Evaluation of the Role of Local Government in Promoting Food Security in Ebonyi State:: A study of Ohaukwu Local Government Area

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Abstract

This study examinedS the Role of Local Government in Promoting Food Security for in Ebonyi State: A Study of Ohaukwu Local Government Area" aimed to determine the extent to which local government has promoted food availability in Ebonyi State; to ascertain the extent local government has promoted food accessibility in Ebonyi State; and to determine how local government has promoted food affordability in Ebonyi State. For the purpose of this study, a descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of this study is 298,592 which was reduced to a sample size of 400. Data for this study were collected from primary source. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire instrument structured. This study mean and standard deviation tables to analyze data collected from the field survey while Person Correlation Method was applied for testing of the hypothesis that guided the study using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Findings revealed that Local government has promoted food availability in Ebonyi State; local government has promoted food accessibility in Ebonyi State; local government has promoted food affordability in Ebonyi State. The study recommended that local government should invest more in agriculture to promote food availability in Ebonyi State. There is need for more funding of local government to promote food accessibility in Ebonyi State. Local government should regulate the prices of foods in order to promote food affordability in Ebonyi State.

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1. Introduction

Over the years, the issue of food security has been a serious issue of concern among governments, individuals, institutions and stakeholders alike. Agricultural production provides the means of livelihood and economic sustenance for majority of Nigerian population. Farmers make significant contribution in meeting the nutritional needs of the country thus contributing to food security of households (Beer and Dean, 2023). Food security has been defined as the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food products for consumption among the populace (Ndukwe and Nwuzor, 2021). Food security at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels is achieved when all the people, at all time, have physical and economic access to meet their dietary needs for active and healthy life. Food insecurity exists when people do not have adequate physical and economic access to food (Botchway and Meissner, 2021). Historically, Ebonyi State has been known for its production of staple crops such as rice, yam, cassava, and maize. For instance, Ebonyi is particularly famous for its Abakaliki rice, which is a significant contributor to the state's economy and food supply (Udeuhele, and Offor, 2023).

Historically speaking, the origin of emphasis on agriculture and food production in Nigeria dates back to the pre-colonial and colonial periods when traditional farming practices dominated. The post-independence era saw increased government involvement in agriculture, particularly through the establishment of agricultural ministries and extension services aimed at boosting food production (Ottong, Ering and Akpan, 2022). In many parts of the world, early agricultural societies were characterized by communal and localized management of food resources (Udeuhele, and Offor, 2023). Tribal leaders, village chiefs, or councils of elders often assumed the role of overseeing food production, storage, and distribution (Ajayi, 2012). These early forms of local governance were instrumental in ensuring that communities had sufficient food, especially during periods of drought or poor harvests. For instance, in pre-colonial Africa, local leaders would often organize communal farming activities and ensure that surplus food was stored for times of scarcity. These practices were critical in maintaining food security in largely subsistence agricultural economies. Similarly, in feudal Europe, local lords had a responsibility to ensure that their subjects had access to arable land and food supplies, often through the management of common lands (Udeuhele, and Offor, 2023). The colonial era brought significant changes to local governance structures, particularly in the management of food security (Chima, Gberevbie, Duruji, 2024). Colonial powers often centralized control over agricultural production and distribution, focusing on cash crops for export rather than local food needs. This shift disrupted traditional food systems and often led to food insecurity in colonized regions.

In the post-colonial period, many newly independent nations sought to rebuild local governance systems that were more responsive to the food security needs of their populations. This period saw the emergence of formal local government institutions tasked with managing agricultural policies and programs at the grassroots level (Ndukwe and Nwuzor, 2021). These institutions were designed to address local food security challenges through initiatives such as agricultural extension services, the provision of farm inputs, and the development of rural infrastructure.

In the modern era, local governments have become increasingly important in addressing food security due to their proximity to the people they serve. They are often responsible for implementing national agricultural policies at the local level, tailoring these policies to suit local conditions. Local governments play a vital role in land use planning, ensuring that agricultural land is preserved and effectively utilized. They also facilitate access to resources such as water, seeds, and fertilizers, which are essential for food production. Moreover, local governments are involved in developing and maintaining infrastructure that supports food security, such as roads, storage facilities, and markets (Ajayi, 2012). By improving rural infrastructure, local governments can reduce post-harvest losses and ensure

that food reaches markets more efficiently, thereby improving both food availability and access. But this seems not to be the case in Ebonyi State, hence this study.

The Guidelines for Local Government Reform of (1976) has defined local government as:

> Government at the local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined area. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and determine activities of state and federal government in their areas; and the ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (Ndukwe and Nwuzor, 2021).

Local governments play a crucial role in the implementation of policies and programs aimed at enhancing food security. Promotion of agricultural development is one of the concurrent functions of the local government performed in collaboration with the state governments as enshrined in the 7th Schedule of the 1999 Constitution as amended 2011. As the level of government closest to the people, local governments are well-positioned to understand the specific needs and challenges of their communities (Ndukwe and Nwuzor, 2021). Their roles include creating enabling environments for agricultural production, ensuring access to markets, providing extension services, and implementing policies that support food security.

In recent decades, the Ebonyi State government has implemented various initiatives to enhance food security. These include the promotion of improved agricultural techniques, the provision of farm inputs like fertilizers and seedlings, and the rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure such as Ebonyi State Fertilizer and Chemical Company Limited to provide farm inputs like fertilizer and agro chemicals. During the administration of Chief Martin Elechi, efforts were made by the government to boost food production through establishment of modern rice mills across the three senatorial zones of the state. These rice mills have been famous for he production of the popular Ebonyi Rice World which is consumed across Nigeria and exported around the globe. Furthermore, the administration of Engineer Dave Umahi made concerted efforts to boost agriculture and food production in Ebonyi State. Notable efforts were made especially in direct rice farming by the State government on various rice farms owned by the government (Ndukwe and Nwuzor, 2021). Moreso, the administration made efforts to boost food accessibility by engaging in massive construction of rural roads across all communities in all the 13 local government areas of Ebonyi State. Additionally, the state government has focused on supporting local farmers through empowerment programs and access to credit facilities. The state government has in a similar way, encouraged local governments to invest and support food production in Ebonyi State (Ibeogu, Ogechukwu and Abah, 2016).

In Ebonyi State, Local governments have a role to play to ensure food security goals set by both Ebonyi state and Federal governments are achieved. Local governments have a role to translate national agricultural policies into actionable programs at the grassroots level. For example, they may implement policies aimed at improving rice production, a key staple in Ebonyi. By overseeing the operation of local food markets, ensuring fair pricing, and preventing hoarding, local governments have a role in stabilizing food availability, accessibility and affordability (Ibeogu, Ogechukwu and Abah, 2016). However, despite acclaimed role of local government in promoting food security, it has become very worrisome that there is rising incidence of hunger, starvation and high prices of food stuffs in the state. It appears that there is growing incidence of food crisis in Ebonyi State. It is against this background that the study became

imperative to evaluate the role of local government in promoting food security in Ebonyi State with focus on the case of Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Food security is a critical issue in Nigeria, a country where agricultural activities dominate the economy. Ebonyi State, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, is predominantly agrarian, with a significant proportion of its population engaged in farming. The rate of hunger in Southeast Nigeria is a critical issue. It appears that many households in rural areas and towns in Ebonyi State are facing a worsening food security crisis, with more people experiencing severe food insecurity in 2024 compared to the previous years. The surge in prices had put a strain on household incomes, making it increasingly difficult for low-income families to afford basic food items. According to the 2020 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) report, food insecurity in Nigeria was high, with about 40% of the population (around 82.9 million people) living below the poverty line (Ibeogu, Ogechukwu and Abah, 2016).

Despite these efforts, local governments in Ebonyi State face several challenges in promoting food security. Many local governments in Ebonyi State struggle with inadequate funding, which hampers their ability to implement large-scale agricultural programs and infrastructural projects. There is often a disconnection between state-level policies and local-level implementation, leading to inefficiencies in addressing food security (Ajayi, 2012). Unpredictable weather patterns and environmental degradation pose significant risks to agricultural production, making it difficult for local governments to ensure consistent food security. Local government is faced with the problems of reaching targeted farmers in the rural areas due to insufficient number of extension agents and other logistics to help our rural farmers increase their food production through the new farming techniques (Mgbenka, Mbah, and Ezeano, 2021). Other problems includes: Inadequate fertilizers which results to poor crop yield, Insufficient improved seeds to replace the local varieties, Inadequate capital and storage facilities, Deplorable road network for transportation of crops, presence of pests and diseases and dearth of veterinary drugs/services.

Ebonyi State especially Ohaukwu Local Government Area is affected by rising food prices, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation, seem to be inducing localized food shortages. With the ongoing economic challenges and conflicts such as farmer-herder clashes, the hunger rate has likely increased over recent years.

The impact of hunger and food shortages in Ebonyi State seems severe. Malnutrition is a significant issue, particularly among children, who suffer from stunted growth, underweight, and weakened immune systems. Malnourished individuals are less able to work effectively, limiting their ability to earn income and further reducing their access to food (Botchway, & Meissner, 2021). It therefore appears that local governments are not making adequate efforts to promote food security in Ebonyi State. It is in view of the foregoing that it became imperative to evaluate the role of local government in promoting food security in Ebonyi State with focus on the case of Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent has local government promoted food availability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area?

2. To what extent has local government promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area?

3. To what extent has local government promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the role of local government in promoting food security in Ebonyi State with focus on the case of Ohaukwu Local Government Area. The specific objectives include:

1. To determine the extent to which local government has promoted food availability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

2. To ascertain the extent local government has promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

3. To determine how local government has promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

2. Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Local government

Local government has been variously conceptualized by administrators, institutions, academics and agencies. Although definitions are varied as to the concept of Local Government as a system of government, it is generally perceived as the third-tier of government primarily instituted to bring governance to the grassroots (Mgbenka, Mbah, and Ezeano, 2021). This is the government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise speeded power within a defined area. The worth of any local government is determined by the quality and quantity of services it renders to the people at the grassroots. Local governments are the third tier administrative structure in Nigeria, created to bring government closer to the people at the grassroots and render social services to the people (Ibeogu, Ogechukwu and Abah, 2016). According to Ibeogu, Ogechukwu and Abah, (2016), local government is a political authority set up by the federal government as subordinate authority for the purpose of dispensing or decentralizing political power.

Essentially it is a kind of interactive and local oriented governance, a synergy, integral and citizen-focused kind of government administration for regional development. In their view, Chima, Gberevbie and Duruji, (2024) local government is the third tier of government lower than the central, regional levels, established by rules to exercise political authority through a representative council within the local area. Impliedly, local government is central and representative government at the lowest strata created for administrative convenience and people-oriented development machinery of central government. In a somewhat similar perspective, Chima, Gberevbie and Duruji (2024) in a similar perspective argued that local government is a popularly elected body charged with executive and administrative duties in issues concerning the inhabitants of a particular place. These elected authorities advance the core welfare and policy plan of central government and the people at the local level. Chima, Gberevbie and Duruji, (2024) view above succinctly captured the basic elements of local government as being a body established by law to exercise specific powers within the local place and/or initiate and direct the provision of government services, determine and execute government projects and businesses for the people in the

defined geopolitical area. In this vein, Local government is understood in this discourse as not only geostrategic, localized but essentially geopolitical (Mgbenka, Mbah, and Ezeano, 2021). Local government is expected to play the role of promoting the democratic ideals of a society and co-coordinating development programme at the local level. It is also expected to serve as the basis of socio-economic development in the locality.

Food Security

Food security is defined by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as the condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Munonye, Matthew, Olaolu, Onyeneke, Obi, Amadi, Ibrahim, Izuogu, and Njoku (2023). Food security is the condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Food security is a situation in which all people, always have physical, and economic access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life. The absence of any of these conditions at the household, regional and national levels cause food insecurity. There are five major elements in assessing food security namely, availability, accessibility, utilization, quality and safety. Availability connotes the physical presence of a large quantity of food, utilization means sufficiency in both quantities of food and sustainability, and accessibility always implies access and not losing such access.

Food insecurity can be considered severe when food intakes are continuously insufficient to meet the daily dietary energy requirements of the individual, leading to a very severe stage of food insecurity called 'hunger.' It is accepted that food is a necessity of life. At the household level, the importance of food is obvious as it is a basic means of sustenance. Food security has proved a useful tool for maintaining political stability and ensuring peace among people

A country can be said to be enjoying food security when people's fear of not having what to eat is removed and the most vulnerable group specifically women and children in marginal areas have access to an adequate quality of the food they want. Demand for food in Nigeria has speedily grown faster than food production or total supply. The Central Bank of Nigeria reported that the rate of increase in food production of 2.5% per annum does not keep pace with the annual population growth rate of 2.8% per annum. Food access, one of the key dimensions of food security, is the function of income and purchasing power of households. Food access is the ability of individuals, households, and nations to obtain the food that is needed to maintain nutrition balance. This encompasses physical access, economic access, and sustainability access.

It encompasses four key dimensions (Udeuhele, and Offor, 2023):

1. Availability: Ensuring that adequate food is available through domestic production, imports, or food aid.

2. Accessibility: People must have the resources—financial or otherwise—to obtain food, which involves income, food prices, and social support systems.

3. Food Affordability: The assurance that access to adequate food is consistently maintained, without risks from sudden economic or climatic disruptions.

Drawing from above, food security is a state of being guaranteed of adequate food, to save hunger, and disease. Food security also connotes accessibility to basic nutrition and food supply, access to safe water and healthy family living (Okoli and Nnamani, 2017). For me, food security presents availability of staple food items in sufficient quantity, with relative cheap prices so that it can be afforded by both

the rich and the poor while food insecurity is when the people cannot be guaranteed access to means of livelihood such as food, good drinking water etc.

Rationale for the Establishment of Local Government in Nigeria

A lot of reasons have been adduced for the creation of local governments in Nigeria. These range from political, social and economic reasons. The following are some of the justifications for the creation of local governments in Nigeria.

(1) To Bring Governance Closer to the People: Local government functions to bring democracy to the local citizens as well as to educate and socialize them politically; participation of the citizens in governance is one of the underlying percepts of democracy. Due to the vast nature of the country (Nigeria), the presence of governments whether at the federal or state levels was not well felt by the people, and this led to neglect and distrust of government by the people. In a bid to bring the activities of government closer to the people, local governments were created to serve as conduits through which government's policies are communicated to the people (Ocheni, and Nwankwo, 2014).

(2) For Administrative Convenience: Local government serves as a channel through which policies and programmes from the state and federal government are communicated and implemented. This is because there are many functions that will be cumbersome for the state and federal governments to perform because of the distance separating them and the people e.g.

(a) Collection of rates, radio and television licenses;
(b) Registration of births, deaths and marriages registry etc.

The local government was also created to serve as the representative of both the federal and state governments amongst the local people. It is a channel through which policies are communicated and implemented (Ocheni, S. and Nwankwo 2014).

(3) To Ensure That Resources are Effectively Mobilized*:* This is to arouse in the citizens the zeal or willingness to contribute financially, materially and morally to the management of local affairs. Local governments are created to bring about meaningful development in the rural areas through the effective mobilization of resources. Local government use the funds made available to it by both federal and state governments and their internally generated revenue to improve on the lives of the people within their areas of operations.

(4) To Preserve Heritage and Common Interest of the People*:* In Nigeria today, there are over 364 ethnic groups with diverse cultures and tongues. These ethnic groups are further divided into communities. These communities form the constituents/areas of local governments in Nigeria. By carving out local governments from amongst people of the same community, government is preserving such long traditional associations and using same to foster the interest of the people concerned.

It should be noted that, the broad objective of establishing local government is placed on the service delivery function. When roads are bad, when there are no markets stalls, no health centres, when there is no water, no drugs in the local dispensaries and when refuse is littered all around the place etc, the ordinary citizen blames it on the local government.

2.3 Empirical Review

Chima, Gberevbie, and Duruji (2024) carried out a study titled “Enhancing Agricultural Policy for Sustainable Rice Production in Ebonyi State, Nigeria”. This study delves into the need for improved agricultural policies to foster sustainable rice production in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Since agriculture plays a pivotal role in the state's economy, the research examines existing policy, identifying its impact on rice production and economic growth. Utilizing a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods such as surveys and interviews, the study assesses the current state of agriculture in Ebonyi. The study used a cross-

sectional survey research design to measure food security and ABP in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study used a mixed method of data collection, including structured questionnaire and in-depth oral interviews with rice farmers in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The findings reveal the need for the Federal and State Governments to sustain the Anchor Borrowers' Programme, as well as promote other. Despite the contributions of the study in the area of food security, the study did not cover the role of local governments particularly Ohaukwu Local Government.

Ndukwe and Nwuzor (2021) carried out a study on "Challenges of Rural Development and Food Security in Nigeria: A study of Ebonyi State Agricultural Development Programme (EBADEP)". The research sought to find out why rural development has continued to elude Nigeria in general and Ebonyi State particular despite of efforts by government and individuals, why there is an unending food insecurity even when various agricultural and food security programmes were introduced among others. The researchers adopted the survey research design method. Data were collected through questionnaire distribution to EBADEP field staff and some group of rural farmers. The questionnaires collected were analyzed using tables, frequency distribution and chi-square (X2) method was used in testing the hypotheses. The study found that more than 80% of the rural areas of Ebonyi State are still underdeveloped; agriculture receives less than 10% of the annual budgetary allocations, farmers in Ebonyi state lack access to credit facilities which lead to low productivity, EBADEP has not lived up to the expectation of teaching the rural farmers and Ebonyi State has not fully exploited its rich agricultural potentials. The implications of the aforementioned are that rural development and food security will continue to be a mirage if a more practical approach is not adopted. More households in Ebonyi State will die of hunger as only the imported goods (costly) would be the last resort. The study therefore recommended that "rural-urban integration" approach through aggressive rural infrastructural provision should be adopted. Government at all levels should collaborate with experts to encourage food security, Ebonyi State should produce those crops they have comparative advantage in, increased budgetary allocations to agriculture, farm demonstration centres should be established in all the 13 local government areas of Ebonyi state.

Mgbenka, Mbah and Ezeano (2021) carried out a study on "the role of local government council in agricultural transformation in Nigeria: need for review of policy"**.** The study focuses on the role of local government councils (LGCs) in agricultural transformation: need for review of policy. Local government (LG) as the closest tier of government to the people is a government at the grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar grassroots needs of the people. As the third tier of government, it brings the agricultural interventions to the rural farmers. Constitutionally, federal government of Nigeria had some agricultural functions that LGs should perform in rural areas. Although, local government is the closest tier of government to the people of Nigeria, yet the resident population in it is denied the benefits of its existence. The failure of local government in the area of service delivery over the years has made the citizens to lose faith and trust in local government administration as an institution in Nigeria. Most LGCs in Nigeria do not offer any assistance to agricultural interventions in local government areas (LGAs). This study reveals certain challenges that militate against efficient performance of LG functions especially in agricultural development. Some recommendations also were articulated and these include: The issue of embezzlement and corruption should be strongly checked and discouraged in all tiers of government in Nigeria through thorough auditing and checking of contracts awarded and execution of such contracts, etc. The researcher however did not cover Ebonyi State particularly Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Ibeogu, Ogechukwu and Abah, (2016) carried out a study on "The role of government in strengthening food security towards rural development by Ebonyi State Agricultural Development Programme (EB-ADP) 2011-2015". The study was necessitated by the prevailing challenges of food insecurity and rural underdevelopment in Nigeria seeks to establish why there is persistent food insecurity

in the country even when several agricultural and food security programmes have been carried out; why true development especially rural development has been a farce despite government and individual efforts in boosting food sufficiency. The study adopted Diffusion Model theory as a theoretical framework of analysis and was anchored on survey research design. The study however revealed that not less than 80% of the rural areas of Ebonyi State and Nigeria are still underdeveloped; farmers also lack access to credit facilities, which results to low productivity in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi A.D.P has not lived up to expectations of assisting the rural farmers on the best way to improve and enhance agricultural productivity, the study concluded that the rich agricultural potentials of Ebonyi State and Nigeria have not been properly exploited and harnessed. It therefore implies that food security and rural development will continue to be a farce if more practical approaches are not adopted. Many household in Ebonyi State and Nigeria will continue to suffer severe hunger as the country will in no distant time resort to importing food materials arising from the neglect of the agricultural sector. It recommended that government at all levels should collaborate with experts and the organized private sectors to encourage food production for food security; that budgetary allocations to agricultural sectors should be increased, agricultural micro credit scheme should be created or established, more field workers and extension agents should be trained and posted to rural areas to educate and enlighten farmers with a view to creating awareness on the latest and perhaps the best farming methods and techniques in order to increase productivity. However, the study focused more on the Ebonyi State Agricultural Development Programme (EB-ADP) but did not cover the specific roles of Local governments particularly Ohaukwu.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted structural functionalism theory by Emilie D. in 197. Structural Functional Theory is a sociological framework that views society as a complex system composed of various parts, each with a specific function that contributes to the stability and equilibrium of the whole system (Mgbenka, Mbah, and Ezeano, 2021). Applied to the context of local government and food security, this theory helps explain how local governments in Ebonyi State function within the larger socio-political and economic system to ensure that food security are maintained.

The relevance of the theory is that one of the primary roles of local governments in Ebonyi State is to adapt to and address the agricultural needs of the community, ensuring food availability. Local governments fulfill this adaptation function by supporting agricultural activities, which are crucial in an agrarian state like Ebonyi. Local governments distribute seeds, fertilizers, and tools to farmers at subsidized rates to boost productivity. It has a role in developing roads, irrigation systems, and storage facilities helps facilitate the efficient production and distribution of food, reducing post-harvest losses and ensuring that food is available in local markets. By fulfilling these roles, local governments adapt to the environmental and economic needs of the community, thereby contributing to food security.

Local governments in Ebonyi State are responsible for the attainment of food security goals set by both state and national governments. Local governments translate national agricultural policies into actionable programs at the grassroots level. For example, they may implement policies aimed at improving rice production, a key staple in Ebonyi. By overseeing the operation of local food markets, ensuring fair pricing, and preventing hoarding, local governments help stabilize food availability and accessibility. Through effective policy implementation and regulation, local governments work towards the broader societal goal of achieving food security. The integration function involves coordinating the various stakeholders involved in food security, ensuring that they work together harmoniously. In Ebonyi State, local governments play a key role in integrating efforts by: bringing together farmers, cooperatives, and agricultural extension services: This coordination ensures that farmers receive the support they need, such as training in modern farming techniques and access to markets; facilitating partnerships: Local governments often collaborate with NGOs, state agencies, and international organizations to pool resources and expertise for food security initiatives.

Using the structural functional theory, the role of local governments in promoting food security in Ebonyi State can be seen as a series of interconnected functions that contribute to the overall stability and well-being of the society. By adapting to agricultural needs, achieving food security goals, integrating various stakeholders, and maintaining cultural values, local governments play a critical role in ensuring that food is available, accessible, and utilized effectively within the community.

3. Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted. The area of this study is Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The population of this study is 298,592 which is the 2024 projected population of Ohaukwu Local Government Area from the National Populations Commission Abakaliki Office. The sample size of this study is 400. Simple random sampling technique, stratified sampling technique and purposive sample technique were used. Data for this study were collected from primary source. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire instrument. This study mean and standard deviation tables to analyze data collected from the field survey while Person Correlation Method was applied for testing of the hypothesis that guided the study using Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

4. Results

Table 1: Questionnaire Administration

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Number distributed	400	100
Number returned	362	90.5
Number not returned	38	5.7
Total valid	**362**	**90.57**

Source: Egba's Field survey, 2025

From table 1 above, out of the 400 questionnaire items administered, 362, (90.5%) were returned, 38 (9.5%) were not returned. This means that the total valid is 362 (90.5%). Therefore, data presentation and analysis is based on the 362 total valid copies of the questionnaire.

4.2 Data Analysis

Table 2: Responses, mean and standard deviation of responses to determine the extent to which local government has promoted food availability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	St.dev.	Decision
1	local government has promoted food availability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area	362	3.2	0.9	Accepted
2	Local government has engaged in procurement of improved seeds and seedlings to support farmers	362	3.0	1.04	Accepted
3	Local government supports farmers with fertilizers to boost food production in rural areas	362	3.0	1.03	Accepted
4	Local government procured farm implements for farmers to boost food production in rural areas	362	2.9	1.07	Accepted
5	Local government trains farmers on modern sustainability practices to boost food production in rural areas	362	2.9	1.01	Accepted
	Grand Mean/SD		3.0	1.00	Accepted

Source: Egba's Field survey, 2025

Analysis in table 2 above shows responses, mean and standard deviation of responses to determine the extent to which local government has promoted food availability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. From the table, it is observed that all the items were accepted with a grand mean of 3.0 representing

a very high extent. Though majority of the respondents agreed to a high extent, the standard deviation which has a value of 1.00 shows that there is high degree of similarity in opinion among respondents. From the table, item 1 to 5 had individual mean of 3.2, 3.0, 3.0, 2.9 and 2.9 respectively and as such were accepted. This means local government trains farmers on modern sustainability practices to boost food production in rural areas.

Table 3: Responses mean and standard deviation of responses to ascertain the extent local government has promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area

S/N	Items	N	Mean	St.dev.	Decision
6	Local government has promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area	362	3.1	1.04	Accepted
7	Local government has engaged in construction of modern markets to boost access to food items in the rural areas	362	2.9	1.03	Accepted
8	There has been renovation of market stalls to boost food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area	362	2.9	0.95	Accepted
9	Through construction of feeder roads, local governments boost access to rural markets to purchase food items	362	3.2	0.93	Accepted
10	Rural farmers have been able to transport farm produce across markets in the area	362	3.3	0.83	Accepted
	Grand Mean/SD		**3.08**	**0.96**	Accepted

Source: Egba's Field survey, 2025

Analysis in table 3 above shows the Responses, mean and standard deviation of responses to ascertain the extent local government has promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. From the table, all the 5 items had a grand mean of 3.08 and grand standard deviation of 0.96. Consequently, all the 5 items were accepted as they had individual mean above 2.5. Item 1 had a mean of 3.1, item 2 had a mean of 2.9, item 3 had a mean of 2.9, item 4 had a mean of 3.2, and item 5 had a mean of 3.3. Consequently, it was concluded that local government has promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Table 4: Responses, mean and standard deviation of responses to ascertain the extent local government has promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area

S/N	Items	N	Mean	St.dev.	Decision
11	local government has promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area	362	2.9	1.04	Accepted
12	The efforts made by local government to boost food production has reduced the cost of food items in the rural areas	362	3.1	1.05	Accepted
13	Supply of modern seeds has increased farm yields thereby reducing the cost of food items in the markets	362	3.2	0.96	Accepted
14	Through supply of fertilizers, local government has made food supply abundant in the market	362	2.8	1.05	Accepted

15	Low income earners now purchase food items due to reduction in prices of food in the rural areas	362	3.0	1.02	Accepted
	Grand Mean/SD		3.0	0.96	Accepted

Source: Egba's Field survey, 2025

Analysis in table 4 above shows the responses, mean and standard deviation of responses to ascertain the extent local government has promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. The analysis shows that all the 5 items were accepted with a grand mean of 3.0 and grand standard deviation of 0.96. From item 1, The efforts made by local government to boost food production has reduced the cost of food items in the rural areas with a mean score of 2.9 while item 2 had a mean score of 3.1, item 3 had a mean score of 3.2, item 4 had a mean score of 2.8 while item 5 had a mean score of 3.0. Consequently, local government has promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one

This hypothesis was tested using responses in table 4 which was scaled and correlated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences at 5% level of significance.

Table 5: Correlations Test of Hypothesis One

Correlations

		Local government's intervention	food availability
Local government's intervention	Pearson Correlation	1	.642*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	362	362
food availability	Pearson Correlation	.642*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	362	362

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the test of hypothesis one above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.642 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between Local government's intervention and food availability. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.011 which was lesser than the 0.01 level of significance. Consequent upon the decision rule, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected and it was upheld that local government promoted food availability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis was tested using the data presented in table 5 which were scaled and correlated accordingly.

Table 6: Correlations Test of Hypothesis Two

Correlations

		Local government's intervention	food accessibility
Local government's intervention	Pearson Correlation	1	-.911*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	362	362
food accessibility	Pearson Correlation	-.911*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	362	362

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the test of hypothesis two above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.911 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between Local government's intervention and food accessibility in rural communities in the state. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.01 which was lesser than the 0.01 level of significance. Consequent upon the decision rule, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected and it was upheld that local government promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Hypothesis three

Table 7: Correlations Test of Hypothesis Three

Correlations

		Local government's intervention	food affordability
Local government's intervention	Pearson Correlation	1	.888*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	362	362
food affordability	Pearson Correlation	.888*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	362	362

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the test of hypothesis above revealed a correlations coefficient of 0.621 which implied that there was a significant positive relationship between Local government's intervention and food affordability. Moreover, the result showed a p-value of 0.00 which was lesser than the 0.05 level of significance. Consequent upon the decision rule, the alternate hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected and it was upheld that local government promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that local government interventions have had a positive impact on food security in Ebonyi State. Farmers who benefited from local government programs reported increased crop yields, improved access to markets, and enhanced food availability. Local governments play a crucial role in promoting food availability, which is a fundamental aspect of food security. Their proximity to communities and their mandate to implement grassroots development initiatives position them uniquely to influence agricultural productivity and ensure that food is available to the population. In Ebonyi state, Mgbenka, Mbah, and Ezeano, (2021) noted that the local governments alongside ministry of agriculture and natural resources have embarked on several agricultural initiatives to boast agricultural development in rural areas. In 2008, 25 unemployed graduates youths were trained at Sunghai Agricultural Centre and soft loans granted to them by Ebonyi State government. In 2009, another batch of unemployed youths was trained at the same Sunghai Agricultural Center in Benin Republic. In 2013, Ebonyi State Government procured twenty (20) tractors with accompanying twenty (20) sets of implements. In 2014, Ebonyi state government trained about thirty two (32) Ebonyians in various aspects of the programmes of Umuebe

farm for two (2) months, local government areas / development centers also disbursed micro-credit loan to farmers across the state. In 2015, the ministry of agriculture and natural resources in line with His Excellency's resolve in the face of the dwindling oil price, to receive agriculture and make it a major revenue earner for the state has made efforts in the following areas through the Local Government Areas: creation of comprehensive data base of all co-operative societies and commercial farmers in the state to help in the planning of agricultural programmes; convoked the stake holders colloquium on moving agricultures forward in Ebonyi state; facilitated the release of fund for the conveyance and installation of parboiling plants in the 3 (three) government rice mills; demonstration of farm implements/ mechanics and training of Ebonyi farmers/youths on the use of the farm implements/mechanics; approval of the assessment of 20b (twenty billion naira agricultural credit scheme in rice production and the disbursement of #20,550, 200.00 (twenty million five hundred and fifty thousand two hundred naira) to 20 (twenty) rice farmers co-operative societies in the state etc.

Ohaukwu Local government area has also played key role in promoting food security at the local government level through the following: Ohaukwu Local government Local governments directly impacts food production through land use planning and management. By designating and protecting agricultural land, Ohaukwu Local government ensures that sufficient areas are available for farming. They can also regulate land use to prevent the conversion of fertile agricultural land into urban or industrial areas, which helps maintain or increase food production levels. Ohaukwu Local government often implements programs aimed at supporting farmers, who are the primary producers of food. This support includes the provision of agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides at subsidized rates, as well as access to credit facilities. By enabling farmers to increase their productivity, Ohaukwu Local government directly enhances the availability of food in the local market.

Infrastructure is critical for food production and distribution. Local governments are responsible for building and maintaining rural infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and irrigation systems. Good infrastructure ensures that farmers can transport their produce to markets efficiently and that agricultural activities can continue even in adverse weather conditions. Additionally, local governments may develop storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses, ensuring that more food reaches consumers. Through agricultural extension services, loc Ohaukwu Local government provides farmers with training and information on modern farming techniques, pest control, and sustainable agricultural practices. This knowledge helps farmers increase their yields and produce food more efficiently, contributing to greater food availability. Local governments play a vital role in establishing and regulating local food markets. By ensuring that there are adequate and well-functioning markets, local governments facilitate the distribution of food from producers to consumers. They may also support the creation of cooperatives or farmer organizations that can enhance market access and bargaining power for small-scale farmers. Local governments are often the first responders to agricultural emergencies, such as floods, droughts, or pest infestations, which can severely impact food availability. By developing and implementing disaster management plans, they can mitigate the effects of these events on food production and ensure a quicker recovery of agricultural activities. Local governments are instrumental in implementing national agricultural policies at the grassroots level. They can also advocate for local needs and priorities in national and regional agricultural policy discussions, ensuring that the unique challenges faced by local farmers are addressed.

5. Summary of Findings

In the course of the study, the following findings as summarized were made:

1. Local government has promoted food availability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. Local government supports farmers with fertilizers to boost food production in rural areas.
2. Local government has promoted food accessibility in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. Local government has engaged in construction of modern markets to boost access to food items in the rural areas.
3. Local government has promoted food affordability in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. The efforts made by local government to boost food production have reduced the cost of food items in the rural areas.

Conclusion

In summary, local governments are essential in promoting food availability by managing land use, supporting farmers, developing infrastructure, providing agricultural extension services, facilitating food markets, managing disasters, and implementing policies. Their efforts help ensure that food is produced efficiently and reach the population, thereby contributing to the overall food security of the community. Local governments play a crucial role in the implementation of policies and programs aimed at enhancing food security. As the level of government closest to the people, local governments are well-positioned to understand the specific needs and challenges of their communities. Their roles include creating enabling environments for agricultural production, ensuring access to markets, providing extension services, and implementing policies that support food security. The research identified several initiatives undertaken by local governments in Ebonyi State to promote food security. These include: Support for Agricultural Production: Local governments have implemented programs to provide farmers with access to improved seeds, fertilizers, and farming tools. These initiatives have contributed to increased agricultural productivity in the state. Infrastructure Development: Investments in rural infrastructure, such as roads, irrigation systems, and storage facilities, have been crucial in enhancing food security. Improved infrastructure has facilitated access to markets, reduced post-harvest losses, and ensured the timely distribution of food. Extension Services and Training: Local governments have provided extension services to educate farmers on modern farming techniques and sustainable agricultural practices. These services have played a key role in improving crop yields and promoting food security

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of local governments in promoting food security in Ebonyi State:

1. Local government should invest more in agriculture to promote food availability in Ebonyi State. This can be done by investing in procurement of modern farm implements, improved seeds, fertilizers and agro-chemicals to boost food production.

2. There is need for more funding of local government to promote food accessibility in Ebonyi State. This can be done by improving rural roads to boost access to rural food markets and ease transportation of farm produce across markets in Ebonyi State.

3. Local government should regulate the prices of foods in order to promote food affordability in Ebonyi State. Government can introduce price control measures to ensure food affordability in Ebonyi Markets. Initiatives such as subsidies and grants on food products should be introduced to bring down the rising cost of food in the market.

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