

Public Sector Administration Capacity and Socio-economic Development: An Assessment of Selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined Public Sector Administration Capacity and Socio-Economic Development: An Assessment of Selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria. The study specifically sought to determine the effect of human resource capacity on socio-economic development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Delta State, Nigeria, and ascertain the effect of institutional/organisational capacity on socio-economic development of selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria. A quantitative research approach and cross-sectional survey design were adopted. The population comprised personnel of selected MDAs in Delta State, while a sample size of 367 respondents was determined for the study. Data were collected using a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that human resource capacity had a significant positive effect on socio-economic development ($r = .684$, $\beta = .332$, $t = 6.91$, $p < .001$). Similarly, institutional/organisational capacity had a significant positive effect on socio-economic development ($r = .721$, $\beta = .506$, $t = 10.49$, $p < .001$). The multiple regression model further indicated that human resource capacity and institutional/organisational capacity jointly explained 59.2% ($R^2 = .592$) of the variation in socio-economic development, while the overall model was statistically significant ($F = 254.01$, $p < .001$). The study concluded that effective human resources and functional institutional structures are important components of public-sector administration capacity for enhancing socio-economic development in Delta State. It recommended that the Delta State Government and management of the selected MDAs should strengthen continuous staff training, merit-based recruitment and deployment, organisational restructuring, inter-agency coordination, accountability, digital administration and performance monitoring. These measures would enhance administrative effectiveness, improve public-service delivery and strengthen the contribution of MDAs to socio-economic development.

Keywords: Public Sector Administration Capacity, Human Resource Capacity, Institutional/Organisational Capacity, Socio-Economic Development, Ministries Departments and Agencies



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INTRODUCTION

Public sector administration is the main institutional mechanism through which states convert political commitments into policies, programmes and services. In developing economies, where markets are often thin and private provision of basic services is limited, the quality of this machinery largely determines whether national and subnational development aspirations are realised. Administrative capacity is the set of human, institutional, managerial, technological and organisational capabilities that public institutions need to formulate policies, mobilise and manage resources, implement programmes and deliver services effectively. It is not reducible to the size of the bureaucracy or the volume of public expenditure. It lies in the competence, coherence and responsiveness of the institutions that spend, regulate and deliver. The concept has been treated as multidimensional in the institutional literature (García-Vegas, 2024), and it features prominently in international assessments of government effectiveness, which hold that performance depends substantially on how well public institutions respond to changing social and economic demands, manage resources efficiently and provide accessible services (OECD, 2023). The same logic underlies multilateral initiatives that treat the strengthening of public administration as a precondition for development results (World Bank, 2023; IMF, 2024; Kaur & Tennant, 2024).

The theoretical lineage of this concern is long. The Weberian tradition holds that professionalised, rule-bound and merit-based bureaucracies are preconditions for predictable and effective state action. North's institutional theory emphasises that development outcomes depend on the rules, enforcement mechanisms and organisational arrangements that structure incentives. State capacity theory and good governance theory converge on a shared proposition: development is shaped less by the formal existence of policies than by the capability of institutions to implement them. New Public Management (NPM) later foregrounded decentralisation, performance orientation, transparency and accountability as levers for improving institutional responsiveness (Nwosu, 2026). More recently, digital transformation and artificial intelligence have prompted the discipline to reconsider administrative capacity, since these technologies reconfigure how governments process information, make decisions and serve citizens while raising new ethical and regulatory demands (Zhu, 2026).

Empirical studies across contexts support the capacity-performance proposition. In Ghana, administrative capacity has been linked to local-level development in metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies, with resource capacity playing a mediating role (Adomako et al., 2023). In the United States, research on grant implementation shows that obtaining resources is only the first step, and that administrative capacity shapes whether funded programmes are successfully delivered

(Shybalkina, 2024). Both studies suggest that resources alone do not guarantee results, and that the capability to convert them into outputs is the critical link. Related work on the public workforce stresses that capacity ultimately rests on people, so that training and retaining competent public servants becomes a strategic imperative (Johnston & Massey, 2024). Evidence from Africa further associates human capital development and institutional quality with inclusive growth (Quaye et al., 2024), while Nigerian studies connect human capital development to income inequality, public sector investment, economic growth and service delivery in the public service (Ogbeide-Osaretin et al., 2024; Ojenike & Shodiya, 2025; Oyelude & Unegbu, 2024).

Nigeria is a compelling setting in which to examine these propositions. Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, successive administrations have adopted extensive governance and public sector reforms intended to rebuild institutions, improve efficiency, strengthen accountability and promote sustainable development (Ukwandu, 2020; Amin et al., 2024). Yet development outcomes have remained largely unsatisfactory, and current assessments continue to point to slow progress on poverty and inclusive growth (World Bank, 2024, 2025). Eleyi and Ogidi (2026) describe this as a persistent gap between policy design and implementation results and attribute it to weak administrative capacity, politicisation of institutions, limited intergovernmental coordination, poor monitoring and evaluation systems and inadequate human capital development. Their conclusion, that Nigeria's governance challenges are rooted more in structural and institutional weaknesses than in the absence of policy, shifts analytical attention from policy formulation to the capacity of the institutions that must carry it out. Olowu (2024) similarly identifies capacity building and development as a defining challenge of the Nigerian public sector, and Bisina and Okolie (2025) argue that strengthening public institutions is necessary for sustainable development. Comparative evidence on Nigerian states points the same way. Tochi (2026) reports that states combining administrative professionalism, fiscal autonomy and effective regulatory enforcement achieved better outcomes in education, health, infrastructure and human development than states with weak bureaucracies and fiscal dependence, even where resource endowments were comparable. Ukpa et al. (2026), studying selected federal ministries, likewise connect governance quality to economic development. Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are the operational core of this capacity. They design sectoral policies, prepare and execute budgets, regulate economic and social activity, and deliver the services through which citizens experience government. Their performance is therefore consequential for socio-economic development, understood here as improvement in employment, infrastructure, education, healthcare, poverty reduction

and the broader quality of life (Cui et al., 2024). Studies nonetheless continue to identify inadequate technical expertise, bureaucratic inefficiency, weak institutional coordination and difficulties in implementing reforms as persistent constraints (Ukwandu, 2020; Olowu, 2024; Ukpa et al., 2026). Evidence on integrity and accountability reinforces the concern. Corruption in the form of bribery and embezzlement has been shown to degrade service quality, misallocate resources and erode public trust (Guled et al., 2026). Where programmes are funded but poorly administered, as with government agricultural financing in Cross River State, corruption and policy inconsistency can neutralise the developmental potential of public investment (Okomisor et al., 2026). Oversight bodies can partly offset these weaknesses, and Augoye (2026) finds that the quality and timeliness of Public Accounts Committees significantly influence accountability for public funds in Niger Delta states. Oversight is, however, an external corrective and not a substitute for internal administrative capability. These dynamics also unfold within a political economy in which gubernatorial dominance, prebendal practices and patronage shape governance and accountability at the subnational level (Attah et al., 2026).

Delta State presents a particularly instructive case. The State has articulated a development agenda emphasising sustainable development, human capital development, efficient resource utilisation and economic diversification. Its medium-term development framework recognises that effective public spending, institutional collaboration and human capital development are central to sustainable outcomes, and its annual budgets allocate substantial public resources to MDAs, including those responsible for education (Delta State Government, 2023; Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2026; Delta State Ministry of Technical Education, 2026). The formulation of the 2024–2027 Medium-Term Development Plan involved focal persons drawn from MDAs, underscoring the strategic role of administrative institutions in translating development priorities into programmes and results. Existing scholarship on the State has examined discrete aspects of public sector performance, including the developmental role of the Niger Delta Development Commission (Okonredo et al., 2025), e-governance and service performance in selected ministries (Ohwokevwu & Okereka, 2025) and agile management practices in selected government agencies (Biose & Mukoro, 2026). These studies illuminate particular instruments, agencies or practices. None, however, treats administrative capacity as an integrated, multidimensional construct and relates it systematically to socio-economic development outcomes across multiple MDAs.

Against this background, assessing public sector administrative capacity and its relationship with socio-

economic development is both theoretically significant and practically urgent. It speaks to whether the capabilities of selected MDAs in Delta State are adequate to support effective policy implementation, efficient service delivery and sustainable development. This study therefore examines the relationship between public sector administrative capacity and socio-economic development in selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Public sector institutions occupy a strategic position in the pursuit of socio-economic development, yet evidence from Nigeria suggests that the translation of policy ambition into developmental outcomes is persistently weak. The national literature identifies a durable gap between policy design and development outcomes, explained principally by institutional and capacity constraints and not by a shortage of reform initiatives (Eleyi & Ogidi, 2026; Nwosu, 2026; Olowu, 2024). The broader evidence on administrative capacity indicates that this is not peculiar to Nigeria. Where capacity is weak, even adequately resourced programmes struggle to be implemented successfully (Shybalkina, 2024; Adomako et al., 2023). At the subnational level, divergence in development performance among Nigerian states with comparable endowments indicates that administrative, fiscal and regulatory capability, and not resource availability alone, shapes outcomes (Tochi, 2026).

In Delta State, many MDAs are widely reported to contend with inadequate and unevenly distributed human resources, weak institutional processes, limited managerial competencies, insufficient technological capacity and ineffective inter-agency coordination. These weaknesses are compounded by governance pathologies documented elsewhere in Nigeria and the wider developing world, including corruption, politicisation, patronage and uneven accountability (Guled et al., 2026; Okomisor et al., 2026; Attah et al., 2026). They may constrain the ability of MDAs to formulate and implement policies, manage public resources prudently, deliver services efficiently and respond to emerging socio-economic needs. The probable consequence is a gap between the State's stated development objectives and the outcomes citizens experience in employment, infrastructure, education, healthcare and poverty reduction. Evidence that oversight mechanisms such as Public Accounts Committees are partly effective (Augoye, 2026) does not resolve this concern, because oversight addresses compliance after the fact and does not build the internal capability to perform. Likewise, the growing emphasis on workforce development and human capital (Johnston & Massey, 2024; Oyelude & Unegbu, 2024) has not been matched by evidence on how human resource capacity combines with institutional, managerial,

technological and coordination capacity to affect development outcomes in the State's MDAs.

Existing studies on Delta State are largely fragmentary. They concentrate on single institutions, specific innovations such as e-governance or agile practices, or accountability mechanisms (Okonedo et al., 2025; Ohwokevwo & Okereka, 2025; Biose & Mukoro, 2026; Augoye, 2026), while broader Nigerian studies are predominantly national in scope or rely on qualitative, secondary-data designs (Eleyi & Ogidi, 2026; Nwosu, 2026; Tochi, 2026). Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence that conceptualises administrative capacity as a multidimensional construct and tests, with primary data from MDAs themselves, how these dimensions relate to socio-economic development in the State. Without such evidence, policy responses risk being misdirected, favouring further reform declarations or isolated technological and financial interventions over the capability deficits that actually impede implementation.

The problem this study addresses, therefore, is the extent to which the administrative capacity of selected MDAs influences socio-economic development in Delta State, Nigeria. By generating empirical evidence on this relationship, the study seeks to clarify which dimensions of capacity matter most and to inform strategies for strengthening public sector effectiveness and improving development outcomes.

Research Questions

- i. Human resource capacity and Socio-Economic Development of Selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria?
- ii. Institutional/organisational capacity and Socio-Economic Development of Selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria?

Research Objectives

- (i) Determine the effect of human resource capacity on Socio-Economic Development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.
- (ii) Ascertain the effect of institutional/organisational capacity and Socio-Economic Development of Selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses were stated in null form as follows:

H₀₁: Human resource capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Institutional/organisational capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Reviews

Public Sector Administration Capacity

Public sector administration capacity refers to the ability of government institutions to mobilise and manage human, financial, technological and organisational resources. These resources are used to formulate policies, implement programmes, coordinate administrative activities and deliver public services efficiently, responsively and accountably. It covers the competencies of public employees, the quality of institutional systems and managerial processes, and the capacity of organisations to turn policy intent into outcomes (World Bank, 2023). The concept has been contested in the literature. Haque et al. (2021) observe that the focus of the capacity debate has shifted toward the administrative dimension of state capacity, now widely used in public administration and policy studies. They also caution that dimensions of capacity are often listed loosely, without explaining their distinctions and linkages, which produces overlaps. This study therefore specifies its dimensions explicitly. It treats administrative capacity as a multidimensional construct and does not rely on a single indicator such as staff strength or budget size.

Empirical work has helped clarify those dimensions. Annan-Prah and Andoh (2023) support leadership, human resource management, financial resource management, technical capacity and adaptive capacity as formative constructs of administrative capacity. In a study of Ghana's metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies, they found that administrative capacity affects resource capacity, that both affect local level development, and that resource capacity mediates the effect of administrative capacity on local development. This is directly relevant to the present study, because it suggests that administrative capability and resource availability work together and that capability is not simply a function of funding.

The measurement literature points the same way. In Italy, Del Monte et al. (2025) analysed 58,922 locally managed projects between 2010 and 2019 and found that greater administrative capacity reduces project duration, which accelerates public spending. They report that a 1% increase in administrative capacity shortens project duration by about 3%. Their study also distinguishes internal components of capacity from external ones such as the quality of public administration, regulatory quality, the degree of decentralisation and political influence. That distinction supports a design that measures internal MDA

capabilities while recognising the political and institutional environment in which they operate. Capacity matters for development because policy design alone does not produce results. Pritchett et al. (2013) describe the "capability trap". In this trap, developing states adopt the external form of modern institutions without acquiring the underlying functional capability, so that implementation failure is masked by formal compliance. Earlier work by the same authors used empirical indicators of administrative capability to show that many countries remain in capability traps, where the state's implementation capability is severely limited and improves only slowly. This perspective helps explain the Nigerian pattern, in which ambitious reforms coexist with weak outcomes (Eleyi & Ogidi, 2026). It also justifies measuring actual capability within MDAs and not simply the existence of policies, structures or reform declarations.

For this study, public sector administration capacity is operationally defined as the extent to which selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Delta State possess and effectively use leadership, human resource, financial, technical, managerial and adaptive capabilities, together with supporting institutional systems, to implement public policies, manage government programmes and contribute to socio-economic development.

Human resource capacity

Human Resource Capacity refers to the knowledge, skills, competencies, experience, number and ability of employees within an organisation to effectively perform assigned responsibilities and achieve institutional objectives. In the public sector, it encompasses the availability of adequately qualified personnel, continuous training and skills development, effective human-resource management, employee motivation and the ability of staff to respond to changing administrative and service-delivery requirements (Adomako et al., 2023; Johnston & Massey, 2024). Recent studies further indicate that human-resource capacity is an important component of administrative capacity because competent personnel are necessary for effective policy implementation, organisational performance and public service delivery. For this study, human resource capacity is operationally defined as the extent to which selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Delta State possess adequately qualified, skilled, experienced and continuously developed personnel capable of effectively implementing government policies and delivering public services.

Institutional/organisational capacity

Institutional/Organisational Capacity refers to the ability of a public organisation to effectively use its structures,

systems, procedures, resources and managerial arrangements to perform its mandated functions, implement policies and achieve intended organisational objectives. It encompasses organisational structures, administrative processes, institutional resources, coordination mechanisms, infrastructure and the systems that enable employees to effectively carry out their responsibilities (García-Vegas, 2024; Melz et al., 2023). In the public sector, institutional capacity is particularly concerned with an agency's ability to translate its formal mandate into effective policy implementation and service delivery. Recent Nigerian literature similarly associates institutional capacity with organisational structures, leadership, resources, infrastructure and administrative systems that support effective public service delivery (Amin et al., 2024). For this study, institutional/organisational capacity is operationally defined as the extent to which selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Delta State possess effective organisational structures, administrative systems, resources, coordination mechanisms and procedures for implementing government policies and delivering public services efficiently

Socio-Economic Development

Socio-Economic Development refers to the process of improving the economic conditions, social well-being and overall quality of life of people through increased productive activities, employment opportunities, income, education, healthcare, infrastructure and access to essential public services. It therefore goes beyond economic growth to include improvements in human welfare, social inclusion and living standards (Cui et al., 2024; World Bank, 2024). In the Nigerian context, socio-economic development involves creating productive employment, improving human capital, expanding infrastructure and basic services, reducing poverty and promoting inclusive economic opportunities. The World Bank (2025) similarly identifies productive jobs, human capital, infrastructure and social protection as important elements of inclusive development in Nigeria. For this study, socio-economic development is operationally defined as the extent to which the activities and programmes of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) contribute to improvements in employment, income generation, infrastructure, education, healthcare, poverty reduction and the general standard of living of citizens in Delta State.

Human resource capacity and Socio-Economic Development

Human resource capacity has a significant role in promoting socio-economic development because competent, skilled, experienced and adequately trained

personnel are essential for effective policy formulation, implementation and public service delivery. In the public sector, employees with appropriate knowledge and professional competencies are better positioned to translate government policies and development programmes into tangible outcomes for citizens. Evidence from Nigeria indicates that investments in human capital, particularly education and health, are associated with improvements in economic performance and development outcomes (Ojenike & Shodiya, 2025). Human resource capacity can also influence socio-economic development through improved productivity, innovation, employment generation and quality of public services. Oyelude and Unegbu (2024) found that human capital development and training within Nigeria's public service are important considerations for effective service delivery. Similarly, Ogbeide-Osaretin et al. (2024) reported a significant relationship between human capital development, income inequality and public-sector investment in Nigeria, suggesting that strengthening human capabilities can contribute to broader development outcomes.

At the broader African level, human capital has also been linked with inclusive growth, although the strength of this relationship depends on institutional and governance conditions. Quaye et al. (2024) found that weak governance can undermine the positive contribution of human capital to inclusive growth. In Nigeria, recent evidence further shows that human capital, particularly education, can strengthen the relationship between urban development and economic growth (2024). Therefore, for selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Delta State, human resource capacity is expected to influence socio-economic development through the availability of qualified personnel, continuous training, professional competence, employee productivity and effective utilisation of human resources for policy implementation and public service delivery. Where MDAs possess capable and adequately developed personnel, their capacity to implement development programmes and provide quality public services is strengthened; conversely, inadequate skills, staffing deficiencies and weak capacity development may constrain development outcomes.

Institutional/organisational capacity and Socio-Economic Development

Institutional/organisational capacity has an important influence on socio-economic development because effective public institutions provide the structures, systems, procedures and coordination mechanisms required to translate government policies and resources into tangible development outcomes. Strong institutional capacity enables Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to plan effectively, coordinate development programmes, manage public resources, implement

policies and deliver public services efficiently. The IMF (2024) notes that stronger institutions and capacity development support economic growth, development, resilience and sustainability. In the Nigerian context, institutional capacity is particularly relevant because weaknesses in public institutions can affect the quality of governance and service delivery. Amin et al. (2024) identify weak institutional capacity, inadequate resources, poor leadership and ineffective public service delivery among the challenges confronting Nigeria's public administration. Similarly, Olowu (2024) argues that strengthening institutional frameworks, governance systems, strategic planning and continuous learning can improve the effectiveness of Nigeria's public sector and contribute to sustainable development.

Institutional capacity also affects socio-economic development through efficient resource utilisation, infrastructure provision, policy implementation, accountability and quality public service delivery. The OECD's recent analysis emphasises that public-sector capacity strengthening improves organisational performance and supports broader sustainable-development objectives (Kaur & Tennant, 2024). The World Bank likewise identifies institutional capacity as fundamental to poverty reduction and sustainable growth because institutions shape the effectiveness with which development interventions are implemented. Therefore, for selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Delta State, institutional/organisational capacity is expected to influence socio-economic development through effective organisational structures, administrative procedures, coordination, resource management, policy implementation and public service delivery. Where institutional systems are effective, government programmes can be implemented more efficiently and development resources can be translated into improved infrastructure, employment, healthcare, education, income opportunities and living standards.

Empirical Reviews

Shybalkina (2024), in her study titled "Getting a Grant is Just the First Step: Administrative Capacity and Successful Grant Implementation," examined how administrative capacity affects the implementation of government-funded programmes. The study specifically sought to determine whether the administrative capacity of recipient public organisations influenced their ability to utilise government grants effectively. Using quantitative data obtained from the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the U.S. Census Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll, and the Government Finance Officers Association, the study employed statistical analysis to examine the relationship between financial administrative capacity and grant implementation. The findings showed that stronger financial administrative capacity was positively associated

with the proportion of grant funds spent during the early stage of programme implementation. The relationship remained robust when alternative measures of administrative capacity were employed. However, the influence of administrative capacity declined toward the later stages of implementation, which the author associated with factors such as workload stabilisation, greater clarity of programme requirements and capacity-building among recipient organisations. The study concluded that administrative capacity is important for successful implementation of government programmes and that public organisations require adequate administrative capabilities to translate financial resources into programme outcomes. The study provides evidence that administrative capacity can determine the effectiveness with which public institutions convert government resources into developmental outcomes. However, the study focused primarily on financial administrative capacity and grant implementation in the United States, rather than the broader human-resource and institutional dimensions of public-sector administrative capacity. It also did not examine socio-economic development as a multidimensional outcome. Furthermore, its context differs considerably from Nigeria's public administration environment. This creates a contextual and conceptual gap which the present study addresses by examining human resource capacity and institutional/organisational capacity and their influence on socio-economic development among selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria.

Chen, Liu, and Zhang (2025), in their study titled "Resources Coupled with Executive Authority: Implications of Relocating Government Administrative Headquarters for Local Economic Development," investigated the effect of government administrative capacity and the concentration of administrative resources on local economic development. The study sought to determine whether relocating government administrative headquarters could influence economic development in recipient locations. Using panel data covering prefecture-level cities in China from 2005 to 2019, the researchers employed an event-study design and difference-in-differences estimation technique to identify the economic effects associated with the relocation of government administrative headquarters. The findings revealed a significant positive effect of administrative headquarters relocation on economic growth in recipient counties. Specifically, the relocation was associated with an increase of approximately 2.236 units in the nighttime-light index, representing about 8.5% of the sample mean. The study further found that the departure of administrative headquarters did not significantly affect economic growth in the original locations. The researchers attributed the positive outcome in recipient areas partly to the inflow of administrative resources, increased government expenditure, expansion of the labour force and

accelerated technological development. The study concluded that government administrative resources and executive authority can have important implications for local economic development. Its major contribution is the demonstration that the location and deployment of administrative resources can influence economic activity. However, the study concentrated on administrative headquarters relocation in Chinese prefecture-level cities, rather than the internal administrative capacity of government ministries, departments and agencies. It also measured development mainly through economic activity rather than broader socio-economic indicators such as employment, infrastructure, education, healthcare and living standards. Thus, there remains a geographical, institutional and measurement gap, which the present study seeks to address by assessing the capacity of selected MDAs and their contribution to socio-economic development in Delta State, Nigeria.

Bisina and Okolie (2025), in their study titled "The Necessity of Strengthening Public Institutions for Sustainable Development in Nigeria," examined the role of resilient public institutions in advancing sustainable development in Nigeria. The study specifically investigated how institutional weaknesses affect accountability, transparency, policy implementation and development outcomes. The researchers adopted a qualitative research approach based on the analysis of documentary sources and anchored the study on institutional theory. The findings indicated that weak, fragile and inefficient public institutions constitute important constraints to Nigeria's sustainable development. Institutional deficiencies were found to undermine accountability, transparency and effective policy implementation, thereby contributing to corruption, poverty and socio-economic stagnation. The study further argued that strengthening public institutions is necessary for improving policy implementation and achieving sustainable development outcomes. The authors concluded that resilient and effective public institutions are indispensable for sustainable development and that reforms should strengthen institutional structures, accountability and implementation capacity. The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it establishes a Nigerian institutional context and directly connects institutional capacity with development outcomes. However, its methodology was qualitative and documentary, rather than an empirical survey of employees or officials within specific government MDAs. In addition, the study examined public institutions broadly and did not operationalise administrative capacity into specific dimensions such as human resource capacity and institutional/organisational capacity. It also focused on sustainable development generally rather than measuring socio-economic development across specific dimensions. Consequently, a methodological, operational and contextual gap remains. The present study addresses these gaps by empirically assessing selected MDAs in

Delta State, Nigeria, using measurable dimensions of public-sector administration capacity and examining their effect on socio-economic development

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional explanatory survey design, grounded in a positivist philosophy. The design was appropriate because the study sought to test whether variation in public sector administration capacity explained variation in socio-economic development, using data collected from respondents at a single point in time without manipulating any variable. Both constructs are organisational conditions and perceptions, which can be measured through structured questionnaire items and analysed with inferential statistics. This approach is consistent with contemporary public administration research, in which organisational and institutional characteristics are examined using survey data and multivariate techniques. Public sector administration capacity was the independent construct, operationalised through two dimensions: human resource capacity (HRC) and institutional/organisational capacity (IOC). Socio-economic development (SED) was the dependent construct. Because the data were cross-sectional, the findings are interpreted as statistical associations and perceived effects rather than as proof of causation.

Study Context and Population

The study was conducted in Delta State, Nigeria. The population comprised 4,443 personnel in eight purposively selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). These MDAs were chosen because their mandates relate directly to public administration and socio-economic development: education and technical education (human capital and skills), health (population welfare), agriculture (livelihoods and food production), works (infrastructure), finance (public resource management), information (communication and public awareness), and youth development (employment and empowerment).

Table 1: Population distribution of selected MDAs.

S/N	MDA	Population
1	Ministry of Education	580
2	Ministry of Information	896
3	Ministry of Finance	616
4	Ministry of Works	456
5	Ministry of Technical Education	567
6	Ministry of Agriculture	432
7	Ministry of Health	551
8	Ministry of Youth Development	345
	Total	4,443

Source: MDA staff records (2026)

Delta State's official budgetary and administrative records identify these sectors as core areas of government activity (Delta State Government, 2023). Staff population figures were obtained from MDA personnel records (Table 1).

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

where n is the sample size, N is the population (4,443), and e is the margin of error (0.05, corresponding to a 95% confidence level). Substituting these values:

$$n = 4,443 / [1 + 4,443(0.05)^2] = 4,443 / 12.1075 \approx 367$$

A sample of 367 respondents was therefore required.

Sampling Technique and Allocation

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. In the first stage, the eight MDAs were selected purposively on the basis of their direct relevance to public administration and socio-economic development. In the second stage, the 367 respondents were allocated to the MDAs using Bowley's proportional allocation:

$$n_h = n(N_h / N)$$

where n_h is the sample allocated to MDA h , N_h is the MDA's population, N is the total population, and n is the total sample. Fractional allocations were rounded using the largest-remainder method so that the allocations summed exactly to 367 (Table 2). In the third stage, respondents within each MDA were selected by simple random sampling from the MDA's staff list, which served as the sampling frame. This procedure ensured that each MDA was represented in proportion to its size and gave every eligible staff member an equal chance of selection.

Table 2: Proportionate sample allocation

S/N	MDA	Population (N_h)	Allocated sample (n_h)
1	Ministry of Education	580	48
2	Ministry of Information	896	74
3	Ministry of Finance	616	51
4	Ministry of Works	456	38
5	Ministry of Technical Education	567	47
6	Ministry of Agriculture	432	36
7	Ministry of Health	551	45
8	Ministry of Youth Development	345	28
	Total	4,443	367

Data Sources and Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected through a structured, self-

administered questionnaire completed by the sampled personnel in their respective MDAs. Secondary data were drawn from Delta State Government publications, MDA administrative documents, development plans, budget documents, policy documents, peer-reviewed journals, and reports of national and international organisations. Secondary sources were used to contextualise the MDAs and to support the construction and interpretation of the measures. Before administration, permission was obtained from the relevant authorities in each MDA. Research assistants were briefed on the administration protocol. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the academic purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained before completion of the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and coded for analysis.

Research Instrument and Measurement

The instrument was a structured questionnaire developed from the study objectives, hypotheses, and the reviewed literature. It had four sections:

Section A (demographics): sex, age, educational qualification, cadre, length of service, and MDA.

Section B (HRC, 5 items): availability of qualified personnel, employee competence, training and development, relevant professional experience, and ability to perform assigned responsibilities.

Section C (IOC, 5 items): adequacy of organisational structures, effectiveness of administrative procedures, availability of organisational resources, interdepartmental coordination, and institutional capacity for policy implementation.

Section D (SED, 10 items): employment generation, infrastructure development, improvement in education, healthcare improvement, poverty reduction, income-generating opportunities, and improvement in citizens' standard of living.

Sections B to D used a five-point Likert scale (Table 3). Construct scores were computed as the mean of the items in each section.

Table 3: Likert scale

Response	Score
Strongly Agree (SA)	5
Agree (A)	4
Undecided (U)	3
Disagree (D)	2
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1

Validity of the Instrument

Face and content validity were established. The draft questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and [number] experts in public administration, management, and research methodology, who assessed item clarity, relevance, the appropriateness of the response scale, and alignment between items and the study objectives and hypotheses. Ambiguous and redundant items were revised or removed, and items needed for adequate construct coverage were added. [If computed, report the item-level and scale-level content validity index (I-CVI and S-CVI).] Construct validity was assessed using [exploratory factor analysis with KMO and Bartlett's test / confirmatory factor analysis, with factor loadings and average variance extracted] on the main-study data.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test was conducted with 37 public-sector personnel (about 10% of the calculated sample) who were not part of the final sample. Internal consistency was assessed with Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above regarded as acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Reliability was assessed again on the main-study data (Table 4).

Table 4: Reliability of the instrument

Construct	Items	Reliability Measure	Acceptable Level
Human resource capacity	5	Cronbach's Alpha	≥ 0.70
Institutional/organisational capacity	5	Cronbach's Alpha	≥ 0.70
Socio-economic development	10	Cronbach's Alpha	≥ 0.70
Overall	20	Cronbach's Alpha	≥ 0.70

Method of Data Analysis

Data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) [version]. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarised respondent characteristics and item responses. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the direction and strength of the relationships between HRC and SED and between IOC and SED. Multiple linear regression was used to estimate the individual and joint effects of HRC and IOC on SED. Regression output included unstandardised and standardised coefficients (β), t -values, the F -statistic, R^2 , adjusted R^2 , and p -values.

Before the regression analysis, the following assumptions were tested:

Multicollinearity: variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values, with VIF below 10 (conservatively below 5) taken as acceptable.

Linearity and homoscedasticity: residual and scatter plots.

Normality: skewness and kurtosis values, Shapiro–Wilk test, and normal P–P plots of residuals.

Independence of errors: Durbin–Watson statistic.

Common method bias: Harman's single-factor test, because all constructs were measured from the same respondents using a single instrument.

Likert-scale composite scores were treated as approximately continuous, which is standard practice for multi-item scales.

Model Specification

The functional relationship was specified as $SED = f(HRC, IOC)$, and the empirical model as:

$$SED = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HRC + \beta_2 IOC + \varepsilon$$

where SED is socio-economic development, HRC is human resource capacity, IOC is institutional/organisational capacity, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 and β_2 are the coefficients of HRC and IOC respectively, and ε is the error term. Three models were estimated (Table 5).

Table 5: Model specification

Model	Independent variable(s)	Dependent variable	Technique
1	HRC	SED	Pearson correlation and simple regression
2	IOC	SED	Pearson correlation and simple regression
3	HRC + IOC	SED	Multiple regression

Hypotheses and Decision Rule

The following null hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁: Human resource capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Institutional/organisational capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.

All hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level. A null hypothesis was rejected where $p < 0.05$ and not rejected where $p \geq 0.05$. R^2 indicated the proportion of variance in SED explained jointly by HRC and IOC, and the standardised beta coefficients indicated the direction and relative contribution of each predictor.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the survey evidence on public-sector administrative capacity and socio-economic development in selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Delta State, Nigeria. The results are reported in the order of data screening, respondent profile, descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation and multiple regression, followed by the tests of the two hypotheses. Each finding is then interpreted against the empirical and conceptual literature, and the section closes with an integrated discussion, limitations, conclusions and recommendations.

Response Rate and Data Screening

The questionnaire was administered to respondents drawn from selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria. A total of 360 questionnaires were retrieved from the field. Seven questionnaires (1.9%) were excluded because of substantial omissions and inconsistent responses, leaving 353 valid questionnaires (98.1%) for analysis (Table 6). The very high proportion of usable questionnaires indicates good data quality. With 353 cases and two predictors, the sample is well above the sizes commonly used as rules of thumb for multiple regression, so it provides an adequate basis for the descriptive and inferential analyses that follow.

Table 6: Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaires.

Questionnaire status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires returned	360	100.0
Invalid questionnaires	7	1.9
Valid questionnaires used for analysis	353	98.1

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents were classified by sex, age, educational qualification, length of service and staff cadre. These characteristics show whether the participants had enough institutional experience to give meaningful information on public-sector administrative capacity and socio-economic development (Table 7). Male respondents constituted 57.5% of the sample and female respondents 42.5%. Respondents aged 41–50 years formed the largest group (34.3%), followed by those aged 31–40 years (27.8%), and 54.7% were aged between 41 and 60 years, an age profile associated with substantial work experience. Tertiary qualifications were dominant: 49.3% held an HND or bachelor's degree and 36.3% held a postgraduate degree, so 85.6% had at least a first degree or its equivalent. In terms of tenure, 86.4% had served for five years or more and 60.1% for more than ten years, which suggests considerable exposure to administrative procedures in

Table 7: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents ($n = 353$).

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	203	57.5
	Female	150	42.5
Age	21–30 years	42	11.9
	31–40 years	98	27.8
	41–50 years	121	34.3
	51–60 years	72	20.4
	Above 60 years	20	5.7
	OND/NCE	38	10.8
Educational qualification	HND/Bachelor's degree	174	49.3
	Postgraduate degree	128	36.3
	Other professional qualifications	13	3.7
Length of service	Below 5 years	48	13.6
	5–10 years	93	26.3
	11–15 years	104	29.5
	16–20 years	66	18.7
	Above 20 years	42	11.9
Staff cadre	Junior	61	17.3
	Senior	182	51.6
	Management	110	31.2
Total		353	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

government institutions. By cadre, senior staff accounted for 51.6%, management staff for 31.2% and junior staff for 17.3%. This profile is useful for the purpose of the study. MDAs in Delta State operate under statutory mandates and annual budget appropriations (Delta State Government, 2023; Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2026; Delta State Ministry of Technical Education, 2026), and the 82.7% of respondents in senior and management cadres are well placed to observe how those mandates are translated into programmes and services. The long average tenure is also relevant to the capacity-building literature, which stresses that public-service performance depends on both training and retaining experienced staff (Johnston & Massey, 2024) and notes that capacity-building in Nigeria's public sector has been hampered by persistent challenges (Olowu, 2024). Cross-national benchmarks such as OECD (2023) are mainly national-level comparators and do not describe individual subnational agencies, which is one reason why primary survey evidence of the present kind remains valuable.

Pattern of Data Presentation and Interpretation of Scores

The analysis follows the objectives and hypotheses of the study. The first part presents descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation). The second part reports the reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha. The third part presents Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis, and the fourth part presents multiple regression analysis used to test the hypotheses. Mean scores on the five-point response scale

were interpreted using the ranges in (Table 8).

Table 8: Interpretation of Mean Scores on the Five-Point Response Scale.

Mean range	Interpretation
1.00–1.79	Very low
1.80–2.59	Low
2.60–3.39	Moderate
3.40–4.19	High
4.20–5.00	Very high

Note. Ranges are equal-interval cut-offs for a five-point scale.

Descriptive Statistics at Scale Level

The major constructs examined were Human Resource Capacity (HRC), Institutional/Organisational Capacity (IOC) and Socio-Economic Development (SED). Table 9 shows that HRC recorded a mean of 3.62 ($SD = 0.71$), IOC a mean of 3.55 ($SD = 0.74$) and SED a mean of 3.67 ($SD = 0.68$). All three means fall within the high band of the interpretation scale (3.40–4.19), indicating that respondents generally perceived the selected MDAs as having a favourable level of human-resource and institutional capacity and as contributing to socio-economic development. SED had the highest mean, while IOC had the lowest, which suggests that respondents rate the people in their organisations somewhat more favourably than the systems within which those people work. The small standard deviations show that responses were reasonably concentrated around their means.

These favourable ratings contrast with the more critical picture in the wider Nigerian literature, which points to

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Human Resource Capacity	353	1.80	5.00	3.62	0.71
Institutional/Organisational Capacity	353	1.60	5.00	3.55	0.74
Socio-Economic Development	353	1.90	5.00	3.67	0.68

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 10: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Decision
Human Resource Capacity	5	0.884	Reliable
Institutional/Organisational Capacity	5	0.871	Reliable
Socio-Economic Development	10	0.913	Reliable
Overall instrument	20	0.902	Reliable

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

persistent capacity gaps in the public sector (Olowu, 2024), uneven results from successive reform programmes (Nwosu, 2026; Ukwandu, 2020) and a gap between policy design and development outcomes (Eleyi & Ogidi, 2026). Three considerations help reconcile the two pictures. First, the sample is dominated by senior and management staff, who may rate their own organisations more favourably than external observers would. Second, scores in the high band describe perceived capacity rather than demonstrated performance; Pritchett et al. (2013) warn that governments can adopt the outward forms of capable institutions without the corresponding functionality, a pattern they describe as isomorphic mimicry. Third, none of the means reaches the very high band, so the data are consistent with the view that gaps remain. The relatively lower rating of institutional capacity is in line with studies that identify corruption, weak accountability and patronage politics as constraints on public-service delivery (Attah et al., 2026; Guled et al., 2026). A high perceived level of SED in the surveyed MDAs should likewise not be read as evidence that development goals have been met, since national and global assessments continue to stress the need for stronger inclusive growth and delivery (World Bank, 2024, 2025).

Scale Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The conventional benchmark of .70 was used as a minimum, but the coefficients were interpreted in light of the number of items and the content of each scale. The coefficients ranged from 0.871 to 0.913 (Table 10), indicating strong internal consistency among the items measuring each construct, and the overall alpha of 0.902 shows that the instrument as a whole was internally consistent. Because coefficients above .90 can also reflect some redundancy among items, the results are read as evidence of strong rather than perfect consistency. An additional point of comparison

concerns measurement. Annan-Prah and Andoh (2023) modelled administrative capacity as a formative construct made up of leadership, human-resource management, financial, technical and adaptive capacities, whereas HRC and IOC are treated here as reflective scales, for which internal-consistency indices are appropriate. A formative specification could be tested in future work.

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses were stated in null form as follows:

H₀₁: Human resource capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Institutional/organisational capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Delta State, Nigeria.

For the regression model, the two independent variables were entered simultaneously to determine their individual and combined contributions to socio-economic development.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine the direction and strength of association among HRC, IOC and SED. Table 11 shows a positive and significant relationship between HRC and SED ($r = .684$, $p < .001$). Improvements in the competence, training and availability of public-sector personnel are therefore associated with better perceived socio-economic development outcomes. IOC also correlated positively and strongly with SED ($r = .721$, $p < .001$), and the correlation between HRC and IOC was likewise positive and substantial ($r = .684$, $p < .001$). Squared correlations indicate that HRC shares about 46.8% of its variance with SED and IOC about 52.0%. The strong link between the

Table 11: Pearson Correlation Matrix ($N = 353$)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Human Resource Capacity	1		
2. Institutional/Organisational Capacity	0.684**	1	
3. Socio-Economic Development	0.684**	0.721**	1

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); all $p < .001$.

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

two capacity dimensions is expected. Annan-Prah and Andoh (2023) found that human-resource management, leadership, financial and technical capacities jointly form administrative capacity in Ghanaian local assemblies, so people and systems are best seen as parts of one capacity system. García-Vegas (2024) similarly treats institutional capacity as a multidimensional concept that covers organisational, human and relational elements. Because the correlation between the predictors is high but below the level at which multicollinearity usually becomes a concern, both variables were retained in the regression model.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was conducted to establish the extent to which HRC and IOC jointly explain variation in SED. The model is specified as $SED = \beta_0 + \beta_1HRC + \beta_2IOC + \epsilon$, where SED is Socio-Economic Development, HRC is Human Resource Capacity, IOC is Institutional/Organisational Capacity, β_0 is the constant, β_1 and β_2 are regression coefficients and ϵ is the error term. The multiple correlation of 0.770 indicates a strong combined relationship between the two predictors and SED (Table 12). $R^2 = 0.592$ shows that HRC and IOC jointly explain 59.2% of the variation in SED, a large effect (Cohen's $f^2 \approx 1.45$), and the adjusted R^2 of .590 shows little shrinkage. The remaining 40.8% is attributable to factors outside the model and to random error (Table 12).

Table 12: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.770	0.592	0.590	0.435

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The model is statistically significant, $F(2, 350) = 254.01$, $p < 0.001$, meaning that HRC and IOC taken together significantly explain variation in SED (Table 13). The estimated equation is $SED = 0.782 + 0.318HRC + 0.472IOC$. Holding IOC constant, a one-unit increase in HRC is associated with a 0.318-unit increase in SED ($\beta = .332$, $t = 6.91$, $p < .001$). Holding HRC constant, a one-unit increase in IOC is associated with a 0.472-unit increase in SED ($\beta = .506$, $t = 10.49$, $p < .001$). The standardised coefficients show that IOC has roughly one and a half times the relative weight of HRC in the model. Given the inter-predictor correlation of 0.684, the implied variance

Table 13: ANOVA for the Multiple Regression Model

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	96.10	2	48.05	254.01	< .001
Residual	66.22	350	0.189		
Total	162.32	352			

Note. Dependent variable: Socio-Economic Development.

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

inflation factor is about 1.9, well below conventional cut-offs, which supports the stability of the coefficients (Table 14). These results describe statistical association within the surveyed MDAs, not proof that administrative capacity alone causes socio-economic development. The data are cross-sectional and perception-based, so reverse causation and common-method variance cannot be excluded. This caution is reinforced by Nigerian evidence that more public spending does not automatically yield better human-development outcomes: Ogbeide-Osaretin et al. (2024) report a feedback relationship between human capital development and income inequality and identify public-sector investment as a crucial factor, and Okomisor et al. (2026) examine how government financing of a sector, agriculture, relates to socio-economic development in Nigeria, which indicates that resources matter alongside administrative capability.

Table 14: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. error	Standardized β	t	Sig.
Constant	0.782	0.154	—	5.08	< .001
Human Resource Capacity	0.318	0.046	0.332	6.91	< .001
Institutional/Organisational Capacity	0.472	0.045	0.506	10.49	< .001

Note. Dependent variable: Socio-Economic Development. Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Human resource capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria.

The Pearson correlation shows a positive relationship between HRC and SED ($r = .684$, $p < .001$), and the regression coefficient is positive and significant ($\beta = .332$, $t = 6.91$, $p < .001$). Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Decision: Human resource capacity has a statistically significant positive relationship with socio-economic development of selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria.

Human Resource Capacity and Socio-Economic Development

The finding indicates that competent, adequately trained and appropriately deployed public-sector personnel are

associated with better socio-economic development outcomes in the selected MDAs. It agrees with the ordering of Annan-Prah and Andoh (2023), who found in Ghanaian metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies that administrative capacity, of which human-resource management is a component, affects local-level development. It also agrees with Oyelude and Unegbu (2024), whose study of Nigeria's public service links human capital development, delivered through the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, to service delivery, and with Johnston and Massey (2024), who address the training and retention of public servants as a condition for future public-service performance. At the macro level, the finding is in line with Ojenike and Shodiya (2025) on the relationship between human capital development and economic growth in Nigeria, and with Ofori et al. (2024), who found that human capital promotes inclusive growth across 43 African countries. Ogbeide-Osaretin et al. (2024) add that human capital development in Nigeria is tied to income inequality and to the level of public-sector investment.

The present result also differs in emphasis from several of these studies. Most of them use national or cross-country data and measure development as economic growth or inequality, whereas this study uses organisation-level perceptions of capacity and a broader socio-economic outcome. That outcome is conceptually compatible with Cui et al. (2024), who relate quality of life to regional economic development in China and thereby support a wider view of development than growth alone. A second difference is that Ofori et al. (2024) found the benefits of human capital to be dampened where governance is weak; the present results are compatible with that conditional reading, because the HRC effect is estimated alongside IOC and is smaller. Olowu (2024) likewise cautions that capacity-building in Nigeria's public sector is constrained by persistent challenges, which implies that training alone is unlikely to be sufficient. Finally, Zhu (2026) argues that public administration is entering an era shaped by artificial intelligence, so that the skills that count as human-resource capacity are themselves changing; future measures of HRC may therefore need to include digital competencies.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Institutional/organisational capacity has no significant relationship with socio-economic development of selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria.

The correlation shows a strong positive relationship between IOC and SED ($r = .721$, $p < .001$), and the regression result shows that IOC significantly predicts SED ($\beta = .506$, $t = 10.49$, $p < .001$). Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis is **rejected**.

Decision: Institutional/organisational capacity has a

statistically significant positive relationship with socio-economic development of selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria.

Institutional/Organisational Capacity and Socio-Economic Development

The finding suggests that the ability of public institutions to establish effective structures, procedures, coordination mechanisms, accountability systems and administrative processes is strongly associated with socio-economic development. It is supported by evidence from outside Nigeria. Del Monte et al. (2025), using 58,922 Italian local projects, found that greater administrative capacity shortens project duration and so speeds up public spending, and Shybalkina (2024) found that financial administrative capacity was positively linked to the share of grant funds spent early in a US programme. Both studies show that capacity determines whether resources are converted into outputs, which is the mechanism implied by the larger standardised effect of IOC here. Haque et al. (2021) and the IMF (2024) likewise address the role of administrative and institutional capacity in development, and Kaur and Tennant (2024) discuss how capacity-strengthening support can be better tailored to the circumstances of small states, a point that applies equally to subnational governments with limited resources. Nigerian and African studies point in the same direction. Bisina and Okolie (2025) argue that strengthening public institutions is necessary for sustainable development in Nigeria, Amin et al. (2024) link public administration reform to good governance and political security, and Ukpa et al. (2026) examine good governance and economic development in selected federal ministries. Within Delta State and its neighbours, Biose and Mukoro (2026) relate agile methodologies to organisational performance in government agencies, Ohwokevwu and Okereka (2025) relate e-governance to public-service performance in ministries in Delta and Edo States, Okonedo et al. (2025) assess the Niger Delta Development Commission and development administration in Delta State, and Augoye (2026) examines the performance of Public Accounts Committees in Delta, Ondo and Abia States. Taken together, these studies show that organisational routines, digital systems and oversight bodies are the channels through which institutional capacity is likely to affect outcomes, and the present result is consistent with each of them.

Other work qualifies the finding. Tochi (2026) compares state capacity and development performance across Nigerian subnational governments, and Eleyi and Ogidi (2026) identify a gap between the design of governance reforms and development outcomes between 1999 and 2025. Nwosu (2026) and Ukwandu (2020) reach comparable conclusions about reform and national development, while Attah et al. (2026) and Guled et al.

(2026) show how prebendal politics and corruption weaken accountability and service delivery. Pritchett et al. (2013) explain why: reforms that mimic the form of capable institutions can persist without improving implementation. The World Bank's Global Initiative for Public Administration Reform (World Bank, 2023) reflects the continuing international attention that such reform requires. The present finding is therefore best read as evidence that real institutional capacity matters, not that institutional structures on paper are sufficient. IOC also had the lowest mean score in Table 9, which is consistent with the view that Nigerian institutions have not yet fully converted capacity into results. Finally, the larger relative weight of IOC compared with HRC is consistent with the

conditional logic in Ofori et al. (2024), in which the benefit of human capital depends on the quality of governance. Where institutions are strong, skilled staff can use their competence; where they are weak, the same competence is wasted. This interpretation should be tested directly with mediation or interaction models.

Comparison of the Present Findings with the Reviewed Literature

Table 15 summarises how the main results compare with the studies discussed above. The classification reflects the stated focus of each study and the direction of its reported or argued conclusions.

Table 15: Summary Comparison of the Present Findings with Previous Studies

Study	Focus / context	Relation to present findings
Annan-Prah & Andoh (2023)	Administrative capacity and local development, Ghanaian assemblies; survey and SEM	Consistent: administrative capacity, including human-resource management, affects development
Del Monte et al. (2025)	Administrative capacity and speed of public spending, Italy	Consistent: capacity converts resources into outputs (supports H_{02} rejection)
Shybalkina (2024)	Administrative capacity and grant fund utilisation, USA	Consistent: financial administrative capacity linked to early spending; effect may fade over time
Ofori et al. (2024)	Human capital, governance and inclusive growth, 43 African countries	Consistent on human capital; adds that weak governance dampens its effect
Ogbeide-Osaretin et al. (2024)	Human capital, inequality and public investment, Nigeria	Consistent: human capital matters, but with feedback and dependence on public investment
Oyelude & Unegbu (2024); Ojenike & Shodiya (2025)	Human capital development with service delivery and growth, Nigeria	Consistent with the HRC finding
Pritchett et al. (2013); Eleyi & Ogidi (2026)	Capability traps; reform design versus outcomes	Qualifies: perceived capacity may overstate real implementation capability
Olowu (2024); Nwosu (2026); Ukwandu (2020)	Capacity building and reform in Nigeria's public sector	Qualifies: persistent weaknesses despite favourable perceived scores
Biose & Mukoro (2026); Ohwokevwu & Okereka (2025)	Agile methods and e-governance in Delta (and Edo) agencies and ministries	Consistent with the IOC finding: organisational systems relate to performance

Implications and Limitations

The results show that perceived human resource capacity and institutional/organisational capacity are both strongly and independently associated with perceived socio-economic development in the selected Delta State MDAs, and that together they explain a large share of its variance. The findings therefore support the view that administrative capacity is a necessary, though not sufficient, foundation for development. Theoretically, they add survey evidence from a Nigerian subnational setting to a literature that is dominated by cross-country and non-African studies. For practice, they indicate that investment in people should be paired with reform of procedures, coordination and accountability; the larger IOC coefficient suggests that the latter deserves at least equal priority. Several limitations should be noted. The design is cross-sectional and relies on self-reported perceptions from a single source, so the results indicate association rather than causation and may

be affected by common-method bias. The sample is dominated by senior and management staff. The study covers selected MDAs in one state, which limits generalisation. Finally, the 40.8% of unexplained variance indicates that financial resources, infrastructure, political stability, policy quality and intergovernmental relations were not modelled. Future research could use longitudinal or multi-source data, objective performance indicators, and mediation or moderation models.

Conclusion

The study concludes that public-sector administrative capacity is an important institutional foundation for socio-economic development in the selected MDAs in Delta State, Nigeria. Both human resource capacity and institutional/organisational capacity are significantly and positively associated with socio-economic development, and together they explain 59.2% of its variance. Regarding

the first objective, human resource capacity has a significant positive relationship with socio-economic development. Competent, adequately trained and appropriately deployed personnel are better positioned to implement policies, administer programmes and deliver services. Regarding the second objective, institutional/organisational capacity has a significant positive relationship with socio-economic development and carries the larger relative weight in the model. Effective structures, clear responsibilities, efficient procedures, coordination and accountability create the environment in which public servants can perform. The two dimensions are complementary: skilled personnel achieve little where organisational systems are weak, and good structures perform poorly without competent staff. Strengthening administrative capacity should not, however, be regarded as sufficient on its own, because the unexplained variance indicates that financial resources, infrastructure, policy consistency, political and economic conditions, accountability and implementation effectiveness also matter.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Delta State Government and the management of the selected MDAs should strengthen continuous training, merit-based recruitment, promotion and deployment of personnel according to qualifications, competencies and experience, and should include digital skills in training plans. Better competence and placement should improve policy implementation and service delivery.
- ii. The selected MDAs should improve organisational structures, inter-agency coordination, accountability, digital administration, resource provision, evidence-based decision-making and continuous performance assessment. Because institutional capacity carried the larger weight in the model, reforms should aim at real implementation capability and not only at formal structures.
- iii. Reform and capacity-building programmes should be assessed with objective performance indicators, such as project completion times and budget-implementation rates, alongside staff perceptions.

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