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Analysing the Impact of Government Expenditure on Economic Development in Nigeria

Sunday Chukwuedon Nwakwanogo
Department of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delta, Agbor
sundaynwakwanogo@unidel.edu.ng

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Abstract: *The broad aim of this study is to investigate how government expenditures affect economic development in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Keynesian theory and adopted the ex post facto research design. Data for the study was collected from secondary sources such as the Central Bank of Nigeria statistical bulletin and World Bank Development Indicators for the period 2000 to 2024. Findings of the study offers evidence of significant positive impact of government expenditure on education, expenditure on health, and expenditure on agriculture on economic development. Overall, the empirical result showed that government expenditures have a significant positive relationship with economic development in Nigeria and recommended that government should increase budgetary allocation for education and health to at least 15% to 25% of the total budget.*

Keywords: government expenditure, expenditure on education, expenditure on health, expenditure on agriculture, economic development, per capita income

INTRODUCTION

Fiscal crises accredited to the bearing of government expenditure on economic growth had been historically argued all over the world. Governments need taxes and other charges from people to finance their expenditures. The government must prioritize recurring and capital expenditure to boost economic development. Governments also build important infrastructure and social amenities that may boost economic growth and reduce poverty. To achieve these expectations, emerging nations like Nigeria have expanded economic control and management (Okere et al., 2019).

Government expenditure is incurred to supply public goods that are important for the survival of citizens and the nation which cannot be provided by the private sector (Barilee & LeyiraChristain,

2021). It is borne out of revenue allocation referred to as redistributions of fiscal policy among various levels of government. Government spending goes to various sectors such as the nation's defense, transportation and communication, education, power, health care, housing, and welfare benefits, among others (Omodero, 2019; Selvanathan et al., 2021).

However, the government's interference in the economy does not automatically guarantee stability. Government expenditure has kept on rising in Nigeria as a result of massive earnings from crude oil, and this has led to an increased demand for public goods. However, the rise in government expenditure has not brought about meaningful growth, because Nigeria is still classified to be among the poorest countries of the world. For instance, the government involvement in the economy of Nigeria did not prevent the oil shock of the 1970s, the financial crisis of 2007, Nigeria's economic recession of 2016 or the global recession of 2020. Suffice to say, that the government roles have become more relevant in developing countries where income, output and employment are low. These countries are characterised by internal and external imbalances and instability, lack of social amenities, poor human capital development, and high poverty rates, thus, making government an essential agent of reducing the socio-economic problems these countries face.

Government expenditure is an important instrument employed to control the economy of the country and it plays a significant role in economic growth and development of any economy. Government expenditure and its effect on economic growth has been an issue of concern and interest for decades. Government expenditure and its relationship with economic growth has been a topical issue, generating heated arguments among scholars. Studies such as Nzechukwu and Onodi (2024), and Osasona et al. (2024) argued that an increase in government expenditure on socioeconomic and physical infrastructure enhances economic growth contending that government expenditure on health, education, and housing improves the productivity of labor and national output. Ranjan et al. (2022), and Okoye et al. (2019), also supported the postulation that an increase in government expenditure enhances economic growth. Conversely, research by Khan et al. (2020); and Jelilov and Musa (2016) held a divergent view and affirmed that an increase in government expenditure usually decelerates the overall growth of the economy. Also worthy of note is that the discrepancy between the Nigerian economic growth and the quantum of government spending over the years raises critical questions on the role of government in promoting economic growth and development.

Several factors motivate this study. First, the study is entrenched in the trust that government expenditure quickens the economic growth of any economy. The state of matters concerning government expenditure is an interesting question that has attracted so much debate in the public domain. Equally, government expenditure poses an unusual problem despite the supposed crucial roles played in economic growth. Therefore, the product of this study is beneficial to the three tiers of government especially those charged with the responsibility of managing government treasury. Second, the study will provide an understanding of areas where public funds can be effectively allocated to promote economic development and will therefore stand as a pointer for government

and stakeholders to make balanced decisions as to the origination and allocation of public funds among competing needs within the economy to promote economic growth.
On this premise, this research reevaluates government expenditure's influence on Nigeria's economic development.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows: Section two focuses on the literature review with emphasis on theoretical framework. Section three addresses the methodology and model specification. Section four presents the estimation result and discussion of findings. Section five concludes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Economic Development

The term development until recently meant growth measured by Gross National Product (GNP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or rise in per capital income. However, recent studies have shown that t development is not growth (Bassanini et al., 2021). Development can be seen as growth coupled with social justice. Liu et al. (2018) suggested that economic development implies changes that lead to improvement or progress because it is believed that an economy that raises its per capita level of real income over time without transforming its social and economic structure in unlikely to be perceived as developing.

Okolo et al. (2018) define economic developments as achieving a set of social goals, since goals are bound to change over time, economic development is, to some extent, a process. An economy in the process of economic development is likely to experience a combination of three sets of change; first, an advancement in utility which a major factor contributing to advance in well being in real income per capita. Also, an advancement where need be in the realms of education, health and general quality of life. Lastly, a self-esteem and self-respect which pertains a growing sense of independence from domination by other countries or at times from the state which is a major characteristic of an economy that can be said to be developed.

GDP per capita as an economic development indicator cannot be measured without GDP and population hence is the most reasons why previous studies such as Onakoya and Somoye (2023), Chude and Chude (2023), and Edame and Nwankwo (2016) have argued that it is the best possible way of measuring economic development of a country. This study adopted per capita income as a measure of economic development.

Government Expenditure

Government expenditure is incurred by the government to maintain institutions, the economy, and society. It tends to increase over time as expansion in development and government activities keep increasing. Aluthge et al. (2021) define government expenditure as a fiscal instrument that plays an important role in moderating inflation, unemployment, recession, balance of payment equilibrium, and foreign exchange rate stability. In Nigeria, the federal government’s expenditure

is divided into capital and recurrent expenditure. The recurrent expenditure deals with expenditure on administration such as wages, salaries, interest on loans, and maintenance. Capital expenditures are expenditures for education, housing, power supply, transportation, work, electricity, and water. Capital expenditures are investments with multiplier effects on the economy in terms of public benefits. In most cases, government expenditure is an intervention that brings income stability and employment to the economy.

Ogboru (2010) sees government spending as a budgetary process that encompasses both operating and capital expenditure. These expenses are necessary to maintain government operations. Recurrent spending may boost productivity, labor efficiency, and savings, which boosts economic development. Nwala and Ogboji (2020), Egbuwalo and Abere (2019), and Ogboru (2010) define recurring expenditure as all government general administrative spending that occurs repeatedly.

Theoretical Framework: Keynesian Theory

Keynesian theory was propounded by John M. Keynes in 1936. Keynesian theory state that increase in government budget has an expansionary effect on income and employment through the multiplier effects on economic development. On the other side, government expenditure crowds out private investment as a result of increase in the rate of interest and this slows down economic growth and reduces the rate of capital accumulation in the long run. Keynes also considered government expenditure as an exogenous variable that contributes positively to economic development (Johnson & Wasiu, 2016). Hence, an increase in government expenditure would likely lead to increase in employment, per capita income, human capital development and economic development

With the introduction of government expenditure (G) by Keynes, the national income determination model is expanded which becomes;

$$Y = C+I+G$$

Where, Y represents aggregate income which equals the sum of consumption (C), Investment (I), and Government expenditure (G). The government expenditure has direct and positive impact on the GDP. An increase in government expenditure will boost aggregate demand, resulting in higher level of national income. All things being equal, an increase in government spending has an expansionary effect on output and income while a decrease has contractionary effect on output and income. Keynesian theory relate to the study on the ground that the study stated that increases in government expenditure will likely lead to increase in economic development in terms of per capita income and human capital development index of a particular country

Empirical Review

Various research works have tried to ascertain the effect of government expenditure on the economy. Babatunde (2018) assessed the relationship between capital expenditure and economic growth in Nigeria using secondary data that covered the period from 1980 to 2016. Weighted least

square was adopted for analysis. The Vector Error Correction model was used as an estimation technique to test the hypotheses formulated. The study found that government spending on transport, communication, education, and health services has a significant effect on economic growth. While the spending on agriculture and natural resources hurt economic growth in Nigeria. The study concluded that allocation to agriculture should be increased and efficiently utilized to produce the desired results.

Similarly, Okere et al. (2019) examined the relationship between of government expenditure and economic growth in Nigeria. Information was obtained from the Statistical Bulletin of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for the years 1981 to 2016. Granger Causality test results demonstrated bidirectional causality between economic growth and government expenditure on administration, as well as between economic growth and government expenditure on economic services. Economic growth exhibits a unidirectional causality with Community Services.

Onifade et al. (2020) examined the impact of public expenditures on economic growth in Nigeria. Capital and recurrent expenditures, and government fiscal expansion was the main focus. Pesaran's ARDL approach was used and data from 1981 to 2017. It identified a proportional link between public spending and economic growth, with recurrent expenditures adversely affecting growth, and positive effects of public capital expenditures being negligible. Granger Causality Test results underscored that government fiscal expansion, largely reliant on debt financing, significantly Granger causes public expenditures and domestic investment, the latter also Granger causing real growth. The study concluded with crucial policy recommendations derived from these empirical findings.

Aluthge et al. (2021) investigated the impact of government expenditure on economic growth in Nigeria. Time series data that covered the period of 1970-2019 was adopted for the study. Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) technique was used for analysis. The unit root test revealed structural breaks and the co-integration analysis was adopted to examine the robustness of the results. Findings showed that capital expenditure exerted a positive and significant impact on economic growth both in the short and long run. While the recurrent expenditure did not either in the short run or long run. The study concluded that the government's spending patterns of recurrent expenditure have not been judiciously allocated when compared with productive activities that enhance human development. Acheampong et al. (2022) investigated the impact of transport infrastructure and technological innovation on economic growth (GDP), energy consumption (EC) and carbon emissions (CO2e) in the European Union (EU). The study used the dynamic system-generalized method of moment and data from 1995 to 2019. The study revealed that higher energy consumption (EC) is linked to a one-way increase in GDP, while GDP and EC have a reciprocal association with carbon emissions (CO2e). Technological innovation contributes directly to both GDP and EC. In contrast, freight transport infrastructure positively influences GDP and CO2e but decreases EC simultaneously. Consequently, EU nations should prioritize and bolster technological innovation as a means to attain energy efficiency.

Duruibe et al. (2023) investigated the effect of government public expenditures on Nigeria's economic development using the sectorial economic function approach. They employed the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a proxy for economic development while government's expenditures on administrative services, economic services, social and community services, and transfers were used as the predictor variables in the study. Surprisingly, the results from the cointegration test and Vector Error Correction Model estimate reveal that all the predictor variables, apart from expenditure on administration, have a positive relationship with economic growth. While expenditures on economic services and social and community services have positive and significant relationship with economic growth, government transfers has a positive but insignificant relationship with economic development. Emphatically, expenditure on administrative services has a significant negative relationship with economic development.
Amadi and Alolote (2023) examined the effects of government infrastructural expenditure on economic development in Nigeria. Secondary data sourced from reported annual spending on selected infrastructure and annual Gross Domestic Products were statistically analyzed. The data treatment used for the secondary data were unit root and co- integration tests using Augmented Dickey–Fuller and Phillip–Perron model. Weighted least square was also used to test the sample of 37-year annual time series using vector error correction model. The data analysis was done with descriptive statistics. Findings from the study revealed that, government spending on transport, communication, education, and health infrastructure have significant effects on economic growth; spending on agriculture and natural resources infrastructure recorded a significant inverse effect on economic growth in Nigeria. An element of fiscal illusion was observed in the government spending on agriculture and natural resources indicating that government is not contributing as much as the private sector in spending on agriculture and natural resources infrastructure in Nigeria.

Osasona et al. (2024) analyzed the impact of government expenditure on Nigeria's economic growth from 1986 to 2021 using the Auto Regression Distributed Lag (ARDL) model. It focused on government capital expenditure, recurrent expenditure, and total expenditure. The Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) was used as a proxy for economic growth, while total capital expenditure, total recurrent expenditure, total expenditure, and domestic debt financing were used as explanatory variables. The results showed that total capital expenditure was positive and insignificant, while total recurrent expenditure was positive and insignificant. Total expenditure was negative and insignificant, while domestic debt finance showed a positive relationship with GDP in the long run. The study concluded that government expenditure indices had an insignificant impact on economic growth in the long-run.

Oguntuase et al. (2024) study delves into the relationship between capital expenditure and economic growth over a three-decade period, spanning from 1992 to 2021. The ex-post facto research design was adopted, using historical data extracted from Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) statistical bulletins. Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) unit root test was carried out to test for the stability of data. Co-integration test was done with Johansen and Engle-Granger methods. Findings showed that, when lagged by one year, government expenditure on education has a positive and

insignificant relationship with gross domestic product. While government expenditure on healthcare has a positive and significant relationship with the gross domestic product; government expenditure on transportation has a negative and insignificant relationship with the gross domestic product; and government expenditure on agriculture has a negative and significant relationship with the gross domestic product. The study concluded that budgetary allocation and implementation of expenditure on education, transport, and agriculture were not properly allocated and utilized to improve the nation's productive capacity.

Nzechukwu and Onodi (2024) examined the effect of government expenditure on economic development in Nigeria. To achieve the objectives of the study ex-post facto research design was adopted. Secondary data was used to generate data from CBN statistical bulletin. The data covered from 1990 to 2021. Data was analyzed using error correction regression model. The findings revealed that Government expenditure (capital expenditure, recurrent expenditure) has no significant effect on gross domestic product in Nigeria but no significant effect on per capital income in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommended that public expenditure is an important fiscal instrument; therefore government can use it to control the economy by ensuring that budget allocation towards capital and recurrent expenditure are well utilized for increase in gross domestic product in Nigeria.

Research Design and Methods

This study employed an ex-post factor research design. This is because the study aimed at exploring cause and effect relationships. Secondary data obtained from CBN Statistical Bulletin, and World Bank Development Indicators were used for the empirical analysis. The study covers a sample period from 2000 to 2024.

The model specification is based on the Keynesian theory, which states that economic development is a positive function of government expenditure. The Keynesian national income model is given as follows:

$Y=C+I+G$ …….(1)
where Y represents national income; C – private consumption expenditure; I – private investment; G – government expenditure. For the sake of this research, the Keynesian model (all things being equal) will be given as follows:
$Y=\beta_0+G$
The functional relationship is given as:
PCI =f (EEdu, EHlt, EAgr)……..(2)
The mathematical specification of the model for the study is as follows:
$PCI_t=\beta_0+\beta_1 EEdu_t + \beta_2 EHlt_t + \beta_3 EAgr_t + U_t$…….(3)
where

PCI = per capita income, EEdu = Expenditure on Education, EHlt = Expenditure on Health, EAgr = Expenditure on Agriculture, β_0 is the intercept or constant term while U_t is the error term; β_1-β_3 are parameters to be estimated while t = time dimension in years.
The economic development was measured with per capita income while the proxies for capital expenditure were expenditure on education, healthcare, and agriculture as contained in the Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletins and Annual Reports. The study covers a period of 25 years (2000-2024).

Data Analysis and Discussion

Pre-Estimation Test Results

Unit Root Test

Table 1: Unit Root Test Results

Variable	ADF Statistics	Critical value @5%	Level of Stationarity
PCI	-1.53614	-1.018681	I(0)
EEdu	-2.82614	-1.043536	I(0)
EHlt	-1.22107	-1.020632	I(0)
EAgr	-1.12772	-0.040111	I(0)

Source: Researcher's computation with the aid of E-View 10

Unit root test is taken to check the stationarity of the variables used in estimating the model. From the table 1 above, the unit root test result revealed that Per capita income, expenditure on education, expenditure on health, and expenditure on agriculture were stationary at level I(0), thus, warrant the use of regression result and Hence, the data used were free from spurious results.

Heteroskedasticity Test

The Breusch-Pagan test was implemented to evaluate the stability of research variances across observational errors, thereby assessing the presence of homoscedasticity. Table 2 encapsulates the key findings of this analysis, informing subsequent data analysis and interpretation.

Table 2: Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Statistic	Value	P-value
F-statistic	2.476862	0.2125
Obs*R-squared	1.821425	0.2319
Scaled explained SS	3.033249	0.2179

Source: Researcher's computation with the aid of E-View 10

Analysis of the model variance stability employed the Breusch-Pagan test, generating a p-value exceeding the established significance level of 0.05. This statistically non-significant outcome indicates that the model does not exhibit heteroscedasticity, meaning the variances of the residuals remain constant across the observations. Consequently, the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity is accepted, implying a valid assumption for further analysis.

Autocorrelation Test

Utilizing the Breusch test as a diagnostic tool, this research delved into the question of whether first-order autocorrelation was present within the model. The underlying assumption for this investigation was the absence of such autocorrelation, which served as the null hypothesis. Furthermore, the analysis adhered to a significance level of 0.05. The detailed results of this assessment are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Autocorrelation Test Results

Statistic	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
F-statistic	3247.498	2210.460	6466.351
Prob > F	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Source: Researcher's computation with the aid of E-View 10

Employing the Breusch test with a pre-defined significance level of 0.05, the study investigated the potential presence of first-order autocorrelation within the model. The analysis yielded a statistically significant p-values 0.0000 falling below the threshold of 0.05. This statistically significant finding provides evidence against the null hypothesis of no autocorrelation, leading to its rejection and the subsequent conclusion that first-order autocorrelation is present within the regression models. However, this problem was corrected through the deployment of the robust standard error test conducted in the survey.

Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Result

The Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Result of the study variables generated from E-views 10 computer software are presented in table 5 below;

Table 5: Ordinary Least Square Result

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
EEdu	0.223152	0.043520	0.263539	0.0000
EHlt	0.176773	0.137350	0.313251	0.0000
EAgr	0.212732	1.224205	0.686758	0.0000
C	14.45222	5.535336	0.152366	0.0004

Source: Researcher's Computation with the aid of E-views 10

Table 5 contained the multiple linear regression estimation result. The result revealed a positive relationship between Expenditure on education (EEdu) and economic development (PCI) with coefficient value of 0.223152 and probability value of 0.0000. A positive relationship exists between Expenditure on health and economic development (PCI) with coefficient value of 0.176773 and probability value of 0.0000. A positive relationship exists between expenditure on agriculture and economic development (PCI) with coefficient value of 0.2122732 and probability value of 0.0004. The result conforms to the *apriori* expectations stated earlier. Thus, from the OLS result, the regression equation becomes:

PCI= 14.45222 + 0.223152EEdu + 0.176773EHlt + 0.2122732EAgr

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examines the impact of government expenditure on economic development in Nigeria. Proxy of economic growth used in the study was per capita income while proxies for government expenditure are expenditure on education, expenditure on healthcare, and expenditure on agriculture. The results of the empirical analysis conducted are discusses in the following subsection.

First, findings revealed that government expenditure on education has a significant positive impact on economic development in Nigeria. This finding is in line with Oguntuase et al. (2024) who noted that capital expenditure on educational infrastructures in developing countries promote economic growth. The finding meets our expectation as we anticipated that expenditure on education will improve both human capital index as well as promote economic development in terms of income per capita for citizens.

More so, findings revealed that expenditure on health has a significant positive impact on economic development in Nigeria. This finding meets our expectation and corroborates the research of Babatunde (2018) and Oguntuase et al. (2024) who stated that expenditure on health can positively influence economic development in Nigeria.

Finally, finding revealed that expenditure on agriculture has a significant positive impact on economic development in Nigeria. In line with this finding, Aluthge et al. (2021), Duruibe et al. (2023), and Osasona et al. (2024) who observed that investment in agriculture can boost the economy of any nation and that agriculture creates an enabling environment to improve the living standards of citizens by having food security and developing export potentials.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The broad aim of this study is to investigate how government expenditures affect economic development in Nigeria. The study adopted three constructs namely government expenditure on education, expenditure on health, and expenditure on agriculture which we hypothesize as variables that may influence per capita income used as proxy for economic development. Indeed,

our study offers evidence of significant positive impact of government expenditure on education, expenditure on health, and expenditure on agriculture on economic development and have been supported in existing literature. Overall, the empirical result showed that government expenditure has significant positive relationship with economic development in Nigeria as shown from the regression estimates.

In line with the findings of the study, it is hereby recommended that government should increase budgetary allocation for education and health. There should be an increase in the annual investments in the education and health sectors to at least 15% to 25% of the total budget.
Also, it is advised that the government increase allocation to the agricultural sector and monitor such allocated funds.

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