: The Impact of governance in the Coastal area

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023

Table 2. Public participation in government project initiation and implementation

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Total Participation	86	17.3
Partial Participation	124	25
Non Participation	286	57.7
Total	496	100

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 showed that 17.3% of the total respondents noted that there was total public participation in projects initiation and implementation in the study area. 25 % of the total respondents agreed that there was partial participation of the public during project initiation and implementation stage. 57.7% of the total respondent proof that there was none involvement of the public in projects initiations as well as implementation. This inferred that majority of the projects being executed in the study area top-bottom project approach since majority of the respondents claimed of non-public participation in project-execution. One can deduce that projects execution in the coastal area were not public driven but rather more of government initiatives and ideas.

Table 3. Projects addressing or tackling pressing community needs

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Adequately addressing	9	1.8
Partially addressing	185	37.7
Not addressing	302	60.9
Total	496	100

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023

Table 3 shows that 1.8% of the total respondents agreed that projects execution and implementation in the study area were able to address pressing community needs. Similarly, 37.3% of the total respondents confirmed that government projects in the coastal areas of Ondo State partially addressed the various community needs and 60.9% of the total respondents claimed that the various government projects in the study area have not been able to address the pressing needs of the various communities in the study area.

Sustainability of government project in the study area

Figure 4 revealed that 2.2% of the total respondents attested that the projects of government instituted in the coastal areas of Ondo State were sustainable and can withstand the test of time. 20.6% of the total respondents noted that government project in the coastal area were partially sustainable. It then implies that they can only serve them for a short period of time. In another development, 77.2% of the total respondents confirmed that government projects in the study area were not sustainable at all. It shows that the quality of such projects was of poor quality and not durable enough to probably cope with the complex environmental challenges of the study area.

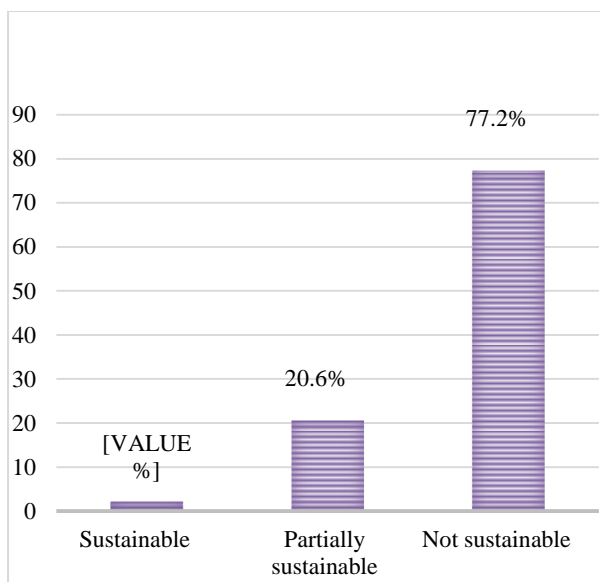


Figure 4: Sustainability of governance project in the study area

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023

Table 4. Government projects promoting livable human settlements in the coastal area

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	8	1.6
Partially agree	101	20.4
Not agree	387	78.0
Total	496	100

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023

Table 4 revealed that 1.6% of the total respondents agreed that government instituted projects in the Coastal area contributed to liveable human settlement in the coastal areas of Ondo State. At another level, 20.4% of the total respondents claimed that government projects in the coastal area contributed partially to human liveability in the study area and 78.0% of the total respondents' proof that government projects in the study area have no significant contribution to human liveability in the study area.

This inferred that majority of the projects being embarked upon by government in the study area did not contribute meaningfully to the comfortability and liveability of the coastal dwellers. Again, since the majority did say that government project did not improve their liveability. It then means that majority of the government projects did not enhance or promote good quality of life since they are not contribution to human liveability. This situation can be associated to the fact that majority of the projects were not public demand driven and so may not likely address directly their cogent needs. If cogent needs are not improving liveability, and then, consequently good quality of life will not be achieved

Government efforts at enhancing good quality of life over the year

Figure 5 revealed that 1.4% of the total respondents stated that they strongly agreed that government projects have improved the quality of life of coastal dwellers in Ondo State. 20.8% of the total respondents claimed that they partially agreed that government efforts have contributed to improved quality of life in the study area and 77.8% of the total respondents confirmed that government effort did not in any way or at any time improved the quality of life

of coastal residents. The implication of this is that government projects and efforts are being implemented without corresponding effect on the people's life in the coastal area.

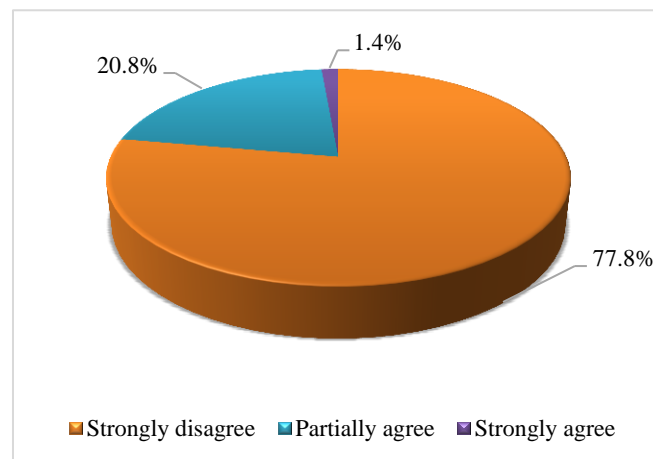


Figure 5: Government efforts at enhancing good quality of life over the year

Source: Author's field survey, 2023

Table 5. Performance of government at improving quality of life through infrastructure provision

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	0	0
Very Good	0	0
Good	69	13.9
Fair	129	26.0
Poor	298	60.1
Total	496	100

Source: Author's field survey, 2023

In understanding the aggregate performance of government at improving the quality of life of coastal residents, level of their performance was appraised through the beneficiaries of those services rendered. 13.1% of the total respondent categorized the performance of government at improving the quality of life to be good, 26.0% noted that the performance of government was fair at alleviating their sufferings, while 60.1% of the total respondents claimed that the performance of government can be classified as poor.

This inferred that majority, that is more than half of the coastal residents of Ondo State are not feeling the impact of government. It further suggested that the residents of coastal areas of Ondo State are less catered for and are marginalize despite the quantum of natural and mineral resources being gotten from the area. This was manifested in the face value of established infrastructure in terms of quality base.

Table 6: Government expenditure on provision of basic services in the coastal areas between 2018-2023

Year	Actual Expenditure (₦)	Budget performance (%)
2018	2,013,628,400.47	27
2019	2,042,892,065.12	33

2020	1,879,556,490.99	15
2021	5,298,457,385.86	26
2022	2,048,587,782.73	15
2023	3,925,870,376.65	22
Total	17,208,992,501.82	

Source: Ondo State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC) 2024

Table 6 showed OSOPADEC expenditure on basic infrastructure in the last six years in the study area. Judging from table 5 where 60.1% of the total respondents rated the government performance to be very poor and comparing that to table 6 where the average annual budget performance was 23%. It is deducible from the foregoing that government efforts at improving quality of life through infrastructural base in the coastal area was below expectation.

Conclusion

A healthy and thriving economy is contingent upon the presence of sufficient contemporary infrastructure. Succeeding governments have made several attempts to construct infrastructure and has spent a lot of money on its infrastructure, however, the infrastructure that is already in place does not match the expenses incurred over time. The state's enormous infrastructure deficits and appalling condition of infrastructure in the coastal area have rendered efforts to achieve sustainable development goals an illusion. It becomes expedient for government to doubled their efforts to step up the infrastructural base of the State particularly, the coastal area with a view to bridge gap so as to meet the sustainable Development Goal target and improving quality of life in the coastal area.

Recommendations

Sequel to the conclusions above, the study recommends the following:

Development of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and markets should be embarked upon. This will guarantee and easy access to services and economic opportunity that will enhance quality of life in the study area.

All abandoned projects should be completed by government with a view to ensuring compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals target.

The private sector should be encouraged to partner with the government in building infrastructure in the coastal area of Ondo State.

Provision of infrastructure in the coastal area should be grassroot oriented projects. This will guarantee and assure of meeting the communities demands

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