



AMERICAN JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (AJHRPA)

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 (2026)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Administrative Constraints and Local Government Performance in Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria

Samuel Andokari Adda^{1*}, Morgan Prayer Christopher¹, Wunuji Wakimbo¹

Article Information

Received: January 20, 2026

Accepted: April 03, 2026

Published: July 31, 2026

Keywords

Administrative Constraints, Caretaker Committees, Local Government Performance, Staff Expertise

ABSTRACT

This study examined administrative constraints and their influence on the performance of Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria. The research focused specifically on the use of caretaker committees and the lack of technical expertise among local government staff. The study was anchored on Institutional Theory and Human Capital Theory to explain how weak governance structures and inadequate human resource capacity affect administrative efficiency and service delivery. A survey research design was adopted, and data were collected using structured questionnaires from a sample of 380 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including ANOVA, were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that the use of caretaker committees has a significant impact by weakening accountability, continuity, and responsiveness to community needs. The study also found that inadequate professional expertise among staff contributes to poor financial management, weak project implementation, and ineffective service delivery. The study concludes that strengthening democratic governance and investing in staff capacity development are essential for improving local government performance.

INTRODUCTION

Effective local governance is a critical pillar of democratic development and service delivery in federal systems. In Nigeria, the performance of local governments is influenced not only by fiscal arrangements but also by administrative and institutional factors that determine how available resources are managed and utilized. While debates on fiscal federalism have traditionally focused on revenue allocation and financial autonomy, increasing scholarly attention is being directed toward the administrative constraints that undermine local government effectiveness, particularly at the grassroots level (Ostrom & Ostrom, 2019).

Nigeria's federal structure recognizes local governments as a distinct tier of administration responsible for promoting grassroots development and delivering essential public services. However, the operational reality of local governance has often been characterized by weak administrative capacity, political interference, and fragile institutional frameworks. Although the Constitution assigns specific responsibilities to Local Government Areas (LGAs), many councils struggle to discharge these duties effectively due to governance deficits and administrative inefficiencies (Ezeudu, 2023).

Although caretaker arrangements are intended to be temporary, they frequently become prolonged, thereby weakening democratic accountability and institutional stability. Studies indicate that caretaker administrations often prioritize political considerations over administrative competence, resulting in poor planning, weak policy implementation, and ineffective service delivery (Eze & Nwosu, 2020).

In addition, the shortage of skilled and professionally trained personnel within many local governments significantly limits administrative efficiency. Inadequate training opportunities and weak human resource development frameworks often result in poor project management and ineffective utilization of public resources (Usman & Abba, 2022).

These challenges are particularly evident in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, where governance disruptions and limited staff expertise have constrained service delivery outcomes. Despite statutory financial allocations, administrative weaknesses continue to affect local government performance. This study therefore examines how caretaker committee administration and staff capacity influence the performance of Wukari Local Government Area between 2015 and 2023.

Objective of the study

The main aim of the study is to assess the influence of administrative and institutional factors on the performance of Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State. Specific Objectives are:

- i. To assess the influence of caretaker committees on the administrative stability and performance of Wukari Local Government Area.
- ii. To examine the effect of inadequate technical expertise among local government staff on the performance of Wukari Local Government Area.
- iii. To evaluate the impact of insufficient professional capacity and skills development on effective service delivery in Wukari Local Government Area.

¹ Department of Public Administration, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

* Corresponding author's e-mail: andikaris@fuwukari.edu.ng

LITERATURE REVIEW

Local Government Administration in Nigeria

Local government administration in Nigeria has evolved within the broader framework of fiscal federalism and intergovernmental relations. The 1976 Local Government Reforms marked a significant turning point by recognizing local governments as a distinct tier of government, with the mandate to decentralize governance, promote grassroots development, and encourage participatory democracy (Anayochukwu, 2022; Obisanya & Hassan, 2022). These reforms were designed to bring government closer to the people and enhance service delivery at the local level.

Despite these intentions, local government administration in Nigeria has been constrained by constitutional ambiguities and excessive state control. The 1999 Constitution recognizes local governments but subjects them to state oversight, thereby weakening their autonomy (Obi, 2019; Anayochukwu, 2022). This arrangement has blurred the administrative boundaries between state and local governments, allowing states to interfere extensively in local government affairs, including budgeting, staffing, and policy implementation (Ogunnubi, 2022).

Furthermore, Nigeria's federal system exhibits characteristics of a centralized or "decentralized unitary" model, where key fiscal and administrative powers remain concentrated at higher levels of government (Ahmad & Brosio, 2006; Awal, 2018). This administrative centralization undermines effective local governance, weakens accountability, and limits the capacity of local governments to respond to local needs. Consequently, local governments have largely underperformed in infrastructure provision, service delivery, and community development, despite their constitutional responsibilities.

Caretaker Committees and Democratic Governance

Caretaker committees represent one of the most significant administrative and institutional constraints on local government performance in Nigeria. Democratic governance at the local level, as envisaged by Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution, requires that local councils be run by democratically elected officials. However, in practice, state governors frequently dissolve elected councils and replace them with caretaker committees (Momoh & Imokhai, 2025; Ogunnubi, 2022).

The literature reveals that caretaker committees lack democratic legitimacy, accountability, and continuity. Their appointment is often politically motivated, aimed at consolidating state control over local governments rather than improving governance outcomes (Adie & Anam, 2024; Majekodunmi, 2012; Ogunnubi, 2022). Examples from Oyo, Bayelsa, Ekiti, Edo, Rivers, Katsina, and Anambra States illustrate how prolonged caretaker arrangements have weakened democratic participation and institutional stability at the grassroots level.

The frequent changes in leadership associated with caretaker committees disrupt development planning and policy implementation (Anayochukwu *et al.*, 2021).

Even when courts rule against the dissolution of elected councils, as seen in the 2019 Oyo State case, political realities often render judicial victories ineffective (Ogunnubi, 2022). This persistent abuse of caretaker committees undermines democratic governance, erodes public trust, and diminishes local governments' capacity to perform their developmental roles.

Human Capital and Staff Expertise in Local Government

Human capital is a critical determinant of organizational and governmental performance, and this holds true for local governments in Nigeria (Oluwasanmi, 2025). The literature consistently identifies inadequate technical and professional expertise among local government staff as a major constraint to effective administration and service delivery (Odalonu, 2015). Poor staffing capacity manifests in weak planning, inefficient financial management, project abandonment, and poor policy implementation.

The problem of limited expertise has historical roots. As new states were created in the 1980s and 1990s, many skilled personnel migrated from local governments to state and federal institutions, leaving local councils with a depleted workforce (Odalonu, 2015). This situation was compounded by declining revenues, job losses, and the inability of local governments to attract or retain qualified professionals.

Scholars emphasize the importance of managerial quality in public sector performance. The management-quality hypothesis suggests that well-qualified leadership and staff enhance organizational outcomes (Avellaneda, 2023). At the local government level, the chairperson plays a central role in governance, and their competence significantly influences administrative effectiveness. However, studies indicate that many local government administrators lack the requisite skills and leadership capacity to manage resources effectively and engage citizens meaningfully (Omar, 2009).

The shortage of skilled manpower has also contributed to the deterioration of infrastructure and public services in rural areas, particularly in health, education, and commerce. Weak accountability mechanisms, poor staff training, and limited professional development further exacerbate these challenges, reinforcing the cycle of poor performance in local government administration.

Theoretical Framework

Institutional Theory and Local Government Performance

Institutional Theory explains how formal rules, laws, norms, and informal practices shape the behavior and performance of organizations. According to North (1990), institutions are the "rules of the game" that structure political, economic, and social interactions. In public administration, Institutional Theory emphasizes that organizational performance is not determined solely by resources, but by the quality and stability of governing institutions (Scott, 2014).

In the context of Nigerian local government administration, Institutional Theory is particularly relevant because local governments operate within institutional frameworks defined by constitutional provisions, state laws, and political practices. Although the 1999 Constitution recognizes local governments as a tier of government, weak institutional safeguards expose them to excessive state interference (Chukwuemeka, 2014; Ogunnubi, 2022). This institutional weakness manifests in the frequent dissolution of elected councils and the imposition of caretaker committees.

From an institutional perspective, caretaker committees represent a distortion of democratic norms and governance structures. They undermine legitimacy, accountability, and continuity, three core institutional pillars necessary for effective performance (Scott, 2014). Because caretaker committees are appointed rather than elected, they are primarily accountable to state governors rather than local citizens, weakening downward accountability and citizen participation (Tijani & Alasan, 2024). This institutional instability disrupts planning, policy implementation, and service delivery, thereby negatively affecting local government performance in areas such as infrastructure development and social services.

Institutional Theory therefore helps explain why local governments like Wukari struggle to perform effectively: weak institutional autonomy, political interference, and unstable governance arrangements create an environment where administrative efficiency and democratic governance cannot thrive.

Human Capital Theory and Local Government Performance

Human Capital Theory posits that investment in education, skills, training, and experience enhances productivity and organizational performance. Originating from the works of Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964), the theory argues that human skills and knowledge are forms of capital that directly influence efficiency, innovation, and development outcomes.

Applied to local government administration, Human Capital Theory underscores the importance of skilled personnel and competent leadership in achieving effective governance and service delivery. In Nigeria, the persistent lack of technical and professional expertise among local government staff has been identified as a major constraint on performance. Poorly trained personnel often lack the capacity for effective planning, financial management, project execution, and policy implementation.

The theory further explains how declining investment in human capital undermines local government performance. As skilled workers migrate to state and federal institutions or urban centers in search of better opportunities, local governments are left with inadequate manpower. This erosion of human capital leads to inefficiencies, project failures, and weak institutional capacity, even when financial resources are available.

Human Capital Theory also highlights the critical role of leadership. The competence of local government chairpersons and senior administrators influences staff recruitment, training priorities, and resource allocation (Avellaneda, 2023). Where leadership lacks the requisite expertise or commitment to capacity building, organizational performance deteriorates further. In Wukari Local Government Area, insufficient professional development and weak managerial capacity can therefore be directly linked to poor service delivery and underperformance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a survey research design to examine intergovernmental fiscal relations and local government performance in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. This design enabled the collection of relevant data from a selected sample in order to make inferences about the larger population. Data were collected primarily through a self-designed structured questionnaire divided into two sections: demographic information and questions addressing the study variables. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. In addition to the questionnaire, observations and discussions with local government officials were used to supplement the primary data, while secondary data were obtained from journals, government publications, conference papers, and other academic sources.

The study area, Wukari Local Government Area, has an estimated population of 238,283 people. A sample size of 380 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan formula, and a stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation of different groups within the population. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, ANOVA, and correlation analysis to test the research hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ANOVA results show an F-statistic of 12.71 with a p-value of 0.00017, which is below the 0.05 significance level. This indicates a statistically significant relationship between the use of caretaker committees and local government performance. The implied T-value (≈ 3.56) also supports this conclusion. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that caretaker committees significantly affect performance.

Interview responses supported the findings that caretaker committees weaken local government performance. Participants noted that these committees often lack accountability and continuity, and tend to prioritize the interests of appointing authorities over community needs. This situation leads to delays in project implementation and reduced service delivery effectiveness. Overall, the continued use of caretaker committees undermines democratic responsiveness and negatively affects the

Table 1: Use of Caretaker Committees and Local Government Performance

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Statistic	p-Value
Between Groups	1,800	3	600	12.71	0.00017
Within Groups	16,240	344	47.21		
Total	18,040	347			

Decision: Reject Hypothesis

F-Statistic: 12.71

p-Value: 0.00017

performance of Wukari Local Government Area.

The ANOVA results show an F-statistic of 67.55 with a p-value less than 0.0001, which is below the 0.05 significance level. This indicates a strong and statistically significant relationship between lack of expertise among

staff and local government performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that inadequate staff expertise significantly affects performance in Wukari Local Government Area.

Interview responses indicated that limited technical

Table 2: Lack of Expertise Among Local Government Staff and Local Government Performance

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Statistic	p-Value
Between Groups	2,890	3	963.33	67.55	< 0.0001
Within Groups	17,500	344	50.87		
Total	20,390	347			

Decision: Reject Hypothesis

F-Statistic: 67.55

p-Value: < 0.0001

knowledge among staff leads to project delays, cost overruns, and weak financial management. Respondents agreed that improving staff training and professional competence would enhance performance. The findings also showed that factors such as joint accounts, state interference, caretaker committees, and inadequate expertise significantly affect performance, highlighting the need for policies to strengthen capacity and governance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings regarding the use of caretaker committees in managing local government affairs indicate that their influence on performance is largely negative. Although caretaker committees are sometimes introduced as temporary administrative arrangements, many respondents expressed the view that such structures weaken effective governance at the local level. A significant number of participants noted that caretaker committees tend to be less responsive to community needs and less effective in managing development projects when compared with democratically elected councils. This situation often arises because caretaker committees lack a direct electoral mandate from the people, which reduces their level of accountability to the local population. As a result, their decisions may not always reflect the priorities and development needs of the communities they serve. Furthermore, the absence of democratic legitimacy often

affects the continuity and stability of local government administration under caretaker arrangements. Respondents observed that caretaker committees are often guided by the interests of the appointing authorities instead of prioritizing the needs of the local community, a position consistent with the findings of Nwaodike (2025) and Joyce (2020). This can lead to delays in project implementation, weak policy direction, and reduced transparency in governance processes. These findings support the work of Ogunnubi (2022), who argued that non-elected administrative bodies often limit community participation and weaken accountability mechanisms, thereby reducing administrative efficiency and overall government performance at the grassroots level.

Another key issue identified in the study is the lack of expertise among local government staff, which emerged as a significant barrier to effective administration, a finding supported by Adie & Anam (2024) and Majekodunmi (2012). They observed that major concerns include the high level of corruption, institutional capacity limitations related to inadequate skills and staffing, lack of transparency, and the dysfunction of ward committees, all of which constitute significant obstacles to effective local government administration.

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that inadequate training and the shortage of skilled personnel negatively affect project execution, financial management, and

service delivery. Without the necessary technical and managerial competencies, many local government employees struggle to effectively plan, implement, and monitor development initiatives. This finding is consistent with the studies of Odalonu (2015) and Tijani & Alasan (2024), which emphasize that the quality of human resources within local government institutions is essential for effective service delivery and sustainable development. The results therefore highlight the importance of continuous professional training and capacity-building initiatives to improve the competence of local government staff, a recommendation also supported by Yusuf and Bello (2021), who stress that strengthening human resource capacity is fundamental to enhancing administrative efficiency and improving governance outcomes at the local level.

CONCLUSION

This study examined administrative constraints affecting the performance of Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State, focusing on the use of caretaker committees and the lack of staff expertise. Guided by Institutional and Human Capital theories, the findings revealed that caretaker committees significantly but negatively influence local government performance by weakening accountability, continuity, and responsiveness to community needs. The absence of democratic legitimacy under caretaker arrangements also undermines effective planning and service delivery.

The study further found that inadequate technical and professional expertise among local government staff impedes performance through poor financial management, weak project execution, and ineffective service delivery. Overall, the study concludes that strengthening democratic governance and investing in human capital development are essential for improving administrative efficiency and enhancing local government performance.

REFERENCES

- Adie, H. I., & Anam, B. E. (2024). Assessing the effectiveness of local government administration in service delivery in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Economics and Public Sector Management (IJASEPSM)*, 12(1).
- Ahmad, E., & Brosio, G. (2006). *Handbook of fiscal federalism*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781847201515>
- Anayochukwu, G. I., Ani, V. A., & Nsah, B. (2022). Assessment of local government autonomy and governance: A case study in Nigeria. *Journal of Governance and Accountability Studies*, 2(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.35912/jgas.v2i1.761>
- Awal, M., Ahmad, Z., & Musa, R. (2018). Intergovernmental fiscal relations in Nigeria: An evaluation of revenue allocation formula and economic development. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 8(2), 151–164.
- Avellaneda, C. N. (2009). Mayoral quality and local public finance. *Public Administration Review*.
- Becker, G. S. (1964). Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis. *Journal of Political Economy*, 70(5), 9–42.
- Chukwuemeka, E., Ugwuanyi, B. I., Ndubuisi-Okolo, P., & Onuoha, C. E. (2014). Nigeria local government: A discourse on the theoretical imperatives in a governmental system. *African Research Review*, 8(2), 305–324.
- Eze, R., & Nwosu, C. (2020). Analysis of caretaker committee administration and its impact on local governance in Southeastern Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 8(4), 87–102.
- Ezeudu, T. S. (2023). Exploring the complexities of fiscal federalism and intergovernmental relations in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 7(8), 787–806.
- Mbaebie, J. (2020). Caretaker committee and performance of local government council in Anambra State. *UJAH*, 21(4).
- Majekodunmi, A. (2012). The state of local government and service delivery in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 1(3), 84–98. <https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v1i3.37>
- Momoh, I. O., & Imokhai, P. I. (2025). Local government autonomy and grassroots democratic participation: An examination of the South-East and North-East geopolitical zones of Nigeria. *Journal of Leadership and Development*, 1(3), 14–27.
- North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nwaodike, C. A., Ayim, E. O., Emmanuel, T. O., Gabriel-Awoleye, S. O., & Alabi, K. (2025). Local governance and caretaker committee system in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Interrogating the grassroots implications. *African Renaissance*, 22(2).
- Obi, E. A. (2019). State-local government relations and the autonomy question: Contextualizing the main issues. *South East Journal of Political Science*, 4(1).
- Obisanya, A. R., & Hassan, I. K. (2022). Improving local government performance through financial autonomy and accountability at Nigerian state. *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*, 23, 222–235.
- Odalonu, H. B. (2015). Challenges confronting local government administration in efficient and effective social service delivery: The Nigerian experience. *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research (IJPAMR)*, 2(5).
- Ogunnubi, O. O. (2022). Decentralisation and local governance in Nigeria: Issues, challenges and prospects. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 27, 5–16.
- Oluwasanmi, A. C. (2025). Human capital challenges, local government autonomy and effective service delivery in local government system in Nigeria. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 6(3),

- 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04896>
- Omar, M. (2009). Urban governance and service delivery in Nigeria. *Development in Practice*, 19(1), 72–78.
- Ostrom, V., & Ostrom, E. (2019). Public goods and public choices. In *Alternatives for delivering public services* (pp. 7–49). Routledge.
- Scott, W. R. (2014). *Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests, and identities* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1–17.
- Tijani, S. O., & Alasan, F. (2024). Local government autonomy as an instrument for national development in Nigeria. *Journal of African Sustainable Development*, 6(2).
- Usman, H., & Abba, M. (2022). Expertise and performance in local government administration: A case study of Borno State, Nigeria. *Journal of Human Resources and Public Administration*, 11(2), 112–130.
- Yusuf, A., & Bello, O. (2021). Local government performance and the influence of state government oversight in Central Nigeria. *Journal of Administrative Studies*, 15(1), 57–70.