

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CONDITIONS OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA: 2015-2024**

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**ABSTRACT**

Infrastructures such as roads, electricity and markets is a critical driver of social and economic development in both developed and developing economies. However, for years, Imo State has faced inadequate provision and poor conditions of infrastructure needed to facilitate rural development. Despite legislative efforts and rural development programmes, rural areas continue to struggle with challenges that threaten employment, income generation, and quality of life. Thereby raising urgent concerns about how to improve socio-economic development of rural areas in the state. The study adopted a mixed methods approach for the study. A multistage sampling technique was utilized through stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques in the selection of one local government area within each senatorial zone in Imo state. Content analysis revealed that rural development was constrained by infrastructure deficiencies, governance and institutional barriers, and community and cultural factors. The study concluded that rural development in Imo State is primarily driven by road and market infrastructure, while electricity infrastructure shows limited statistical influence, with governance, contextual, and community dynamics further shaping development outcomes. The paper recommends that Imo state government should put more budget in the development of infrastructures for more socio-economic development.

**Background to the Study**

Globally, infrastructure development is widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of socio-economic progress in both developed and developing contexts. Core elements of infrastructure, particularly road networks, electricity supply, and market facilities, constitute far more than basic amenities; they represent essential foundations for meaningful development outcomes. Their significance lies in their capacity to facilitate mobility, enhance productive activities, and stimulate trade, thereby serving as indispensable prerequisites for sustainable growth. Within this framework, infrastructure functions as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation by fostering employment creation, expanding income-generating opportunities, and improving overall standards of living.

Recognizing this profound impact, several developed and developing economies have strategically prioritized extensive infrastructure development programs and projects over time. It is on this note that developed countries such as China, India, and Brazil at different time embraced on programmes and projects on infrastructure development. Notable among such programmes includes, China Rural Revitalization Strategy in 2017, a long-term national plan directed at improving living standards and economic development in rural areas. India equally carried out National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) in 2019. Brazil, too, has been proactive, initiating regional infrastructure development efforts in 2012 and subsequently introduced the Investment Partnership Programme (IPP) in 2016. The substantial investments made by these nations in their respective infrastructure sectors were explicitly aimed at fostering a holistic national development (Donald, 2023).

In Africa attempts have been made in infrastructure development in order to achieve rural development. For instance, South Africa has diligently implemented critical infrastructure programmes, specifically targeting road and electricity development. Rwanda has demonstrated foresight by undertaking rural infrastructure and city management projects since 2016, aimed at

modernizing its rural and urban areas. Equally, Cameroon, mirroring these efforts, initiated rural electrification projects in 2023, which are still ongoing, highlighting a commitment to extending vital services to rural populace. In Nigeria, successive governments have, over the years, embarked on series of programs and projects designed to address infrastructure deficits. Notable among these initiatives are the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), established in 1986; the broad-reaching Rural Electrification Scheme; and National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP) in 2011. These concerted efforts underscore a recognition of infrastructure's pivotal role in promoting rural development (Audu & Adeiza, 2024).

On the other hand, rural development emerges as a crucial subset of national development, specifically addressing social and economic development within rural areas. The goal being on how to significantly enhance the socio-economic well-being, and the quality of life for rural dwellers. This is primarily achieved through the strategic provision of essential infrastructure, such as functional roads, reliable electricity, and conducive markets, all of which are instrumental in fostering employment and income-generating opportunities in rural areas.

Internationally, rural development has remained a prominent global concern for several decades, specifically from the 1960s to the present day. This extensive period has witnessed the active involvement of various international organizations, which have consistently been at the forefront of intervening and initiating diverse rural development strategies, particularly in developing countries. The World Bank, for instance, has played a significant role by aiding and funding rural electrification projects. Similarly, the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) included substantial efforts aimed at rural areas in developing countries.

Across Africa, notable examples include Ghana's establishment of the Rural Enterprise Project (REP), which ran from 2003 to 2012, and its Community Based Rural Development Project (CBRDP). Kenya, too, adopted two major strategies: the District Focus Strategy for Rural Development (DFSRD) in 1983 and the Rural Urban Balance Strategy (RUBS) in 1986. Collectively, these widespread efforts have been strategically targeted towards the advancement of socio-economic development, primarily by improving employment opportunities and enhancing the overall quality of life in rural areas (Amakye, 2017; Mofako, 2025; David, 2025).

In Nigeria, various governments have over the years, initiated and implemented different rural development programs and projects. These endeavours have consistently aimed to ensure that socio economic development is achieved in the rural areas. Examples of such initiatives include the establishment of the National Directorate for Employment (NDE) in 2001, designed to enhance employment. The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was also launched in 2001 with a similar objective of improving economic opportunities. Furthermore, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), and the creation of youth employment - N-Power scheme. All these initiatives have been meticulously designed to tackle the persistent challenges of unemployment, limited income-generating opportunities, and a generally poor quality of life, particularly prevalent in Nigeria's rural areas (Enyi, 2014; Onyebuchi, 2024).

Despite these considerable commitments and consistent governmental efforts, a significant gap remains in the socio-economic development in many rural areas of Nigeria. Rural areas in Nigeria frequently appear unattractive as places of residence, largely due to the demonstrably low quality of life experienced by rural dwellers. A fundamental issue contributing to this disparity is the disproportionate concentration of essential infrastructures and economic opportunities predominantly within urban centres, with only limited availability in rural areas. This imbalance has inevitably led to limited socio-economic development, resulting in persistently low income generating, and employment opportunities in rural areas (Usman, 2013; Okanlade, 2022). The marked disparity has been attributed to a combination of historical neglect, chronic underinvestment, and complex political and economic challenges that have historically plagued rural development policies and projects. For instance, while infrastructure is globally recognized as a crucial catalyst for activating and stimulating socio-economic activities and development, through

the direct creation of employment and income opportunities, as well as the enhancement of the quality of life, its impact in rural areas of Nigeria has often fallen short of expectations.

In Nigeria, with reference to Imo State, different governments have embraced and implemented various programmes and projects on rural development.. These initiatives have consistently aimed to significantly enhance socio-economic development within the state's rural areas. Examples include the Imo State Directorate for Employment, established in 1988, which was specifically designed to provide employment opportunities, foster job creation, and facilitate vocational skills acquisition. More recently, programs like Skillup Imo (Digital skills and youth empowerment), launched in 2023, and the Imo Digital Economy Agenda (IDEA) 2022, aim to empower youth with modern skills for self-employment. Furthermore, the Imo State Rural Roads Maintenance Agency (IRROMA), established in 2008, plays a crucial role in maintaining vital roads within rural areas. International collaborations have also been instrumental, such as the French Development Agency's financed and World Bank-managed Rural Access and Mobility Project (RAMP) 2020, and the Public Utility and Rural Development Project (PURDP). All these programs and projects were strategically put in place with the aim to facilitating socio-economic development, creating employment and income generation opportunities, and ultimately ensuring a good standard of living for the rural dwellers of Imo State

Despite all aforementioned efforts by different governments through programmes and projects focused on rural development across Nigeria, including those specifically implemented in Imo State, a significant concern persists. The fundamental problem is that rural development, particularly socio-economic development in the rural areas of Nigeria remains a pressing challenge.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Rural infrastructure is widely recognised as a cornerstone of socio-economic transformation: reliable roads reduce transport costs and improve market access, dependable electricity enables productive enterprise and value-addition, and functional market facilities foster trade and livelihoods. Over the past decade, Imo State has implemented a number of targeted interventions intended to address these needs, including the Imo Rural Roads Maintenance Agency (IRROMA), the Public Utility and Rural Development Project (PURDP), and the Imo State Community and Social Development Agency (IMCSDA), each designed to improve accessibility, stimulate local economies, and enhance quality of life in rural communities. However, despite the deployment of these programmes and related investments, many rural communities in Imo State continue to report pervasive infrastructural deficits and limited socio-economic gains (Okafor & Nnadi, 2021).

Empirical and sectoral evidence shows that Nigeria continues to face pronounced urban-rural divides in access to basic services: national data and reviews indicate significant shortfalls in rural electricity access and continuing weaknesses in rural infrastructure provision that constrain livelihoods and economic activity (World Bank, 2023). Furthermore, field observations and community reports from several localities in Imo State reveal recurring problems that mirror these national patterns: rural roads remain poorly maintained or impassable in the rainy season, which restricts movement of people and farm produce; electricity infrastructure is visible in many communities (poles and lines) but supply is erratic or effectively non-functional for productive uses; and market infrastructure is often dilapidated or lacking basic amenities, making markets uncondusive for trade and small enterprise development.

Although a growing body of literature documents the positive relationship between targeted infrastructure investments and rural livelihood improvements, most of the recent studies focus on national or cross-regional patterns, sectoral programme evaluations, or technical aspects of electrification and road construction rather than on sub-national, place-based assessments that interrogate how implemented projects have actually translated into improved socio-economic outcomes at the local level. In particular, there is a dearth of empirical work that systematically examines the condition, functionality, and socio-economic impact of roads, electricity, and market

infrastructure within Imo State for the period 2015–2024, and how these infrastructural realities have mediated the success (or failure) of state-led rural development initiatives.

This study therefore addresses this gap by providing a systematic, place-based assessment of the condition and functionality of roads, electricity, and market infrastructure in Imo State between 2015 and 2024 and by empirically examining how those infrastructural conditions have impacted rural development outcomes.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following questions guide the study:

1. What is the impact of the condition of road infrastructure on rural development in rural areas of Imo State?
2. How has electricity infrastructure impacted on rural development in rural areas of Imo State?
3. What is the impact of the condition of market infrastructure on rural development in rural areas of Imo State?
4. What are the factors militating against infrastructure and rural development in rural areas of Imo state?

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to assess the impact of the conditions of infrastructure on rural development in rural areas of Imo State. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the impact of the condition of road infrastructure on rural development in rural areas of Imo state.
2. To evaluate the impact of the state of electricity infrastructure on rural development in rural areas of Imo State.
3. To examine the impact of the condition of market infrastructure on rural development in rural areas of Imo State.
4. To identify factors militating against infrastructure and rural development in rural areas of Imo State.

Over the years, scholars have carried out studies on issues related to infrastructure and rural development in Nigeria and other countries. They have communicated different information, ideas and findings in their various studies through published and unpublished materials. This chapter presents the conceptual review, theoretical review, theoretical framework of the study, empirical review of relevant studies, summary of literature review and gap in literature.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is globally recognised as facilitators of social and economic development. It encompasses the foundational physical and systems necessary for a society or economic activities, such as road, electricity and market. It is an essential requirement to any county's economic development. It facilitates business operations, distribution of goods and development. Due to its complex roles, scholars have come up with different perspectives of what infrastructure is or should be.

To Amadi and Aloto (2020) infrastructure encompasses socio-economic amenities that promote economic growth. They argued that effective infrastructure has the potentials to promote holistic development by enhancing both economic and social sectors. Similarly, Donald (2023) sees infrastructure as physical system of a nation that is involved in the production and distribution of goods and essential services, which are crucial for sustaining and improving social living conditions. These view underscore the role of infrastructure in creating enabling environments for productive activities and overall development.

Salisu (2016) conceptualises infrastructure as a network of interconnected structural components that serve as the foundation of a country's development. He distinguishes between

economic infrastructure such as roads markets airports and electricity which directly facilitate economic activities and social infrastructure such as schools hospitals and water supply-which are imperative for enhancing human well-being and social development. In his view both forms of infrastructure are interdependent and necessary to achieve national development and improve the overall quality of life. This definition is an indication that infrastructure is not just a physical entity but a strategic asset for national development.

Similarly, Reddy (2018) views economic infrastructure as essential facilities that support the development of other sectors of the economy and these amenities assist in the smooth running of all the sectors of economy. The above definition indicates that infrastructure can facilitate social and economic development. To Amadi (2020) economic infrastructure connotes services that directly facilitate a wide range of economic activities and growth of a country. Infrastructure helps to determine a country's potential success or failure. This means that Infrastructure represents the engine that stimulates the economy of any nation as well as to assess the level of development in a country. In other words, economic and social infrastructures are imperatives for the development of a nation.

Additionally, the author states that infrastructure like electricity is necessary in the production process and socio-economic activities of any country. He argued that adequate infrastructure development facilitates productive activities which serve as a foundation stone for growth in both the rural and urban economy. Infrastructure is equally seen in the context of rural economy. To Ukessay (2018) infrastructure connotes the supporting structure that facilitates the growth of the rural economy and assists economic activities in the rural areas, to explore the opportunities in the environment. Similarly, he described infrastructure as interconnected elements of economic change such as; power, transport, market and communication serve as the foundation for the growth of an economy. This definition underscores that electricity supply tends to facilitate the pace of production activity, while an effective road system would make the movement of human and material resources from one place to the other very easy and accessible, as well as link-up various markets from urban to rural areas.

Different authors have defined infrastructure based on the region and aim of the study, in order to fit properly within their study. For instance Osumgborogwu (2016) defines infrastructure as those primary services and system required in the process of development. The availability and accessibility bring positive effect in the lives of citizens. He argued that presence of infrastructure such as road, water, market and power supply have the tendency to promote the living conditions of citizen of a state. This definition suggests that infrastructure plays a great role in enhancing the quality of life of citizen in a state.

Equally, Enwereuzor (2021) observes that infrastructure represents the basic structures and facilities necessary for social and economic life the people and community to function effectively. It is a basic need which a community requires for a better living condition. The availability and accessibility of infrastructure such as; good road network, uninterrupted power supply (electrification), to enhance storage and processing facilities, market physical structure facilities in rural communities, are panacea to sustainable rural development. This definition means that the functionality of infrastructure can promote economic development in rural areas of a community or rural areas. World Bank (2000) observed that infrastructure is better described and accessed from rural perspective. In their view, infrastructure is basic element in the development process that brings about improvement in the socio-economic life of the rural dwellers. In their view, rural infrastructures are catalyst and key indicators of levels of development. This means that infrastructures are facilitators of development in the rural.

Infrastructure as conceptualized by Kurushetra (2021) is the backbone of any country which plays a very important role in supporting a nation's economic growth. He sees infrastructure as crucial need for improving the well-being and, thus reduce poverty in the rural areas. It provides essential production condition which is required for economic growth and the quality of life in the

rural areas. This implies that provision of infrastructure in the rural areas facilitates economic development for the rural dwellers.

From the foregoing "infrastructure" just like many other concepts in social sciences, is complex in definition. The common view point is that infrastructure can be social or economic infrastructures which are seen as facilitators of production and distribution of goods and services and economic development. For the purpose of this study, "infrastructure" is perceived as physical structures needed for a society or community to function effectively, in order to enhance the economic well-being and better living standards of people through the instrumentality of infrastructures such as; road, electricity, and market.

### **Rural Development**

This study is concerned with rural development. It is pertinent to look at the concept of rural area and later beam light on rural development. Basically, a rural area is also called countryside and denotes a geographic area that is located outside towns and cities. This suggests that any area that is not urban is taken to be a rural area. Webster (1984) indicates that typical rural areas have low population and small settlements. The World Bank (2012) classified areas with at least 300 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> as rural areas. In Nigeria rural areas are describe as rural communities and villages within a local government areas. They are known to have limited access to infrastructure and economic opportunities, and they are agriculturally-based areas. Rural areas are opposite of urban areas, and are typically small towns, communities and villages with ample space within local governments in a state (Adisa, 2014). In other words, no matter where they are found the general characteristics of rural areas as indicated above appear to be the same. Rural areas in Imo state share the same features as described above. They are not urban areas, but they are rural communities and villages facing challenges in their social and economic living conditions within rural local government areas of Imo state.

The concept of rural development is multidimensional in nature. Different scholars and institutions defined and conceptualized it in various ways. This is because of the complex and multifaceted aspects of rural development. In supporting this, rural development has been seen as a strategy designed to improve the socio- economic well-being of a specific people in the rural area. It entails assisting the poor rural dweller to seek a livelihood in the rural areas (Adisa, 2014). As a phenomenon, Adisa sees it as interaction between various physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural, and institutional factors. As a discipline, it is multidisciplinary, representing social sciences, behavioral, engineering and management sciences. These intersections are intended to address everything that affects rural people and the quality of their life, and as integral members of the larger society and, indeed the world.

In another vein, rural development is broadly viewed as an overall improvement on the quality of life of human being in terms of economic, social, political, environmental and administrative issues. It is on this note that World Bank (2012) conceives rural development as scheme which is planned to enhance the social and economic conditions of the rural people in such a way that the benefits go around the targeted rural community. The central idea of rural development derived from the above definitions is that rural development revolves around improving the quality of lives of the rural dwellers. Amoo (2019) perceives rural development as the overall development in rural areas, intending to improve the quality of life of rural people. The author noted that, rural development is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept, and encompasses various aspects such as, social, economic, institutional, infrastructure service and environmental strategies.

In Aaron and Akuandna (2018) socio-economic development is conceive as improvement in the rural areas that aims to tackle social and economic challenges, with particular intension to enhance the well-being of rural dwellers. The authors stated that socio-economic development is the enhancement of quality of life and the means of economic opportunities of people living in rural areas, through different initiatives targeted to address rural challenges such as, unemployment, poverty and limited access to income. This means that initiatives like investing in infrastructure and

rural development programmes to solve social and economic problems in rural areas are seen as rural development. In the views of Okanlade (2020), rural development is strengthening the institutions that promote progress in the rural areas. It means improving the governance, legal structure and policies that facilitates infrastructure development and overall rural well-being in rural areas. It entails all efforts by government, Non Governmental Organizations' (NGOs) and communities in shaping rural areas. This means that all efforts by both the government and private organisation towards improving the people in rural areas are regarded as rural development.

According to Ogunkoye, Lassi, Hassan and Elumah (2015) rural development is the provision of infrastructural facilities in the rural areas such as; electricity, road, telecommunications, schools and market in rural areas to improve the well-being. It means that making these facilities available in rural areas is rural development. To Janhau (2020) in his article defined rural development as:

A process of developing and utilizing natural and human resources, technologies, infrastructural facilities, institutions and organizations, government policies and programmes to encourage and speed up socio- economic growth in rural areas, to create jobs, and to improve the quality of rural life towards self-sustenance.... (Janhau, 2020).

The above definition appears comprehensive. It stresses that rural development involves programmes, policies and actions by government as well as other organizations and institutions in harnessing available human and natural resources to improve the living condition of rural dwellers. The expected improvement is in many spheres of the people's lives.

World Bank (2014) defined rural development as a comprehensive and reliable tool aimed at bringing about desirable rural transformation. In their view, rural development is expected to produce results that are tested and found effective under certain circumstances before being introduced under similar circumstances in another setting. It is a problem solving strategy through technological development. Rural development to Okanlade (2020) is a distinct approach which entails creating of enabling environment for rural dwellers to explore and to improve their economic well-being.

The advocates of modernization argue that rural development is the transition from traditional society entangled by norms, beliefs and value which are hindering development progress. In their perceptive rural development is all about change from old ways of life to modern style of living with focus on industrialization, through the introduction of modern technologies and economic strategies in the rural areas. This implies that rural development is also accepting new technologies.

In conceptualizing rural development in the twenty-first century, Taledo (2020) observed that rural development is one of the strategies intended to make a permanent or overall improvement in the living condition of all segments of the societies (primarily the living conditions of the rural people). This could be achieved through empowering the capacity of rural communities through the provision of different infrastructures that can improve their well-being, and creation of local institutions working on issues of rural people.

At this point, one may sum up on the review so far on the concept of rural development. The concept of rural development has been explained by many scholars and practitioners. Basically, there is no agreement among various views on the meaning of rural development. One basic thing is that it means all efforts to the improvement of the well-being and better condition of the people in rural areas. These efforts can be through social, economic, institutional and infrastructural, and environmental development.

Therefore, in this study rural development is the improvement in socio- economic conditions and well-being, by improving employment and income generating opportunities, and quality of life of rural dwellers.

### **Theoretical Review**

Three theories such as Modernization Theory, Integrated Rural Development Theory, Functionalist Theory, and Social Contract Theory can be applied in this study however we are adopting Functionalist theory.

### **Functionalist Theory**

The theory emerged from the efforts of Sociologists like Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Gabriel Almond and Robert Merton (Polinaidu, 2004). Functionalists perceive the society as a social system with institutions in it as subsystems. They posit that the parts of a system, though many, are connected together with each having a role to play for the working of the entire system. Structural Functionalists like Gabriel Almond and Bingham, envisioned society as an organism since each component plays a necessary role, but cannot function alone. When one part experiences crisis, other must adopt to fill the void. This means that different parts of the society are primarily composed of social institutions each designed to fill different needs. These different parts are interdependent and interconnected with each other. Meaning that what affects one part will definitely affect the other parts.

Functionalists emphasized that government institutions are established for specific purposes. These institutions (federal, state and local governments) are established to provide infrastructural facilities for socio-economic development. According to functionalists an institution only exist because it servers a vital role in the functioning of the state. They are expected to interact with one another and function in a way that infrastructures are made available for development. The rural areas have the right to be provided with infrastructure like, road, electricity and market. The functioning or malfunctioning of government institutions will impact on the provision of infrastructural development in the rural areas. From the functionalist perspective rural development is achievable through active collaborative performance of institutions in a state established for different functions.

Relating the functionalist theory to this study, an infrastructure is the structural functional and basic requirements or element needed for socio-economic development to take place in a State. For rural development to be achieved, infrastructure must be made available and in good conditions. It is important that infrastructural facilities like roads, electricity and markets are put in place and adequately provided to suit the societal need of the rural dwellers. In order to achieve and effective rural development there must be collective efforts between the government and the people. This means that the government should provide their own quota in the development of the rural areas by ensuring that the entire basic infrastructure (roads, electricity and markets) are put in place, while the rural people on their part will welcome and harness available infrastructure brought to them. The stand point of arguments of functionalist is that dysfunction of the levels of governments to provide infrastructure is a constraint on rural development. This is a pointer to the fact that both the federal, state, and local governments must be functional and work as a system in order to contribute effectively in the provision and adequate condition of infrastructure in rural areas.

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Road Infrastructure and Rural Development**

In the study by Umar, Kabiru and Ahmed (2017) examined the impact of road infrastructure on rural development in Kwami Local Government Area of Gombe State, Nigeria. The objective of the study was to ascertain the extent to which road infrastructure affects development indicators such as agricultural output, market access and rural standard of living. The study adopted a survey-based methodology, distributing 300 questionnaire across three randomly selected communities. The findings of the study revealed an inequitable and inadequate road infrastructure, and constricted development in study area. The authors concluded that poor road infrastructure is a barrier to transporting agricultural produce to the markets and poor standard of living in the rural areas.

The study recommended an integrated rural development approach in addressing the problem of road infrastructure and rural development. The reviewed study has made great contribution by revealing the implications of road infrastructure and rural livelihood. While the study made significant contributions, it is limited in scope. As it did not explore on how the condition of road infrastructure impact on rural development outcomes. This study filled the gap using mixed methods of data collection and analyses

In another study by Adeniyi, Akinrinmade and Abiodun (2018), the authors examined the effect of road on rural development in Akure North Local Government of Ondo State, Nigeria. The authors stated that rural road transportation is a vital channel of ensuring effective movement of rural people and exchange of goods, which enhance rural economy and development in Nigeria. Using survey research design as its methodology, and descriptive statistics and Chi-square to analyse data and test the hypotheses, respectively.

The findings revealed that the road infrastructure are in deplorable condition, thereby making accessibility to economic opportunities and standards of living difficult. The study recommended that local government area should be adequately financed and equipped to manage and maintain rural road infrastructure to ensure effective transportation of goods and development. The reviewed study has made valuable impact road infrastructure through transportation services on rural development. However, the area of departure with the current lies in the scope and variables of the study. This study filled the gap, as it focused on impact of the conduction of road infrastructure on rural development in rural areas of Imo State.

In the same vein, Bala and Muhammed (2018) conducted an analysis on road infrastructure and transportation dynamics in Gombe State, Nigeria. The authors set out to examine whether the capital investment in road infrastructure development over the years influence commercial activities and development in Gombe city. The study adopted alpha, beta, and gamma indices to determine the changes in road network development. The findings revealed that good road network in the area has significant impact on economic activities and quality of life of rural dwellers.

The authors suggested for more road infrastructure development to enhance commercial activities and development in the state. The reviewed study is relevant to this study as it discovered the importance of road infrastructure on socio-economic development. Yet there is a gap, due to contextual disparities.

In another study, Jabulani and Pfano (2019) examined the role of road infrastructure on rural dwellers livelihood in South Africa. The authors relied on extensive literature review and visual observations to collection data. The findings indicated that deplorable road infrastructure is to sustainable livelihood of rural dwellers. The authors recommended that the government should treat the provision and maintenance of road infrastructure as priority to enhance livelihood of rural dwellers.

The reviewed study has contributed to knowledge on the effects of poor rural infrastructure on sustainable livelihood in rural areas of South Africa. However the findings of the reviewed study cannot be generalized being a conceptual and literature review and was conducted outside Nigeria.

In a separate research conducted by Asher and Novasad (2020) the authors assessed rural infrastructure impact on local economic development in rural regions of India, the authors utilized a fuzzy regression discontinuity design based on population thresholds. The goal of the research was to evaluate the causal effects of rural infrastructure on economic development across 1,000,000 villages. The study found limited evidence of local economic development within the villages examined. This suggests that the impact of infrastructure on job opportunities primarily occur outside the villages, meaning that the advantages are experienced externally rather than locally. The researchers concluded that the existing rural road infrastructure is inadequate for fostering sufficient economic development in rural areas. The reviewed study has added to knowledge on impact of road infrastructure on economic development in rural areas in India. However, the study was narrow and only focused impact of road infrastructure on one socio- economic development indicators.

Nnaeto and Umeh (2020) studied the impact of poor social infrastructure on the quality of life in rural communities in Egbuoma in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of poor state of roads, healthcare, water, electricity and recreational facilities on economic activities in the study area. The study relied on survey design and descriptive statistics to collect and analyse data respectively. The finding indicated that poor infrastructure negatively affects the economic activities in the areas studied. The study revealed that poor road infrastructure is responsible to low socio-economic activities and economic opportunities in rural areas. Equally, the authors found that poor road infrastructure is responsible for the folding of many socio-economic ventures, and poor standard of living. The study concluded that the poor infrastructure is due to government negligence in the provision and maintenance of social infrastructure in the study area. The study suggested that government intervention is urgently needed in the provision of infrastructure in the study. The reviewed study has made valuable insights on the impact of poor infrastructure on economic activities and quality of life in the study area. In as much as the study is relevant. There is a gap in scope and methodology. The review study focused on the impact of infrastructure on economic activities and quality of life, while this study is on the impact assessment of the conditions infrastructure (road) on rural development with regards to employment, and income opportunities and quality of life in rural areas in Imo State, Nigeria.

In order to assess the role of infrastructure on the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers, Okpa (2022), explored the relationship between infrastructural development and socio-economic wellbeing of the rural dwellers in Bakassi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The author specifically examined the relationship between road, potable water and socio-economic well-being of rural dwellers in the study area. The study adopted cross-sectional design, using quantitative and qualitative data from 420 rural respondents, with a multi-stage sampling technique. Descriptive statistics was used for data analyses and Chi-square statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed among others that, there is a significant relationship between road and the socio-economic well-being of rural dwellers. The authors suggested that government at all levels should be largely involved in the provision of good and durable roads and rehabilitations of old ones, especially in linking villages, communities and towns to strengthen economic activities.

The reviewed study has contributed to literature and knowledge on the role of infrastructure on socio-economic well-being of the rural dwellers. However, the reviewed study did not determine the sample size statistically. Also, the study examined road and portable water on socio-economic well-being of rural dwellers, while this study considered the impact of the condition infrastructure (roads, electricity and markets) on rural development with regard to employment, and income generating opportunities as well as quality of life in Imo State, Nigeria.

In another work Nnaukwu, Chineze and Emenike (2022) studied the influence of road transport on the socio-economic transformation of selected rural areas in south-east, Nigeria. The aim of the study was to examine the effect of road transport on the socio-economic transformation of selected rural areas in the south east, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. A total of 15 local government areas were selected and 400 respondents were administered questionnaires. Data collected were analyzed with the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient was used to test the hypotheses. The study found that access to road transport has a significant relationship on rural economic development. The authors discovered that adequate road infrastructure facilitates the transportation and economic development. The findings underscore the need to accord great priority to road construction, recommending that Ministries of Works and Transportation should emphasize and increase budgetary allocation for the development and maintenance of rural road infrastructure.

The reviewed study has made great impact on rural development from road transportation perspective. The reviewed study is different due to the disparities in the objectives of the study.

In another study Olufunke, Nwokobia and Onu (2023) investigated the effects of road infrastructure on rural development with focus on Otukpo and Agatu Local Government Areas of

Benue State. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the relationship between roads infrastructures and rural development. The study adopted a mixed methods approach. The finding revealed that poor road infrastructure in Otukpo and Agatu LGAs hampers commercial activities and economic lives of rural dwellers. The study recommended the urgent need for road development to better the lives of rural dwellers. The reviewed study is relevant to this study and has significantly added to literature pertaining to rural development. Yet, due to geographical limitation, this study examined the impact of the condition of road infrastructure on rural development with regards to employment, and income generating opportunities as well as quality of life in Imo State, Nigeria.

Aworemi, Abiri, Adebajo and Oladele (2023) conducted a study on the effects of road infrastructure on the socio-economic development of rural dwellers in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study employed quantitative research design to examine the relationship between road infrastructure, educational level, marital status on socio-economic development of rural dwellers in the study area. Data for the study were collected through a survey conducted on 100 rural dwellers. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and blocking variable model were used for the analyses of the results. The findings indicate that road infrastructure, educational level, and marital status are significant predictors of socio-economic development among rural dwellers. The key limitation of the reviewed study lies in its constrained conceptualisation of socio-economic development. While the analysis identifies predictors such as road infrastructure, educational attainment, and marital status as predictors of socio-economic development. This study captured other indicators such as employment, income-generating opportunities and quality of life.

The study conducted by Donald (2023) on the importance infrastructure on rural development in Etinan, in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study examined public infrastructure (road, pipe borne water, healthcare) on rural development in the study area. The study adopted survey design and data were collected using primary and secondary sources. While Pearson correlation method was adopted to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that infrastructure plays significant role in socio-economic development of rural dwellers. The author recommended that government should make policies that gear towards the provision of infrastructure for a holistic development in the rural areas. The reviewed study is relevant to this study but different in context.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a mixed methods research design. The design involved both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analyses in an appropriate and principle manner (Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri, 2021). The method allowed the researcher to quantify patterns and trends through surveys, while also exploring the experiences of rural dwellers through interviews. By integrating the strengths of both methodologies, the study was able to capture objective and subjective data on the impact of infrastructure and rural development

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of study revealed that infrastructure plays a critical role in shaping the direction of rural development. Road infrastructure emerged as a meaningful determinant of rural development, with improved roads shown to enhance accessibility, mobility, and economic activities across communities. Similarly, market infrastructure was found to be a significant driver of rural development, as functional and well-equipped markets strengthen local commerce, improve the accessibility of goods and services, and foster broader community development. Although electricity infrastructure was linked with development outcomes based on qualitative findings, the statistical evidence did not establish its influence as significant within the study sample, highlighting the persistent challenge of unreliable power supply in rural communities. Beyond the direct role of infrastructure, the study underscores the impact of contextual and governance-related challenges that continue to undermine rural development in Imo State. The study also draws attention to community and cultural dynamics that significantly shape development outcomes.

In conclusion, the study highlights that achieving sustainable rural development in Imo State requires a holistic approach that combines infrastructural improvement with good governance, community participation, and cultural sensitivity. Strengthening roads and market infrastructure, while improving the reliability of electricity, must be supported by consistent policies, increased funding, anti-corruption measures, and institutional reforms. Equally important is fostering active involvement of rural dwellers in development planning to ensure that interventions are both relevant and impactful. Only through such integrated efforts can infrastructure truly serve as a catalyst for meaningful rural transformation and improved quality of life for residents of Imo State.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should prioritise the rehabilitation and regular maintenance of rural roads through a dedicated rural roads policy, as good road networks are critical for agricultural distribution, market access, and rural economic growth.
2. Rural electrification programmes should be restructured to ensure not just installation but reliable supply, while alternative energy solutions such as solar mini-grids should be scaled up to meet the electricity needs of rural households and small-scale enterprises.
3. State and local governments should adopt a rural market upgrading policy that includes provision of standard stalls, storage facilities, and sanitation systems to strengthen trade, income generation, and food security in rural communities.
4. Policies should be enacted to strengthen the autonomy and funding of local governments, ensure continuity of infrastructure projects across administrations, and reduce political interference in rural development programmes.
5. Anti-corruption frameworks should be reinforced to prevent mismanagement of funds, poor monitoring, and political patronage, with strict sanctions for offenders to safeguard infrastructure investments.
6. Rural development policies should integrate active community involvement in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of projects, alongside sensitization campaigns to address cultural practices that delay or obstruct development.

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