



EFFECT OF POLITICAL INTERFERENCE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF BURUKU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study investigates the effect of political interference on the performance of local governments in Buruku Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State, Nigeria. Using a case study approach, the study examines how political control over finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, and manipulation of development projects affect local government performance. The study utilized a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to gather data from 358 administrators and politicians within the LGA, with a sample size of 100 respondents selected through probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using regression analysis. The results revealed that political interference in the form of financial control ($\beta = -0.305$, $t = -3.206$, $p = 0.002$), politically motivated appointments ($\beta = -0.497$, $t = -5.152$, $p = 0.000$), policy interference ($\beta = -0.365$, $t = -4.975$, $p = 0.000$), and manipulation of development projects ($\beta = -0.742$, $t = -7.706$, $p = 0.000$) all had significant negative effects on local government performance. These findings align with previous studies that highlighted the detrimental impact of political interference on the autonomy and efficiency of local governments. The study concludes that political interference, particularly in financial and administrative matters, significantly undermines the effectiveness of local governance. It recommends the need for greater political autonomy, merit-based appointments, and policies that are more attuned to local needs to enhance the performance of local governments in Nigeria.*

Key words: *Political interference, financial control, appointment of officials, policy interference, manipulation of development projects, local government performance.*

1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Local government performance is fundamental to the effective delivery of public services and the advancement of socio-economic development worldwide. As the tier of government closest to the people, local governments are tasked with addressing community-specific needs, including infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and environmental management (Nwachukwu & Obasi, 2018). Globally, strong local government performance contributes significantly to achieving national and international development goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Efficient local governance fosters inclusivity, accountability, and community-driven development (Adegbite & Aluko, 2020). However, local government performance is often influenced by the extent to which political dynamics and

administrative systems function in harmony. Political interference, while often perceived negatively, can either enhance or hinder local government administration depending on its nature and intent. For instance, when political leaders provide strategic guidance, allocate resources equitably, and encourage collaboration, political interference can positively influence local government performance (Onyeizugbe & Eze, 2019).

Political interference refers to the undue involvement of political actors, such as state governors, legislators, or influential individuals, in the affairs of local government administration. It encompasses practices such as controlling finances, influencing the appointment of officials, overriding policy decisions, and manipulating development projects for political or personal gain (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2018). For this study, political interference is operationally defined as actions by political actors that either enhance or constrain the autonomy and efficiency of local governments in delivering essential services. Key measures of political interference include control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, and manipulation of projects. On the other hand, local government performance refers to the ability of local governments to effectively fulfill their statutory responsibilities, including service delivery, resource management, and community development. It is often evaluated through indicators such as service quality, responsiveness, transparency, and financial accountability (Obisi, 2011).

While political interference can provide local governments with access to critical resources and political support, it often disrupts their autonomy and hinders decision-making processes (Adegbite & Aluko, 2020). Conversely, a lack of political engagement may result in underfunding or neglect of local governments. The degree of interference and its alignment with the objectives of local governance are therefore critical in determining its overall impact on performance.

Systems theory emphasizes how inputs (such as political influence) affect processes (local government operations) and outputs (service delivery). Empirical studies have also provided mixed findings. Adegbite and Aluko (2020) found that financial interference by state governments constrains local government autonomy, while Nwachukwu and Obasi (2018) demonstrated that political appointments reduce accountability and effectiveness in public administration. However, other studies, such as Adeniyi and Olufemi (2018), suggest that constructive political engagement can enhance local government capacity.

However, Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State, like other local governments in Nigeria, is not immune to the challenges posed by political interference. Additionally, manipulation of projects and erosion of autonomy further hinder the ability the local governments to perform their statutory functions effectively. These challenges raise concerns about the capacity of Buruku Local Government Area to meet the needs of its residents and drive sustainable development. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to explore the effect of political interference on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area, highlighting the specific ways in which this interference have affected the operations and service delivery.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Local governments in Nigeria are designed to be autonomous entities tasked with bringing governance closer to the grassroots and addressing local developmental needs. However, the persistent issue of political interference undermines this autonomy, leading to poor performance and inefficiency. In Buruku Local Government Area, this interference is evident in the control of financial resources by the state government, the politicization of appointments, and the manipulation of local projects to serve political interests rather than community needs. Policy interference and the erosion of autonomy further exacerbate the challenges faced by the local government. These interferences have resulted in delayed service delivery, lack of accountability, and widespread disillusionment among residents. Furthermore, the inability of the local government to function independently hampers its capacity to address pressing issues such as infrastructure development, healthcare delivery, and education. This study addresses these issues by examining the specific effects of political interference on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area, providing insights into how these challenges can be mitigated.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of political interference on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State. Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. determine effect of control of finance on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State;
- ii. evaluate the effect of appointment of officials on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State;
- iii. assess the effect of policy interference on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State; and
- iv. examine the effect of manipulation of projects on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State.

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the effect of financial control by higher political authorities on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area?
- ii. How does the appointment of officials based on political considerations affect the performance of Buruku Local Government Area?
- iii. In what ways does policy interference influence the effectiveness and efficiency of Buruku Local Government Area?
- iv. How does the manipulation of development projects impact the performance of Buruku Local Government Area?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will guide this study:

H₀₁: Control of finance has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

H₀₂: Appointment of officials based on political considerations has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

H₀₃: Policy interference has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

H₀₄: Manipulation of development projects has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study is significant as it provides insights for local government authorities on improving performance despite political interference, helps state and federal governments understand the consequences of excessive control, guides policymakers in designing supportive frameworks, enriches academic literature on local governance, empowers communities in Buruku to demand accountability, and informs NGOs and development partners on addressing governance challenges effectively.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the effect of political interference on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area in Benue State, Nigeria. It specifically investigates how financial control, appointment of officials, policy interference and manipulation of projects, influence the efficiency and effectiveness of the local government in delivering its mandates. The study covers the administrative, financial, and developmental functions of the local government and evaluates how these are impacted by external political influences. The time frame for the study is limited to the most recent five (5) years 2020-2024, providing a contemporary analysis of political interference and its implications. The primary data will be collected from key stakeholders, including local government officials, community members, and political actors within Buruku Local Government Area.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discussed the theoretical framework, the conceptual review, and the review of related empirical works, concluding with a summary of the literature reviewed.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on the agency theory and systems theory.

2.1.1 Agency Theory

Agency Theory was propounded by Michael C. Jensen and William Meckling in 1976 in their paper "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs, and Ownership Structure", The theory primarily examines the relationship between a principal (who delegates work) and an agent (who performs the work), focusing on the potential conflicts of interest between them and the costs incurred in resolving these conflicts (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). The aim of the theory is to understand how the interests of principals and agents often diverge, and

how principals can implement control mechanisms such as monitoring, incentives, and contracts to align the agent's actions with their own interests.

The belief of this theory is based on the recognition of conflict of interest between the principal and the agent, the concept of agency costs (costs of resolving the conflict, including monitoring and incentive alignment), and the need for risk-sharing between the two parties (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Additionally, the theory assumes that both the principal and agent act rationally in their self-interest and that there is **b** where the agent holds more information about their actions than the principal (Obisi, 2011). These assumptions lead to the need for monitoring mechanisms to reduce inefficiencies and ensure that agents act in line with the principals' goals (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2018).

In relation to the current study on political interference and local government performance, Agency Theory helps to explain the dynamics between political authorities (principals) and local government officials (agents). Political authorities may exert control over finances, appoint officials based on loyalty rather than merit, or impose policies that do not align with the needs of local governments. These actions create a conflict of interest between the political authorities and the local government officials, leading to inefficiencies and reduced performance (Obisi, 2011). The theory's emphasis on the importance of aligning interests through monitoring and incentives is particularly relevant in analyzing how political interference undermines local governance.

However, agency theory has some limitations, including the assumption that both the principal and agent act purely rationally, which oversimplifies human behavior (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Moreover, the theory overlooks the social and ethical factors influencing decision-making and does not fully account for the role of organizational culture in mitigating agency problems (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2018). Additionally, the theory is more suited to market-driven relationships, and may not fully address the complexities of public administration where the primary goal is not profit maximization.

2.1.2 Systems Theory

Systems Theory, propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s, is primarily discussed in his work *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications* (1968). The theory emphasizes the concept of a system, wherein each component is interrelated, and changes in one part of the system can affect the whole. Bertalanffy's general systems theory was initially introduced in the field of biology, but it was later extended to social systems, management, and organizational theory. The main thrust of the theory is that organizations should be viewed holistically, considering how all parts of the system interact and work towards common goals, rather than focusing on individual components.

The key tenets of Systems Theory include the interdependence of components, where every part of the system is connected and changes in one part affect others; holism, which stresses that systems should be understood as a whole; and equifinality, which means that different pathways can lead to the same outcome. Feedback mechanisms, both positive and negative,

are essential for maintaining system stability and adaptation. Additionally, open systems are affected by their environment, with input from external sources influencing the system's behavior.

The assumptions of the theory are that systems are interconnected, complex, and goal-oriented, and that they strive for equilibrium while remaining adaptable to changes in their environment (Bertalanffy, 1968). These assumptions are useful in analyzing the impact of political interference on local governments, as political actions (such as control over finances or appointment of officials) can disrupt the balance and efficiency of local governance systems. According to Systems Theory, these disruptions can have cascading effects across the system, undermining overall performance.

However, Systems Theory has some weaknesses, such as its over-simplification of complex systems, difficulty in measuring interactions between components, and the lack of specificity in providing concrete guidelines for implementation (Scott, 2003). Additionally, it often neglects individual behavior within systems and can adopt a static view of systems, which may not fully capture the dynamic nature of organizations and their environments (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

This section provides a conceptual review of the key dimensions of political interference the measures of LGA performance.

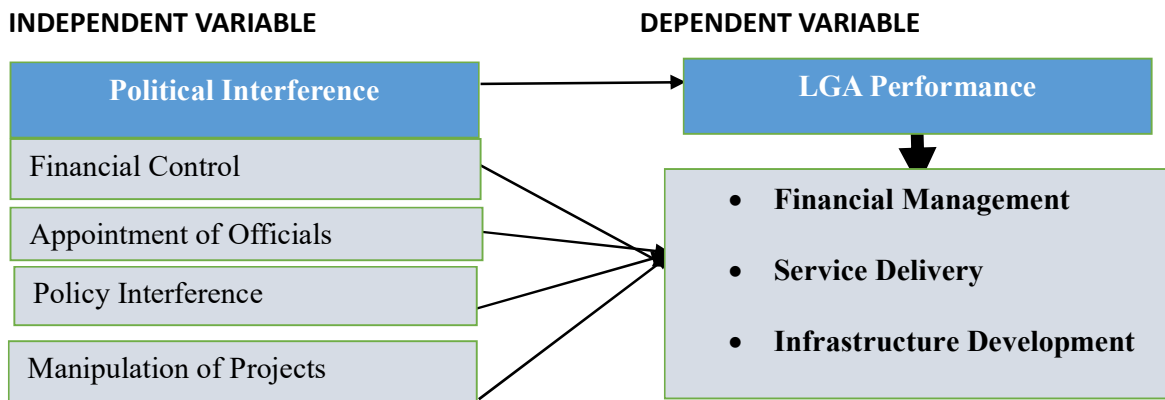


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

Source: Researchers Compilation of Conceptual Framework, 2025

2.2.1 Political Interference

Political interference describes the impact that politicians or other representatives of advanced governmental echelons have over the operations of public enterprises. Government intervention is regulatory action taken by the government that seeks to change

the decisions made by individuals, groups, and organizations about social and economic matters (Gulen & Ion, 2016). Governments are usually tempted to appoint bureaucrats or political cronies to SOE boards since these individuals do not question the adoption of inefficient decisions. Politicians who intervene in public administration decisions such as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting are said to be engaging in political meddling. Thus, the public and administrative institutions become politicized as a result of political activity in the administration and the undue influence of the politicians (Jens, 2016). In other words, they prevent the development of an independent public administration movement. Nigerian politicians take an unnecessary interest in topics of public administration, take advantage of public employees, and inflate the contributions of public administration employees.

Political interference refers to the involvement of political actors such as elected officials, political parties, or government bodies in the decision-making, operations, or functions of institutions or organizations in a manner that undermines their independence, efficiency, and effectiveness. It is often characterized by favoritism, control, or manipulation of processes to achieve political goals rather than public interest.

Political interference manifests in various forms, including the imposition of policies, undue control of finances, manipulation of appointments, and overriding of decisions by political actors. In local governments, it often undermines their autonomy and hinders their capacity to deliver essential services to their communities. The nature of interference may be systemic, rooted in the structure of governance, or driven by the actions of individuals or groups with vested interests.

2.2.3 Dimensions of Political Interference

Political interference is a significant factor influencing the performance of local governments, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. It encompasses various actions by political authorities that undermine the autonomy and functionality of local governments. The dimensions of political interference include the control of finances, the appointment of officials based on political loyalty rather than merit, the imposition of policies that do not align with local needs, and the manipulation of development projects to serve political agendas. Each of these dimensions negatively impacts the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of local governance, hindering service delivery and long-term development (Alimi & Manyong, 2020; Obisi, 2021; Adeoye & Tan, 2022).

1. Control of Finances

The control of finances refers to the power exercised by political authorities often at the state or federal level over the funds allocated to local governments. Political interference in the financial management of local governments can manifest in various forms, such as directing how funds are spent, delaying or withholding allocated funds, or diverting funds to projects that serve political interests. This control undermines the financial autonomy of local governments, reducing their ability to execute development programs and provide essential

services to their communities (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2018). In a system where local governments are financially dependent on higher levels of government, this form of interference can create significant barriers to effective governance and long-term development (Alimi & Manyong, 2020). This practice of operating joint state-local government accounts has led to state governments exercising disproportionate control over the local governments' finances, often to the detriment of the latter's service delivery capacity (Obasi, 2021).

2. Appointment of Officials

Political interference in the appointment of local government officials is another key dimension that negatively affects governance. Rather than basing appointments on merit, experience, and qualifications, political loyalty and affiliations often become the primary criteria (Nwachukwu, 2019). This undermines professionalism within local government institutions, as individuals appointed for political reasons may lack the necessary expertise or commitment to public service. Such practices can lead to inefficiencies, poor decision-making, and a lack of innovation in service delivery (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016). It can also perpetuate a culture of patronage where individuals are appointed based on their political connections, rather than their ability to meet the needs of the local population. This include appointments influenced by political considerations rather than merit could compromise the local government's ability to effectively address community issues, further entrenching inefficiencies (Obisi, 2021).

3. Policy Imposition

Policy imposition is another significant form of political interference where higher political authorities often state or federal governments impose policies that do not align with the specific needs or priorities of local governments (Onyeizugbe, 2021). These policies may not be suitable for the unique socio-economic and cultural conditions of the local communities they are intended to serve. The imposition of policies that are disconnected from the local context can lead to inefficiencies, wastage of resources, and public dissatisfaction (Adeoye & Tan, 2022). Furthermore, when local governments are forced to implement policies that do not align with their developmental plans, it can result in poorly executed programs, which ultimately harm local governance and hinder progress.

4. Manipulation of Projects

Manipulation of development projects is a common consequence of political interference in local government administration. In this dimension, political actors may hijack the planning, execution, or distribution of resources for development projects, diverting them to serve personal or political interests (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2018). Political manipulation may involve awarding contracts to politically connected individuals or groups, regardless of their ability to deliver the projects. In many cases, the projects may not align with the community's needs or may be poorly executed due to a lack of expertise or oversight (Obisi, 2021). This form of interference can lead to inefficiencies in the use of public resources and undermine the

developmental goals of local governments. Additionally, such practices often breed corruption and reduce public trust in the local government.

2.2.4 LGA Performance

Local Government Area (LGA) performance refers to the effectiveness and efficiency with which a local government unit delivers its services and implements policies aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of its residents (Gberevbie & Akinlabi, 2021). This performance is assessed through various indicators, including financial management, service delivery, infrastructure development, community engagement, and the overall achievement of set objectives.

Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) defined performance as an organization's ability to attain set goals and how set standards were applied to ensure attainment these goals. Performance results from the joint efforts all members of an organization towards attainment of set goals. Also, Etzioni (2024) sees goals of an organization as an ideal state of affairs an organization strives to attain, it is the main reason of its existence. Thus, an organization's performance is assessed based on the level of attainment of this ideal state of affairs. Evaluating performance in the public sector is complex because public sector goals are not geared towards profits but on citizen's satisfaction. Issues regarding economy, efficiency and effectiveness drive these goals. Furthermore, public sector goals are often ambiguous and are intended to serve a varied number of stakeholders with competing demands (Boschken, 2024) and hence, comparison is difficult. However, the institutional setting should be considered when evaluating public sector performance (Bevir *et al.*, 2023). Key dimensions of LGA performance include service delivery, governance and accountability, infrastructure development, financial management, and political autonomy (Boschken, 2024).

2.2.6 Nexus between Political Interference and Local Government Performance

Economically, political interference can lead to the misallocation of resources, which ultimately hampers local government performance. Local governments are responsible for providing essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, which contribute to the economic development of the community. However, when political authorities control the allocation of funds or direct resources to serve political interests, it leads to inefficiencies in the management and distribution of resources. Political interference can also distort local government budgeting processes by imposing spending priorities that do not align with the community's most pressing needs. In some cases, political interference may lead to the diversion of public funds for personal or party-related gains, thereby reducing the financial capacity of the local government to perform its functions (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

Furthermore, political interference can limit the local government's ability to make independent economic decisions that would enhance the socio-economic welfare of its citizens. For example, political appointees may prioritize projects that serve political ends

rather than those that are beneficial to the entire community, leading to suboptimal development outcomes. The economic inefficiencies resulting from political interference often manifest in the form of wasteful public expenditure, underperformance in service delivery, and limited infrastructure development (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2018).

According to Jensen & Meckling, 1976 political interference can lead to conflicts of interest between political authorities (the principals) and local government officials (the agents). In this context, political authorities, who have the power to control resources and appoint officials, may impose decisions or policies that are not aligned with the best interests of the local government or the community. This creates an agency problem, as the local government officials may act in ways that serve political goals rather than focusing on improving the welfare of the residents. The theory highlights the need for monitoring and aligning incentives to reduce inefficiencies caused by political interference.

Bertalanffy, (1968) offers another lens through which to view the effects of political interference on local government performance. According to this theory, local governments function as complex systems with interconnected components (e.g., officials, resources, and services). Political interference disrupts the equilibrium of the system, causing misalignments in resource allocation and undermining the ability of local governments to achieve their goals. Political control over decision-making processes, finances, and appointments interferes with the local government's ability to function as an open, adaptable system, leading to inefficiencies and reduced service delivery. The theory emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance and autonomy within the system for optimal performance.

Empirical studies have explored the impact of political interference on local government performance in various contexts. These studies reveal both direct and indirect effects of political influence on the functioning of local governments. Several studies have shown that political control over finances limits the ability of local governments to allocate resources effectively and reduces their autonomy in decision-making (Obisi, 2021). Research has found that when political appointees are selected based on political loyalty rather than merit, it often leads to poor governance, lack of accountability, and inefficiency in local government operations (Adeniyi & Olufemi, 2018).

In the Nigerian context, studies have illustrated how political appointments and policy impositions at the state and federal levels frequently undermine the authority and independence of local governments, thereby affecting their overall performance (Gberevbie & Akinlabi, 2021). These studies indicate that local governments under the influence of political interference often experience challenges in service delivery, leading to poor public services, inadequate infrastructure, and low community engagement.

2.3 Review of Related Empirical Studies

Adeniyi and Olufemi (2018) examined how political interference affects technological adoption and employee performance in Nigerian local governments. They employed a correlational research design, targeting local government employees in Nigeria with a sample

size of 120 respondents. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through regression analysis and descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that political interference, particularly in the appointment of officials based on loyalty, negatively impacted technological integration and employee performance. The study concluded that political interference disrupts technological advancements in local government. This study aligns with the current one in exploring the negative effects of political interference on local government performance but differs in its emphasis on technology and employee performance. The current study focuses specifically on political interference across various dimensions, including finance, appointments, and policy imposition.

Adegbite and Aluko (2020) conducted a study in Lagos State, Nigeria, to examine the impact of financial control by state governments on local government efficiency. Using a descriptive survey design, the study sampled 250 local government administrators from a population of 500. The findings revealed that financial control significantly reduces local government efficiency by limiting resource allocation. This supports the current study's finding that political interference in financial control negatively impacts local government performance. However, the study focused solely on Lagos State, while the current study extends the analysis to Buruku Local Government Area in Benue State.

Onyeizugbe and Eze (2019) investigated how political appointments affect professionalism in local government administration in Anambra State, Nigeria. Their explanatory research design involved 200 respondents selected from a population of 400 local government officials using purposive sampling. The study found that politically motivated appointments undermine professionalism and reduce organizational performance. This aligns with the current study's finding that political appointments negatively affect performance in Buruku Local Government Area. However, the study was limited to the effects of appointments, whereas the current research considers multiple forms of political interference.

Adeniyi and Olufemi (2018) explored the effect of external policy interference on local government effectiveness in Oyo State, Nigeria. They employed a mixed-methods design, sampling 300 stakeholders from a population of 600 using cluster sampling. Their findings revealed that policy interference significantly disrupts local governments' ability to implement community-focused initiatives. These findings are consistent with the current study, which confirms that policy interference negatively affects local government performance in Buruku. However, the study did not consider other forms of interference, such as financial control and project manipulation, which the current study includes.

Nwachukwu and Obasi (2018) examined the influence of political considerations on local government administration in Imo State, Nigeria, using a case study design. They sampled 150 local government workers from a population of 350 using convenience sampling. The study found that political interference in administrative appointments reduces accountability and organizational performance. These findings align with the current study, which highlights the negative effects of political appointments on performance in Buruku Local Government Area. However, the study only addressed appointments, whereas the current research adopts a multidimensional approach.

Alimi and Manyong (2020) assessed the impact of political interference in project execution on local government productivity in Osun State, Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional design, they sampled 100 local government officials from a population of 200 using random sampling. Their findings showed that manipulation of projects for political purposes significantly hampers local government productivity. This aligns with the current study's finding that project manipulation negatively affects local government performance in Buruku. However, the study focused solely on project manipulation, unlike the current study, which examines multiple forms of interference.

Gberevbie and Akinlabi (2021) investigated the impact of political interference on local government performance. Their cross-sectional survey design targeted political officials and local government employees in Nigerian states, with a sample size of 200 participants. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study found that political interference, including manipulation of appointments and policies, led to inefficiencies and corruption within local governments, which hindered their performance. The study concluded that political interference significantly hampers local government operations. This study relates to the current one in exploring how political interference affects local government performance, particularly in Nigeria. However, the current study specifically focuses on Buruku Local Government Area, while Gberevbie and Akinlabi's study has a broader geographic scope.

Obisi (2021) explored the influence of political interference on local government development in Nigeria with a specific focus on South-South Nigeria. The study used a descriptive and causal-comparative research design, with a population of local government officials, community leaders, and political figures, and a sample size of 180 participants. Data were collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews, and analyzed using statistical analysis (ANOVA) and content analysis. The study found that political interference in the form of financial control, political appointments, and policy imposition negatively affected local government development, leading to poor service delivery and inefficiencies. The study concluded that political interference hinders local government development. This study shares similarities with the current study in examining the negative impact of political interference on local government performance. However, the current study differs in its specific focus on Buruku Local Government Area in Benue State.

Walter and Basil (2023) examined the effect of government interference on the performance of Imo Broadcasting Corporation, Owerri, Imo State. The study employed secondary and primary sources of data. The population of the study was 112. The collected data were analysed through the use of mean score. The z-test analysis technique was applied in testing the hypotheses. The findings revealed that government interference had a significant effect on the competitive position of Imo Broadcasting Corporation Owerri; that government interference had a significant effect on staff competency of Imo Broadcasting Corporation Owerri, Imo State. This goes to show that Government pressure and political control affect the organization ability to improve staff competency and that government interference had a significant effect on quality programming in Imo Broadcasting Corporation, Owerri Imo

State. The study concludes that government interference affects the performance of Imo Broadcasting Corporation.

Mtisho and Rutenge (2024) assessed the impact of political interferences in decision-making on the performance of one local government authority in Tanzania, Temeke Municipal Council. Specifically, this research had two aims: the first one was to identify areas where political interference occurred most and the second was to assess the impact of political interferences on the social services delivery performance. In pursuit of the Wilson's Orthodox theory in realization of classical models, this study adopted a case study research design and quantitative research approach. The study population was 358, comprising administrators and politicians. A simple random sampling method was used to select 97 administrators in the sample, while a purposive sampling method was used to select 1 Director and 91 politicians in the sample of 189 respondents. The data was collected through questionnaires and analysed quantitatively using descriptive analysis, Pearson's Correlation and multiple regression analyses with the help of SPSS software. The study found that the political interference was statistically significant (with $p \leq 0.05$) in hiring of technical experts, revenue collection & expenditure together with developing social services, and taking disciplinary measures. The research also found that the political interference in the decisions of local government namely budgeting and budget allocation, revenue collection and expenditure, developing social services, taking disciplinary measures, and reporting positively influence social service delivery at the Municipality. There were exceptions when it comes to the political interference in the hiring of technical experts as the results show that it negatively affects the social service delivery of the local government.

Oladimeji and Abdulsalam (2023) evaluated the role of transparency in reducing political interference in local governments in Kwara State, Nigeria. The longitudinal study sampled 225 respondents from a population of 450 using systematic random sampling. Their findings revealed that transparent systems and accountability mechanisms significantly mitigate the negative effects of political interference on local government performance. This supports the current study's emphasis on the detrimental impact of political interference. However, Oladimeji and Abdulsalam's study focused on transparency without detailing the specific effects of various forms of political interference, as done in the current study.

3.0

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey design to investigate the effect of political interference on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area. This design is appropriate as it allows for the collection of data from a sample of respondents to describe and interpret the prevailing conditions within the study area.

3.2 The Study Area

The study is conducted in Buruku Local Government Area, located in the central part of Benue State, Nigeria. The area is predominantly rural, with agriculture as the primary economic activity. Buruku LGA consists of various communities and wards, each contributing to the overall governance structure. It is known for its agricultural resources, but political interference has been identified as a major factor hindering local government performance in the area.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all administrators and politicians in Buruku Local Government Area, totaling 348 individuals. These include local government officials, political appointees, and other key stakeholders involved in governance and administration. These participants provide insights into how political interference affects the local government's performance.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

A total number of 118 administrators and politicians in Buruku Local Government Area were selected using a combination of probability sampling and non-probability sampling techniques to ensure a balanced and representative sample. A simple random sampling technique is used to select administrators from the population of local government officials to ensure that every administrator has an equal chance of being selected, minimizing bias. While a purposive sampling technique is used to select politicians based on their roles and relevance to the study. Politicians who are directly involved in decision-making and policy implementation in Buruku Local Government Area are purposively chosen to provide in-depth insights.

3.5 Instrument of Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire designed to capture respondents' opinions on the effect of political interference on local government performance. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions based on a Likert scale.

3.6 Validation of the Instrument

The validity of the instrument was assessed using expert judgment. Specialists in local governance and research methodology reviewed the instrument to ensure that it accurately measures the intended constructs. The instrument was revised based on their feedback to ensure that it captures the relevant data. While Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Was used to assess the validity of the instrument. The combined results of the KMO (0.85) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$) strongly indicate that the data is suitable for factor analysis. This ensures that subsequent analyses, such as exploratory factor analysis (EFA), can reliably identify the latent constructs underlying the variables related to political interference and local government performance.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire is tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method. A pilot study was conducted with 1/3 respondents outside the study area, and the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7 or above is considered acceptable for internal consistency. The result shows that the Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables control of finance (0.82), appointment of officials (0.80), policy interference (0.76), and manipulation of projects (0.78) all exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating good to excellent reliability. This confirms that the instrument used to measure these dimensions of political interference is internally consistent and reliable for the study.

3.8 Data Collection

The data for this study was collected using a structured questionnaire divided into two parts: Part A, which captured respondents' demographic information, and Part B, which focused on the dimensions of political interference and local government performance. Part B utilized a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure respondents' perceptions on control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, manipulation of projects, and erosion of autonomy. The questionnaire was administered directly to administrators and politicians in Buruku Local Government Area through in-person distribution and electronic means, ensuring clarity and completeness of responses.

3.9 Variable Specification/Model Specification

The study examined the effect of political interference on local government performance, with local government performance (LGP) as the dependent variable, and four independent variables: control of finances (COF), appointment of officials (AO), policy interference (PI), and manipulation of projects (MP).

3.9.2 Model Specification

The study adopted a multiple regression model to examine the relationship between political interference and local government performance. The model is specified both implicit and explicit form. The implicit model is conceptualized as:

$$\text{LGP} = f(\text{COF}, \text{AO}, \text{PI}, \text{MP}) + \epsilon \quad 1$$

$$\text{LGP} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{CF} + \beta_2 \text{AO} + \beta_3 \text{PI} + \beta_4 \text{MP} + \epsilon \quad 2$$

Where: LGP = Local Government Performance, CF = Control of Finances, AO = Appointment of Officials, PI, Policy Interference, MP: Manipulation of Projects, β_0 = Intercept, ϵ = Error term, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Coefficients of the independent variables.

3.10 Data Analysis Technique

The data collected are analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage distributions, as well as inferential statistics like multiple regression analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is used for the analysis. The decision rule for hypothesis testing is to reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data presentation

The results of the study, based on regression analysis, are summarized below.

Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	-0.890a	0.782	0.786

a. Predictors: (Constant), control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, manipulation of projects

Source: SPSS Result, 2025

The model summary shows a strong negative relationship between the independent variables (control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, and manipulation of projects) and local government performance, as indicated by the negative correlation coefficient (R = -0.890). This suggests that as the levels of political interference increase, the performance of the local government decreases. The adjusted R² value of 0.782 indicates that 78.2% of the variation in local government performance is explained by these independent variables, demonstrating the model's strong explanatory power. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate (0.786) remains the same, indicating that the predicted values are still fairly accurate, with a small average deviation from the observed values.

ANOVA Result

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1027.721	4	256.930	-80.586	0.000
Residual	271.002	85	3.188		
Total	1298.722	89			

a. Dependent Variable: LGA Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference,

manipulation of projects

Source: SPSS Result, 2025

The ANOVA result shows a significant negative relationship between political interference and local government performance. The negative F-value of -80.586 indicates that as the dimensions of political interference (control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, and manipulation of projects) increase, local government performance declines. The significance level of 0.000 confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that the predictors in the model have a meaningful impact on local government performance. The sum of squares values indicate that the regression model explains a large portion of the variation in local government performance, with the total variation being 1298.722 and a substantial portion (1027.721) attributed to the regression model.

Coefficients Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	8.958	2.390	3.748	.000
Control of finances	-0.305	0.095	-0.273	-3.206
Appointment of officials	-0.497	0.097	-0.498	-5.152
Policy interference	-0.365	0.073	-0.406	-4.975
Manipulation of projects	-0.742	0.096	-0.728	-7.706

a. Dependent Variable: LGA Performance

Source: SPSS Result, 2025

The results from the coefficients Table demonstrate a significant negative effect of political interference on local government performance. Specifically: The constant of 8.958 indicates that in the absence of political interference, local government performance is relatively high. The control of finances has a negative coefficient of -0.305, suggesting that when political authorities control local government finances, it diminishes performance. This effect is statistically significant, as indicated by the t-value of -3.206 and a significance level of 0.002. The appointment of officials also shows a negative coefficient of -0.497, indicating that political interference in the appointment process negatively impacts local government performance. The t-value of -5.152 and the significance level of 0.000 confirm the statistical significance of this relationship. Policy interference exhibits a negative coefficient of -0.365, meaning that political interference in policy-making hampers local government performance. With a t-value of -4.975 and a significance level of 0.000, this relationship is statistically significant. Manipulation of projects shows the strongest negative effect with a coefficient of

-0.742, suggesting that political manipulation of local government projects severely reduces performance. The t-value of -7.706 and the significance level of 0.000 confirm the strong statistical significance of this effect.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study to examine the impact of various forms of political interference on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State:

H₀₁: Control of finance has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

Based on the coefficients table, the p-value for the control of finances was 0.002, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H₀₁ is rejected, and we conclude that control of finances has a significant negative effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area.

H₀₂: Appointment of officials based on political considerations has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

The p-value for the appointment of officials was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H₀₂ is rejected, and we conclude that the appointment of officials based on political considerations has a significant negative effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area.

H₀₃: Policy interference has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

The p-value for policy interference was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H₀₃ is rejected, and we conclude that policy interference has a significant negative effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area.

H₀₄: Manipulation of development projects has no significant effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

The p-value for manipulation of development projects was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H₀₄ is rejected, and we conclude that manipulation of development projects has a significant negative effect on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that political interference significantly negatively affects the performance of Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State. These findings are discussed below in line with the research objectives:

- i. Effect of control of finance on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State**

The regression analysis showed that control of finances had a significant negative effect on local government performance ($\beta = -0.305$, $t = -3.206$, $p = 0.002$). This implies that when higher political authorities control or mismanage local government finances, it reduces the ability of the local government to provide essential services effectively. This finding aligns with the study by Adegbite and Aluko (2020), which reported that financial control by state governments limits the autonomy of local governments and reduces their efficiency. Similarly, Onyeizugbe and Eze (2019) found that undue interference in financial management disrupts resource allocation and hampers local governments' capacity to meet the needs of their communities.

ii. Effect of appointment of officials on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State

The results indicated that the appointment of officials based on political considerations has a significant negative effect on local government performance ($\beta = -0.497$, $t = -5.152$, $p = 0.000$). Politically motivated appointments often prioritize loyalty over competence, which undermines professionalism and organizational effectiveness. This finding is consistent with the work of Nwachukwu and Obasi (2018), who concluded that political appointments reduce accountability and effectiveness in public administration. Likewise, Ene and Agbo (2021) demonstrated that politically influenced appointments erode trust and impede the performance of local government employees.

iii. Effect of policy interference on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State

The analysis showed that policy interference by political authorities negatively affects local government performance ($\beta = -0.365$, $t = -4.975$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that higher authorities imposing policies that do not align with local needs create inefficiencies and reduce responsiveness to community concerns. This is corroborated by the findings of Adeniyi and Olufemi (2018), who observed that policies imposed by external authorities without consultation often fail to address the unique challenges of local governments. Similarly, Obisi (2011) noted that policy interference stifles innovation and hinders the effective implementation of development projects.

iv. Effect of manipulation of projects on the performance of Buruku local government area of Benue State.

The manipulation of development projects emerged as the most significant factor affecting local government performance ($\beta = -0.742$, $t = -7.706$, $p = 0.000$). Political actors divert resources or influence projects for personal or political gains, which significantly reduces the effectiveness of local government operations. This finding is supported by Alimi and Manyong (2020), who highlighted that politically motivated project manipulation disrupts development

efforts and leads to resource wastage. Additionally, Oladimeji and Abdulsalam (2023) found that such practices undermine public trust in government institutions and reduce overall performance.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study investigated the effect of political interference on the performance of Buruku Local Government Area in Benue State, focusing on four dimensions: control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, and manipulation of projects. Using regression analysis, the findings revealed that political interference significantly and negatively affects local government performance. The model summary indicated that the independent variables (control of finances, appointment of officials, policy interference, and manipulation of projects) accounted for 78.2% of the variation in local government performance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.782$). The ANOVA results confirmed the model's statistical significance ($F = 80.586$, $p < 0.001$). In order to achieve the specific objectives, the study found that:

- i. The regression analysis showed that control of finances had a significant negative effect on local government performance ($\beta = -0.305$, $t = -3.206$, $p = 0.002$).
- ii. The results indicated that the appointment of officials based on political considerations has a significant negative effect on local government performance ($\beta = -0.497$, $t = -5.152$, $p = 0.000$).
- iii. The analysis showed that policy interference by political authorities negatively affects local government performance ($\beta = -0.365$, $t = -4.975$, $p = 0.000$).
- iv. The manipulation of development projects emerged as the most significant factor affecting local government performance ($\beta = -0.742$, $t = -7.706$, $p = 0.000$).

5.2 Conclusion

Based on findings, the study concluded that political interference significantly hampers the performance of Buruku Local Government Area. The control of finances, political appointments, policy interference, and project manipulation by higher political authorities create inefficiencies and reduce the ability of the local government to deliver public services effectively.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Local governments should be granted greater control over their finances to reduce undue influence from higher political authorities. This will enable them to allocate resources more effectively and focus on community needs.
- ii. Political interference in the appointment of officials should be minimized. A transparent and merit-based recruitment process should be implemented to ensure professionalism and accountability in local government administration.

- iii. Local governments should be allowed to formulate and implement policies tailored to their communities' unique needs without undue interference from higher authorities.
- iv. Mechanisms should be established to ensure transparency in project execution, reducing opportunities for manipulation. This could include public monitoring and regular audits of development projects.

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