# ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN RIVERS STATE

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship between administrative capacity and effective policy implementation of local governments in Rivers State. Two hundred (200) civil servants from Ikwerre, Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor LGAs in Rivers State constituted the population size. A response rate of 49%, representing 98 retrieved and usable copies of the questionnaire, was recorded. Three testable null hypotheses were formulated from the variables. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was engaged to analyze the null hypotheses. Result from the analyses empirically established the relationship between both variables. Therefore, administrative capacity meaningfully impacts effective policy implementation of local governments in Rivers State. It was thus concluded that there has been a wide gap between the development goals of a policy at the formulation stage and the realization of such goals at implementation stage. To close this gap, it was thus recommended that there should be: provision for adequate monitoring of projects, to stop the problem of abandoned projects and to ensure the realization of policy implementation goals; adequate and effective communication between the target beneficiaries and the implementers of policy programmes or projects so as to have a clear understanding of the progmme; State Assemblies should enact a law that will guarantee continuity of policies made towards growth and development beyond a particular regime or tenure.

## Introduction

Local government is the most important level of government in the pursuit of long-term national development. Over the years, national development has been urged to begin at the local level, since local government is widely recognised as a critical tool for rural transformation and mechanism for the successful delivery of socioeconomic services to the people (Onuigbo, 2021). Many policies have been established in Nigeria since the start of local government administration, but they have not been completely implemented owing to one or more problems. This apparent lack of political will or attitude toward policy execution has been a severe concern in numerous organisations and in Nigeria as a whole. As a result, there is a need to critically scrutinise the topic matter.

Since the release of Pressman and Wildavsky's landmark case study implementation in 1973, research on policy implementation has flourished. This is not unrelated to the fact that policy execution is important to the government's success. Policy implementation can be defined as the stage of policy development that occurs between the establishment of a policy (such as the passage of a legislative act, the issuance of an executive order, or the promulgation of a regulatory rule) and the consequences of the policy for the people who are affected by it (Egonwan, 2009). Policy implementation refers to the actions that are carried out in light of policy establishment; it refers to the process of converting financial, information, material, technical, human, demand and support, inputs, and so on into outputs, goods, and services (Onuigbo, 2021). It also entails a wide range of activities, such as issuing and executing orders, disbursing cash, providing loans, allocating and recruiting staff, and so on.

Approaches are chosen and policies are created in local government areas, with the goal of enhancing the performance of the local government. More importantly, policy execution is critical, and failure may result in financial waste, political discontent, and disruption. One of the important characteristics differentiating high-performing nations from those with poor performance is effective and rigorous implementation, as well as the ability to really deliver on policy promises (e.g., Barber et al., 2010; Barber, 2015). The obstacles to local government councils' efforts to achieve an efficient and effective fulfilment of statutory obligations in their areas are tremendous. However, it has been recognised that one of the key issues affecting Nigerian local governments is the administrative ability to successfully execute policies (Bolatito & Ibrahim, 2014).

A lack of administrative skill in policy execution jeopardises its success. Administrative ability appears to be an important intervening component in the path from policy decision to policy result (Addison, 2009). Existing literature has demonstrated how insufficient administrative capacity affects the effect of policy, the quality of multi-level governance, the fulfilment of international responsibilities, and the political system's accountability (Rothstein, 2015; Wu et al., 2015). As a result, this research project takes a critical look at how to improve policy implementation. It will also investigate the causes for policy failures and alternative strategies to improve policy implementation in Rivers State's local government districts.

## Significance of the Study

The engine of efficient governance and management of public concerns is policy implementation. The success of policy execution is critical to the growth of local governments, which is why this study is necessary. This study is critical because it will serve as a reference point for policymakers and implementers, as well as give academic aid to help them accomplish their tasks and obligations more successfully. It will include methods for

enhancing policy implementation as well as processes for improving policy implementation in Nigeria's local government areas, particularly in Rivers State. Furthermore, the work will aid researchers, students, and society at large by serving as a resource for future research in the art and science of administrative capacity and policy execution.

**Scope of Study**

**Content Scope:** The review of literature in this study will be undertaken strictly within the domain of administrative capacity and effective policy implementation.

**Geographical Scope:** The geographical scope of this research is restricted to Local Government Areas in Rivers State.

**Unit of Analysis:** The unit of analysis is at the individual (micro) level which covers civil servants of Local Government Areas in Rivers State.

**Literature Review**
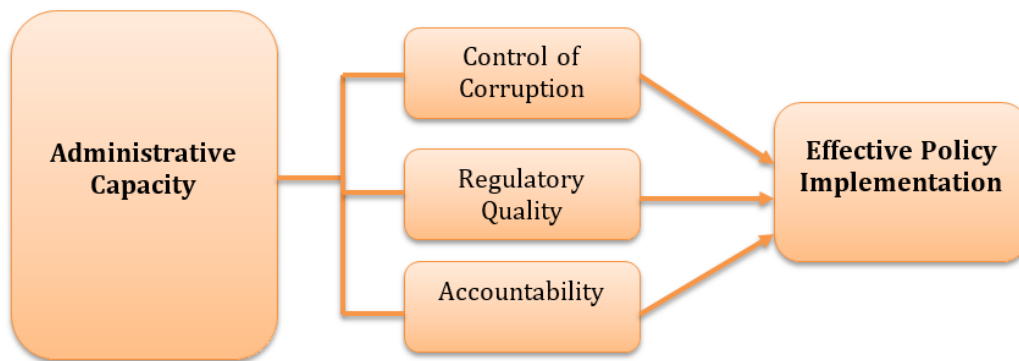


**Figure 1:** A Model of Administrative Capacity and Effective Policy Implementation.

**Administrative Capacity**

The phrases "capacity" and "dependence" are sometimes used interchangeably and refer to distinct types of capacity, including state capacity, policy capacity, management capacity, and administrative capacity (Wu et al., 2015). The term "capacity" as used in this context refers to the administrative component of state capacity, i.e., administrative capacity, which is extensively used in public administration and policy research (El-Taliawi & Van der Wal, 2019). Haque et al. (2021) recognised the practical importance of this capacity in terms of its requirement for economic performance, industrial expansion, policy execution, and overall national development.

Capacity is broadly described as the capacity to carry out activities, solve issues, create goals, and accomplish objectives (Milio, 2007). Thus, it is a collection of characteristics embedded inside effective organisations that enables them to carry out their tasks effectively (Misener & Doherty, 2009). El-Taliawi and Van Der Wal (2019) asserted that administrative capacity is concerned with the organisation of policy implementation and execution, as well as the operation and performance of agencies and networks with their managers accountable for delivering on policy commitments. They defined administrative capacity as the government's ability to manage its people and physical resources in order to accomplish its objectives. Ellis (2010) discusses macro- and micro-level administrative capabilities. At the macro level, he

defined administrative capacity as the capacity to improve the welfare of the governed, or people, via the provision of suitable services, job creation, education, and health care, among other things. At the micro level, it is the capacity of public employees to provide the highest amount of public output (services) at the lowest possible cost, given the organization's goal, vision, and strategy.

Capacity to implement policies and programmes successfully is critical to a nation's prosperity. Indeed, having a capable public sector capable of optimally aligning resources with actions and effectively implementing specified policies is often seen as a critical aspect in a state's governance quality (Rothstein, 2015; Wu et al., 2015) and development success. Indeed, regardless of how representative, democratic, or elaborately constructed public policies are, they are useless without the competence of governments and government personnel to implement them (Howlett, 2019). Successful government projects require qualified persons and organisations (Pritchett et al., 2013) that can define issues, create priorities, allocate resources, and implement policies in an efficient and effective manner.

## Control of Corruption
One of the most popular definitions of corruption, according to Wathne (2021), is "the misuse of entrusted power for private advantage." According to the research, no specific definition that applies to all forms, types, and degrees of corruption, or that is generally accepted, can be identified. Because of the lack of conceptual accuracy, measuring and comparing corruption levels through time and across countries, industries, and institutions is challenging (Mason, 2020). The answer for programming purposes has been to supplement these broad descriptions with a specific explanation of the sort of corruption in issue, as well as the levels, sectors, and institutions where it occurs, the individuals engaged, and the causal causes. According to Wathne (2021), some scholars have begun to define corruption in terms of its polar opposites, such as "good governance," "quality of government," "ethical universalism," and "state capability."

The literature on corruption is vast, encompassing topics such as the causes that contribute to corruption, the link between corruption and economic growth, and the political ramifications of corruption (Dong & Torgler, 2013; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). The corruption literature has thoroughly investigated and verified a causal link between interpersonal trust, political trust, and corruption. Several studies have shown that trust is both a cause and a result of corruption (Zakaria, 2013). High levels of corruption, in particular, tend to reduce interpersonal and political trust, whereas countries, governments, and/or public officials with low levels of trust tend to encourage corruption.

## Accountability
The term "accountability" is derived from the word "account." "A report or description of an occurrence or experience," according to the Oxford Dictionary. The suffix "-ity" refers to the characteristic of accountability (McGrath & Whitty, 2018). Accountability may also be characterised as an explanation of a public institution's operations, set aims, duties, outcomes, and even failures within the context of social responsibility (Costa, 2010). Accountability is the act of explaining one's behaviour to someone in a position of authority (Kalkan & Alparslan, 2009). Accountability in government is a relationship based on taking on a specific duty for achieving performance and the requirement to reveal it within the context of agreed-upon goals (Aktan & Oban, 2000).

## Regulatory Quality

Regulation is a delicate balancing act that must be performed in order to advance the interests of customers, competitors, and investors while also promoting a broader "public interest" agenda (Parker, 2001). According to the World Bank Group (2010), high quality regulation is that which is successful in creating the required effects while being efficient in attaining the desired goals at the lowest possible cost. High-quality regulation also entails stakeholder involvement and a high level of openness during the policy creation and implementation phases. The significance of these attributes of effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency stems from the reality that every government activity includes trade-offs between various uses of resources in order to accomplish stated objectives and outcomes. Thus, if maximising social welfare is a primary aim of policy action, the most efficient and effective policy solutions should be adopted.

## Effective Policy Implementation

Many researchers have defined the word "policy implementation" from diverse viewpoints. Policy implementation is a critical stage in the policy-making process. It refers to the process through which numerous parties, organisations, processes, and techniques collaborate to put policies into practise in order to achieve policy objectives (Stewart et al., 2008). Implementation may be considered as a process, an output, and a result that incorporates a variety of individuals, organisations, and control systems. Simon (2010) defines policy implementation as the application of policy by government administrative machinery to accomplish goals. Policy implementation, in particular, refers to the measures taken by public and private entities to realise the goals set forth in past policy choices, Meter and Horn (1975; as cited in Yadav, 2010).

## Administrative Capacity and Effective Policy Implementation in Local Government System

Administrative competence is inextricably related to policy execution since it requires operating a political or economic system's machinery and turning political and collective intent into actions through management and implementation (Farazmand, 2009). Administrative agencies are usually in charge of implementation. The implementing organisation, the environment, particularly the political and economic environment, the policy target group, the objectives and enunciated means of implementation, and policy resources are the major actors in the implementation process.

The ability to execute policies effectively relies heavily on administrative capability. These abilities include the government's capacity to define issues, set priorities, allocate resources, and possess the competence necessary to offer effective public services (El-Taliawi & Van Der Wal, 2019). According to Milio (2007), administrative capability has a significant impact on regional success. Weak administrative skills are frequently linked to poor performance outcomes (El-Taliawi & Van Der Wal, 2019). Capacity building is a policy implementation instrument that increases the capacity of bureaucratic intermediates to carry out required activities and participate in policy implementation, hence making it easier to execute.

## Theoretical Framework

This research was based on a system analysis. According to systems theory, public policy is the political system's response to external pressures. Ludiving von Bertalanffy (1951) pioneered the input-process-output model in the social sciences, and Kenneth Boulding revitalised systems theory and reinvigorated interest in the 1960s. The assumption is that

there is a reciprocal link between public policy and environmental factors when using the systems approach.

The input consists of environmental demands that are channelled through the political system (conversion) by the population. The political decision-maker or policymakers who work on the demands are part of the conversion mechanism. The output is the policy implementation, or the actions taken in response to the political system's policy decisions and pronouncements. The planned and unforeseen implications of policies for society that flow from the political system's activity or inaction are referred to as feedback mechanisms. This results in either increased demands or increased assistance.

The examination of a system to identify the factors that are controllable and uncontrolled, as well as to understand how the system really performs, is known as system theory. The interaction between the political system and the environment is also crucial. The positive connection indicates that environmental demands affected policy pronouncements made by the political system. The policy outputs, on the other hand, determine the policy outcome, which, in turn, influences the input. The factors in the policy cycle are all interconnected.

## Methodology
Survey research design was adopted for this study.200 civil servants conveniently selected from Ikwerre, Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas in Rivers State, constitutes the population of the study. A response rate of 49%, representing 98 retrieved and usable copies of the questionnaire, was recorded. The reliability of the research instrument was tested and the Cronbach Alpha values were all above the .70 threshold. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was employed to test the hypotheses.

## Results and Data Analysis

## Test of Hypotheses
This section examines the association between the dimensions of the predictor variable (administrative capacity) measured against effective policy implementation which constitutes the objective of the study. A total of three null (hypothesis one to hypothesis three) bivariate associations are tested in this section using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistical technique at a 95% confidence interval. The decision rule is set at a critical region of $p > 0.05$ for acceptance of the null hypothesis and $p < 0.05$ for rejection of the null hypothesis.

**Table 1: Control of Corruption and Effective Policy Implementation (Test for Hypothesis 1)**

| | | | Control of Corruption | Effective Policy Implementation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Control of Corruption | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .718[**] |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| | Effective Policy Implementation | Correlation Coefficient | .718[**] | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2020

**Ho$_1$:** There is no relationship between control of corruption and effective policy implementation local governments in Rivers State – data (table 1) reveals that there is a significant relationship between control of corruption and effective policy implementation (where rho = .718; p =0.000). Hence we find that control of corruption is associated with effective policy implementation and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate that *there is a significant relationship between control of corruption and effective policy implementation.*

**Table 2: Regulatory Quality and Effective Policy Implementation (Test for Hypothesis 2)**

| | | | Regulatory Quality | Effective Policy Implementation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Regulatory Quality | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .823** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| | Effective Policy Implementation | Correlation Coefficient | .823** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2020

**Ho2**: There is no relationship between regulatory quality and effective policy implementation local governments in Rivers State – data (table 2) reveals that there is a significant relationship between regulatory quality and effective policy implementation (where rho = .823; p =0.000). Hence we find that regulatory quality is associated with effective policy implementation and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate that *there is a significant relationship between regulatory quality and effective policy implementation.*

**Table 3: Accountability and Effective Policy Implementation (Test for Hypothesis 2)**

| | | | Accountability | Effective Policy Implementation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Accountability | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .722** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |
| | Effective Policy Implementation | Correlation Coefficient | .722** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | . |
| | | N | 98 | 98 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2020

**H$_{o3}$**: There is no relationship between accountability and effective policy implementation local governments in Rivers State – data (table 3) reveals that there is a significant relationship between accountability and effective policy implementation (where rho = .722; p =0.000). Hence we find that accountability is associated with effective policy implementation and based on the decision rule of p < 0.05 for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate that *there is a significant relationship between accountability and effective policy implementation.*

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings revealed an empirical association between administrative capability and successful policy execution of local governments in Rivers State. The study specifically demonstrated an empirical association between the aspects of administrative capability (i.e., corruption control, accountability, and regulatory quality) and successful policy execution of local governments in Rivers State. These findings are consistent with previous research, since administrative capacity has been identified as a key term in the public administration literature on capacity building.

In public administration studies, capacity development is viewed as a policy implementation technique that improves the capacity of bureaucratic intermediates to carry out necessary activities and participate in policy implementation, hence improving policy implementation (Rothstein, 2015; Wu et al., 2015). In studies of intergovernmental management, capacity development is viewed as a critical tool for strengthening the skills of officials from various, generally lower, jurisdictions to run programmes on their own and fulfil newly allocated tasks (Haque et al., 2021). These submissions also support Pritchett et al. (2013) and Howlett's (2019) assertions that successful implementation of government initiatives necessitates capable individuals and organisations, and that public policies would be meaningless if governments and government officials lacked the capacity to implement them, no matter how representative or democratically formulated or intricately designed they were. As a result, this paper empirically confirms the relationship between the factors.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

There has been a significant disparity between a policy's development goals in the formulation stage and their realisation at the implementation stage. To reduce this widening gap, there is a need to improve the extent to which Rivers State's governmental administration successfully executes policy. The following proposed procedures should be followed in order to realise this improvement:

i. To avoid the problem of abandoned projects and to assure the achievement of policy implementation goals, effective monitoring of projects should be provided.

ii. There should be enough and effective communication between the target beneficiaries and the implementers of policy programmes or projects so that everyone understands the programme and it can be implemented effectively.

iii. State legislatures should pass legislation that ensures the continuance of policies aimed at growth and development beyond the end of a specific regime or tenure.

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