Impact of Public Investments in Social and Community Services on Standard of Living in Nigeria

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Abstract: Social and community services carried out by the public sector are expected to better the lots of the people in the country and consequently, much investments are committed into these services. This notwithstanding, the role of public sector's investments in social and community services in the living standard of Nigerians, has not been clarified in empirical literature. Therefore, this study empirically explored the role of public sector's social and community services in the standard of living in Nigeria during the period, 1981 to 2022. Secondary data used in the study were sourced from Central Bank of Nigeria's Statistical Bulletin and World Bank's World Development Indicators. The analysis of the time series data using Fully Modified Least Squares (FMOLS) regression technique reveals the existence of positive and significant effects of government total capital and recurrent expenditures on social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria. However, government recurrent expenditure on education exerted negative significant effect on standard of living and government recurrent expenditure on health had positive non-significant effect on standard of living in Nigeria in the study period. The study concluded that public sector's investment in social and community services improves standard of living in Nigeria. This suggests the need for more investments by the Government in social and community services in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Standard of living as a measure of the wellbeing of residents of a particular country is a key focus of welfarist state and as such various policies and investments are geared towards achieving it with least cost and minimal efforts. Hence, the extent to which the people could assess and afford the basic necessities of life which are germane to their state of wellbeing is the main and pertinent issue involved in standard of living maximization. Therefore, to attain high standard of living, the public as well as the private sector do commit themselves to certain investments and services. A case in point is the public sector investment in social and community services.

Public sector investment which is considered as crucial for the delivery of some essential goods and services, is the investment that is made for the benefit of the general populace by the federal, state, or local governments (Nteegah & Okwu, 2023). These investments are in the form of government expenditures. These expenditures could be capital or recurrent in nature and they may be in various dimensions such as expenditures on administration, social and community services, economic services, and transfers. According to Nteegah and Okwu (2023), government expenditure on social and community services includes both one-time and ongoing spending on social and community services. This implies that there are two broad types of government expenditures on social and community services, namely, capital and recurrent expenditures on social and community services. Further in the explanation, the authors state that government spending on things like housing, health, and education are capital expenditures on social and community services while recurring government expenses for health, education, and other social services are equal to recurring government expenses for social and community services (Nteegah & Okwu, 2023).

It has been observed that government through its fiscal policy, especially as it relates to public expenditure, has been making efforts to contribute its quota to the growth of the country, most especially in developing countries like Nigeria (Abdulmajeed et al., 2019). For instance, government expenditures generally, and particularly her investments in social and community services, have been on the increase , despite this, there has not been any significant improvement in the standard of living in Nigeria (Amadi & Korgbeelo, 2022l; Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical

Bulletin, 2023). The role public sector's social and community services investments in standard of living has remained an unsettled and unclarified matter in empirical literature. Hence, this study sought to explore the effect of public sector's investments in social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria during the period, 1981 to 2022.

Therefore, the main objective of this study was to examine the impact of public sector's investments in social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are to: determine the impact of government total capital expenditure on social and community services, on standard of living in Nigeria; examine the impact of government total recurrent expenditure on social and community services, on standard of living in Nigeria; and assess the impact of government total recurrent expenditure on education, on standard of living in Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Public Sector Investments in Social and Community Services

Public sector investments are basically government expenditures (capital and recurrent) which are carried out in anticipation of returns in the form of satisfactory delivery of public goods and increased utility to the people. In other words, (Nteegah & Okwu, 2023), public sector investments are investments that are made for the benefit of the general populace by the federal, state, or local governments. According to Amadi and Korgbeelo (2022), public sector investments otherwise called public sector spending or government expenditure refers to the total amount of money spent by the government in a year, typically made up of both recurrent and capital items. Public investments are crucial for the delivery of some essential goods and services which are either unable to be efficiently supplied by the private sector (public goods) (like police services and military defense) or are designed in such a way that only one supplier could economically invest in them (natural monopolies) (like power, clean water, and sewage services) (Nteegah & Okwu, 2023).

Public sector's investment in social and community services include investments in education, health, and other social and community services (CBN Statistical Bulletin, 2023). Although, there are different forms of public investments ranging

from investments in administration, economic services, financial transfers, to social and community services but investments in social and community services are unique in that they geared towards improvement the health, human capacity, education and other social and community infrastructures, all for the over improvement of the lives of the people. Public sector's investment in social and community services is simply government expenditure on social and community services. According to Agu et al. (2024), Government expenditure on social and community services are expenses incurred to improve the general wellbeing of the masses to promote growth and development in an economy, including expenses on education, health, electricity and other social and community services.

2.1.2. Standard of Living

Akpunonu et al. (2017) describe standard of living as is the capacity of an individual to have access to the basic necessities of life with ease. Furthermore, Babarinde et al. (2022) describe standard of living as the degree, ability and extent to which citizens to access and afford the basic necessities of living for their welfare and good living condition. In other words, standard of living is the material well-being of the average person in a given population (Wasurum & Kpagih, 2023). The standard of living is a concept used to describe the level of income, necessities, luxury, and other goods and services that are readily available to an average person in a society (Amadi & Korgbeelo, 2022). The standard of living in the financial condition of the citizens translating to their ability to access the basic needs of life, otherwise termed consumption (Jeff-Anyeneh et al., 2020).

Following similar studies (Amadi & Korgbeelo, 2022; Babarinde et al., 2022; Nduka et al., 2019; Ogbuagu & Ewubare, 2019; Wasurum & Kpagih, 2023), this study measures standard of living using the per capita income approach (gross domestic product (GDP) per capita). Per capita income is a measure of the amount of money that is being earned per person in a certain area and can be calculated for a country by dividing the country's national income (that is, gross domestic product (GDP)) by its total population (Nduka et al. 2019).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning for this study is the Keynesian theory of public expenditure. The study selected the theory because of its theoretical linkage of

government expenditure with economic growth and development and by extension with standard of living.

2.2.1. Keynesian Theory of Public Expenditure

Theory of public expenditure postulated by Keynes (1936) emphasizes the crucial role of government in an economy. Faulting the unrealistic assumption of full employment, the Keynesian economists believe in government intervention in the economy through government expenditure, and other fiscal measures (Amadi & Korgbeelo, 2022). The less-than-full employment results in distortion in the market mechanism, hence the need for the intervention of the public sector in the economy in order to restore stability. One principal way through which the government intervenes in the economy is through her fiscal policy, and particularly through her expenditure. Thus, the Keynesian theory of public expenditure is basically all about the significant role of government expenditure in economic recovery, stimulation of national output, increase in national employment, and ultimately in improving the standard of living of people. The theory postulates a unidirectional causality between public expenditure (or investment) and economic growth and by extension, standard of living. In other words, if the government increases public expenditure on different public services, the multiplier effects will trickle down to producers, consumers, contractors, workers and everybody as more employment opportunities will be created to reduce poverty level and enhance people's standard of living (Bowale et al., 2020).

2.3. Empirical Review

Nteegah and Okwu (2023) analysed the impact of public sector investment on economic development in Nigeria from 1981-2021 using Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model. The study examined how public investment on economic services, social and community services and administrative services had affected economic development in terms of: standard of living, literacy rate and job creation. The study found among others, that public investment in economic and administrative services improved living standard while public investment in social and community services retarded living standard in Nigeria both in the short and long run. The study concluded that: public investment in economic and administrative spurred economic development than public investment in social and community services in Nigeria.

Bolarinwa (2023) investigated the relationship between formal education and the standard of living in Nigeria by analyzing the impact of government expenditure on education and school enrolment on the country's GDP per capita as a proxy for standard of living. Using 30 years of annual time series data and employing the ordinary least squares (OLS) method, the study reveals that higher enrolment rates in secondary and tertiary education had positive and significant effects on GDP per capita, indicating that investments in higher education lead to increased productivity, higher incomes, and improved economic outcomes and living standards. However, government expenditure on education had a negative and insignificant effect on GDP per capita, calling for further exploration into the effectiveness and allocation of education spending for sustainable economic growth.

Using ARDL approach, Wasurum and Kpagih (2023) examined the effect of socio-economic infrastructure on the standard of living in Nigeria for the period 1981–2021. The study used per capita income as a proxy for standard of living, while investments in health, education, telecommunications, and electric power supply were used as infrastructure. The study revealed that, among others, that education and health infrastructures had positive but non-significant long-run effects on standard of living in Nigeria. However, in the short-run, the study found that health infrastructure had positive significant effect while education infrastructure had negative significant effect on standard of living in Nigeria.

Ejemezu and Ajala (2023) investigated the effects of government expenditure in various economic sectors on poverty in Nigeria from 1986 to 2022. Using government expenditure on education, health, security, building and construction, and roads as proxies, and the head count index as a proxy for poverty, the study analyzed the secondary data using Johansen cointegration and vector error correction mechanisms. The study found that government expenditures had positive short-term effects on poverty, but negative long-term effects, except for government expenditures on roads. This suggests that government expenditure has a reducing effect on poverty in the long term, but is not effectively addressing poverty in the short term. The study concludes that government expenditure plays a significant role in reducing poverty in the long run.

In another study, Adi et al. (2022) investigated the impact of community and social development project on rural communities in southern Taraba State, Nigeria. Primary data were collected from 150 respondents, randomly selected

using structural questionnaire and they were analyzed using frequency, percentage and t-test. The result shows that community and social development project had impacted positively on rural development and their living standard had improved.

Using error correction model (ECM), and Granger causality test, Amadi and Korgbeelo (2022) investigated the impact of government expenditure on standard of living in Nigeria for the period 1981 to 2020. In the study, total government expenditure was disaggregated based on the standard functional classification of government spending on administration, social and community services, economic services, and transfers. Standard of living was measured in terms of the misery index. Findings of the study indicated that government expenditure on administration significantly worsens the standard of living. Also, government expenditure on social and community services and government spending on economic services strongly improve the standard of living unlike government expenditure on transfers which contributes insignificantly to the improvement of the standard of living in Nigeria. Further evidence from the Granger causality test showed a unidirectional causality from government expenditure on social and community services to standard of living in Nigeria.

Also, Jeff-Anyeneh et al. (2020) examined government spending and standard of living in Nigeria between 1981 and 2008 using ARDL model and Granger causality technique. The study found that in the long run, recurrent expenditure significantly relates to a standard of living, while capital expenditure insignificantly relates negatively with a standard of living. Furthermore, the study reveals the existence of a bidirectional causal relationship between standard of living and recurrent expenditure, which implies both recurrent and capital expenditure have a significant effect on the standard of living in Nigeria.

During the period 1981–2018 in Nigeria, Bowale et al. (2020) used ARDL approach to evaluate the nexus between standard of living (proxy by per capital income) and the rising four components of capital and recurrent expenditure (administration, economic services, social and community services, and transfer payments). The study found that rising government expenditures on these four components of both capital and recurrent spending were negatively and insignificantly related to per capita income, while those that were positively related were also insignificant, indicating low standard of living of Nigerians during the

period of study. The study concluded that government expenditure did not improve the standard of living of Nigerians significantly.

Ogbuagu and Ewubare (2019) provided empirical analysis of the long run and short run impact of government expenditure (education, health, and consumption expenditure) on standard of living in Nigeria from 1981 to 2017 using Vector Error Correction Model (VECM). The result of the study suggests that fiscal spending on education, health and consumption in Nigeria have been used to improve standard of living in the long run. Furthermore, the short run coefficient results reveals that education expenditure had positive and significant impact on standard of living while health and consumption expenditure have insignificant impact on standard of living in Nigeria.

Nduka et al. (2019) employed ARDL and Granger causality approach to re-examined how the standard of living of the citizens are affected by Federal Government of Nigeria expenditure pattern from 1981 to 2018. The outcome of the study revealed that, there is a positive significant effect of government recurrent expenditure on per capita income, whereas there is a negative significant effect of government capital expenditure on per capita income in Nigeria. However, in the long run, the study found recurrent expenditure to exert significant positive effect on per capita income, unlike capital expenditure which had a significant negative effect on per capita income in Nigeria.

Akande (2016) employed the Johanson cointegration test and Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) to investigate the relationship between education and standard of living. The variables used include per capital real GDP, government expenditure on education and health. The result of the study suggested that education had positive but non-significant effect on standard of living unlike government expenditure on health which had negative significant effect on standard of living in Nigeria.

3. Methods

The study sought to examine the effect of public sector's investments in social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria during the study period, 1981-2021 and the technique of analysis are Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares and Robust Least Squares regressions.

The study was in line with ex-post facto research design and as such historical data were used in the study. In data analysis, some preliminary tests were conducted:

augmented Dickey-Fuller unit root test, to determine the stationarity property of the variables of study; and Johansen cointegration test, to order ascertain whether or not there is long-run relationship between public sector's investments in social and community services and standard of living in Nigeria. Thereafter, the regression proper was conducted using Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares regression technique. Finally, some post-estimation tests were also performed on the estimated regression model.

Table 1: Operationalisation of Study Variables

Variable	Abbreviation	Measurement	Source
Standard of living	LGDPPC	Gross Domestic Product per capita at (current local currency unit) (natural log.).	World Development Indicators
Public investment in social and community services (capital)	LCSCS	Government total capital expenditure on social and community services (natural log.).	CBN Statistical Bulletin
Public investment in social and community services (recurrent)	LRSCS	Government total recurrent expenditure on social and community services (natural log.).	CBN Statistical Bulletin
Public investment in health (recurrent)	LRHELT	Government total recurrent expenditure on health (natural log.).	CBN Statistical Bulletin
Public investment in education (recurrent)	LREDU	Government total recurrent expenditure on education (natural log.).	CBN Statistical Bulletin

4.   Results and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics in respect of the variables of this study: Gross Domestic Product per capita; capital expenditure on social and community services; recurrent expenditure on social and community services; recurrent expenditure on education; and recurrent expenditure on health.

According to the descriptive statistics in Table 2, the average Gross Domestic Product per capita in Nigeria in the period of the study (1981-2022)was ₦225,807.7 which means that an individual has an average of ₦225,807.7 per GDP of Nigeria. The series (GDPPC) which ranges from ₦1853.14 to ₦925981.1, can be said to fluctuate significantly from its mean considering the fact that its mean value is less

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	GDPPC	CSCS	RSCS	REDU	RHELT
Mean	225807.7	75.00119	365.5660	161.4129	98.02500
Maximum	925981.1	377.2600	1628.990	702.9800	437.5200
Minimum	1853.140	0.240000	0.290000	0.160000	0.040000
Std. Dev.	271838.1	92.36698	492.5265	209.7177	133.6021
Skewness	1.039902	1.438982	1.229387	1.218924	1.287190
Kurtosis	2.831110	4.648222	3.256664	3.257968	3.416263
Jarque-Bera	7.619693	19.24880	10.69503	10.51690	11.90124
Probability	0.022152	0.000066	0.004760	0.005203	0.002604
Observations	42	42	42	42	42

Note: GDPPC=Gross Domestic Product per capita; CSCS=Capital expenditure on social and community services; RSCS=Recurrent expenditure on social and community services; REDU=recurrent expenditure on education; RHELT= recurrent expenditure on health

than its standard deviation (271838.1). The Jarque-Bera statistic of GDPPC attests to the non-normality of the series.

Furthermore, the averages of recurrent and capital expenditures on social and community services in Nigeria between 1981 and 2022 s**tood at** 365.5660 and 75.00119 respectively. This suggests that there was more recurrent investment in social and community services than its counterpart capital expenditure. The minimum recurrent expenditure on social and community services (0.290000) exceeds the minimum capital expenditure on social and community services (0.240000) while the maximum recurrent expenditure on social and community services (1628.990) is more than the maximum capital expenditure on social and community services (377.2600) in the study period. Both capital and recurrent expenditures on social and community services are not normally distributed and they exhibit wide dispersion from their average values.

Moreover, the mean values of recurrent expenditures on education, and on health stood at 161.4129 and 98.02500 respectively. This suggests that there was more recurrent investment in education than health in the study period. Just like both capital and recurrent expenditures on social and community services, both recurrent expenditures on education, and health fail the normality test and they are widely dispersed from their average values.

4.2. Unit Root Test

The Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root test statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) Unit Root Test Statistics

	t-Statistic	*Prob.*	*t-Statistic*	*Prob.*	*I (d)*	*Remarks*
LGDPPC	-1.437399	0.5547	-3.481201	0.0137	I(1)	Stationary
LCSCS	-0.521946	0.8762	-9.981577	0.0000	I(1)	Stationary
LRSCS	-2.498720	0.1239	-8.355664	0.0000	I(1)	Stationary
LRHELT	-1.877898	0.3387	-10.45374	0.0000	I(1)	Stationary
LREDU	-2.427935	0.1413	-8.074429	0.0000	I(1)	Stationary

According to the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root test statistics in Table 3, none of the variables attain stationarity in level but at first differencing, they all attained stationary. This suggests that all the variables are I(1) series.

4.3. Cointegration Tests

Table 4 contains the result of Johansen cointegration test.

Table 4: Johansen Cointegration Test

Hypothesized		Trace Statistics		Max-Eigen Statistics	
No. of CE(s)	*Eigenvalue*	*Trace Stat.*	*0.05 Prob.*	*Max-Eigen Stat.*	*0.05 Prob.*
None	0.578483	95.56142	0.0001*	34.55577	0.0415*
At most 1	0.487337	61.00565	0.0018*	26.72546	0.0641
At most 2	0.421796	34.28019	0.0142*	21.91312	0.0388*
At most 3	0.202802	12.36707	0.1402	9.066095	0.2807
At most 4	0.079211	3.300972	0.0692	3.300972	0.0692

* denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level

As presented in Table 4, Johansen cointegration test by way of Trace test indicates the existence of 3 cointegrating equations at the 0.05 level, but Max-eigenvalue test indicates the existence of 1 cointegrating equation at the 0.05 level. This implies that there is a long-run relationship between public sector's investments in social and community services and standard of living in Nigeria.

4.4. Regressions Result

The study employed Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares (FMOLS) regression technique in determining the role of public sector's investments in social and community services, in standard of living in Nigeria.

The Fully-Modified Least Squares (FMOLS) regression technique belongs to the family of cointegrating regression which are considered more efficient than

OLS. In the same category with FMOLS include Dynamic Least Squares (DOLS) and Canonical Cointegrating Regression (CCR). FMOLS is a regression technique applicable to series that are integrated at order not exceeding one but not to series that are of mixed orders of integration. Since, the preliminary tests carried out indicate the satisfaction of these conditions, the FMOLS regression also becomes applicable in the investigation of the effect of public sector's investments in social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria.

Therefore, the results of the Fully-Modified Least Squares (FMOLS) regression on the effect of public sector's investments in social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Effect of Public Sector's Investments in Social and Community Services on Standard of Living in Nigeria

Method: Fully-Modified Least Squares		
Dependent Variable: LGDPPC		
Variable	Coefficient	Probability
LCSCS	0.2617	0.0097
LRSCS	0.8823	0.0011
LRHELT	0.1419	0.4433
LREDU	-0.5089	0.0126
C	8.1261	0.0000
R- Squared	0.9837	
Adjust. R- Squared	0.9819	
Jargue-Bera	(0.4329; p=0.8053)	
Correlogram Squared Residuals	(Lag 1-12, p>0.05)	

As reported in Table 5, the Fully Modified Least Squares (FMOLS) regression technique as applied to the time series data reveal the finding of positive and significant effect of government total capital expenditure on social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria. Likewise, there was a positive and significant effect of government total recurrent expenditure on social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria. Both indicators of public sector's investments in social and community services were found to improve standard of living in Nigeria. This agrees with the conclusion drawn by Amadi and Korgbeelo (2022), who found government expenditure on social and community services improves the standard of living. However, it is contrary to the finding of Bowale et al. (2020) which indicates

that government expenditure on social and community services did not improve the standard of living of Nigerians significantly. Also, it does not concede with the submission of Nteegah and Okwu (2023) which asserts that public investment in social and community services retarded living standard in Nigeria.

However, government recurrent expenditure on education exerted negative significant effect on standard of living in Nigeria. This finding is not agreement with the finding of Bolarinwa (2023) that government expenditure on education had a negative and insignificant effect on GDP per capita in Nigeria. In the same vein, the finding reported by Wasurum and Kpagih (2023) that education infrastructure had positive but non-significant long-run effects on standard of living in Nigeria is not tandem with the study's finding. Similarly, there is agreement between this finding and the result of Ogbuagu and Ewubare (2019) which reports the positive significant role of fiscal spending on education on standard of living in Nigeria.

Furthermore, this study found that government recurrent expenditure on health had positive non-significant effect on standard of living in Nigeria in the study period. This finding concedes with the finding that health infrastructure had positive but non-significant long-run effects on standard of living in Nigeria (Wasurum & Kpagih, 2023). However, this is not in agreement with the result of Ogbuagu and Ewubare (2019) which suggests that fiscal spending on health in Nigeria has been used to improve standard of living in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study empirically explored the role of public sector's social and community services in the standard of living in Nigeria during the period, 1981 to 2022. In line with ex-post facto research design, secondary data were used in the study. The secondary data used in the study were sourced from Central Bank of Nigeria's Statistical Bulletin and World Bank's World Development Indicators. The analysis of the time series data using Fully Modified Least Squares (FMOLS) regression technique reveals the existence of positive and significant effects of government total capital and recurrent expenditures on social and community services on standard of living in Nigeria. However, government recurrent expenditure on education exerted negative significant effect on standard of living and government recurrent expenditure on health had positive non-significant effect on standard of living in Nigeria in the study period.

The study concluded that public sector's investment in social and community services improves standard of living in Nigeria. This suggests the need for more investments by the Government in social and community services in Nigeria. Specifically, government should increase both its capital and recurrent expenditures on social and community services in Nigeria and design sustainable measure of effective delivery of the social and community services to the people and proper accountability should be ensured in the implementation of the social and community services' investments by the public sector.

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