

An Exploration of Social and Economic Impacts of Rural Access and Mobility Project Among Residents in Osun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Despite the potential benefits of rural access and mobility projects, there is a dearth of empirical research on the long-term socioeconomic impacts of such projects on rural communities in Osun State, Nigeria. This study, therefore, explored social and economic impacts of rural access and mobility project among residents in Osun State, Nigeria with a view to examining the socio-demographic characteristics of the residents and social and economic impact of the RAMP projects on the residents, respectively.

The study was anchored on Growth Pole Theory (GPT) and Rural Accessibility Theory (RAT), while concurrent mixed-method design approach was employed. Four-hundred and fifty respondents residing within the RAMP-2 projects regions comprised Iwo, Ife and Ilesha were sampled using both probability and non-probability sampling procedures. A self-designed instrument was used to obtained information from the participants. Descriptive statistics comprised simple percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used for quantitative data analysis, while the responses from the KII were thematically analysed.

The results indicated that the RAMP project increased access to educational institutions, make educational resources readily available and accessible, ease an access to information and communication services, expansion in the access to markets for selling products, improved access to clean water, substantive reduction in dropout rates, promote access to education for vulnerable groups, among others.

The study concluded that RAMP project had social and economic impacts on the resident of the communities under investigation. Therefore, officials should prioritise addressing inadequate institutional capacity and insufficient coordination among stakeholders; and prioritise the establishment of a dedicated project management unit, strengthening stakeholder coordination, and building local government capacity to ensure project success among others.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rural road infrastructure is essential for improving livelihoods and promoting agricultural growth, especially in emerging areas like Osun State in Nigeria. Roads are vital for economic growth because they connect farmers in rural areas to markets, make it easier to move agricultural products and inputs, and increase access to vital services like banking, healthcare, and education (Musa & Yusuf, 2022; Adamu & Kawugana, 2025). Despite Osun State's enormous agricultural potential, many rural towns are still separated because of inadequate road systems, which impede overall rural development, market expansion, and productivity.

In Osun State Nigeria, agriculture is the foundation of rural economies, making a substantial contribution to employment, revenue generation, and food production. However, farmers' capacity to move goods effectively is hampered by inadequate road infrastructure, which results in post-harvest losses, expensive transportation, and limited access to better market prospects (Adamu & Kawugana, 2025). Better rural roads may boost commerce, attract investments in agribusiness, and increase economic activity, all of which can help to reduce rural poverty and advance sustainable development (Aruna, 2019; Aransi, 2019). World Bank. (2019) corroborated that rural roads increase socioeconomic well-being by providing better access to financial institutions, healthcare, education, and marketplaces. Poor road infrastructure restricts farmers' production and market involvement in many developing nations, including Nigeria.

Transportation is one of several variables that affect sustainable rural development. Rural economic promotion, information transmission, people movement, and the gathering and exchange of commodities and services are all facilitated by efficient and effective rural transportation. As immobility perpetrates poverty on the other hand, efficient transit makes it easier to access rural areas' natural potential, which may be used to boost their economies. Therefore, the provision of rural transport is an essential component of rural development plans, acting as a mechanism and catalyst for rural transformation through the reinforcement of rural development and reducing poverty by improving efficiency and equality outcomes (Adedeji, et al., 2014; Pius & Frank, 2024). In addition to social benefits like increased safety (fewer injuries and fatalities), better connectivity and access to social services, shorter travel times and costs for road users, increased city competitiveness, increased investment appeal, business development opportunities for local entrepreneurs, and improved quality of life, improving road adequacy also significantly boosts national and regional economic growth (Gichaga 2017; Khanani et al., 2021; Muvawala et al. 2021; Ghosh & Dinda 2022; Stjernborg 2023).

However, there can be a number of unintended detrimental effects on the environment and society from road construction and the facilities they are linked with, including borrow-pits and workers' camps, particularly when they are badly executed (Clements et al, 2018; Ogwang & Vanclay 2019; Vilela et al., 2020; Vijayakumar et al., 2023; Wan et al., 2024). The construction of new roadways can lead to the displacement of residents living along the planned route. Similarly, the expansion or improvement of existing roadways can have a temporary or permanent impact on roadside vendors, significantly affecting their livelihoods and means of sustenance in both scenarios. Furthermore, concerns arise regarding the workforce, typically dominated by men, and the potential risks of project-induced migration or influx to nearby communities (Gerriets, 2024). Inadequate planning, execution, and management of road and other projects can result in conflicts with local communities, project delays, increased costs, road safety concerns, and potentially irreversible social and environmental impacts (Hanna et al., 2016; Alamgir et al., 2017; Esteves et al., 2017; Vanclay & Hanna 2019).

The Rural Access and Mobility Project in Osun State, Nigeria, has significant links to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By improving rural infrastructure and transportation, the project contributes to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Enhanced mobility and access also promote economic growth, aligning with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Additionally, the project improves access to healthcare, education, and markets, supporting SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 1 (No Poverty), respectively. This would ultimately enhance the overall quality of life for residents in Osun State, Nigeria.

The RAMP would directly contribute to SDG 9 by improving rural infrastructure, particularly roads and transportation systems. This would enhance connectivity, facilitate the movement of goods and people, and increase access to markets, services, and opportunities. The investment in infrastructure development would foster economic growth, promote entrepreneurship, and

creates an enabling environment for businesses to thrive. The project aligns with SDG 11 by promoting sustainable and inclusive rural development. As an improvement in the access to rural areas would help to reduce disparities between urban and rural communities and thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. It would also support the development of resilient and sustainable infrastructure, which is critical for building vibrant and thriving communities.

The Rural Access and Mobility Project promotes economic growth and decent work in Osun State by enhancing access to markets, employment opportunities, and services. Improved infrastructure and transportation systems enable businesses to operate more efficiently, increase trade, and create jobs. The project would also support entrepreneurship and innovation, allowing rural residents to participate in the economy and improve their livelihoods. By stimulating economic activity, the project contributes to achieving SDG 8. The project would contribute to SDG 3 by improving access to healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. Enhanced mobility and transportation infrastructure enable residents to reach healthcare facilities more easily, reducing travel times and increasing the likelihood of seeking medical attention when needed. This is particularly important for vulnerable populations, such as pregnant women, children, and the elderly (Aransi, 2019). By improving access to healthcare, the project would promote better health outcomes and well-being for rural residents.

The Rural Access and Mobility Project support SDG 4 by enhancing access to education services in rural areas. Improved transportation infrastructure enables students to attend school more regularly, reducing absenteeism and increasing the likelihood of completing their education. Teachers and educational resources can also be more easily transported to rural areas, improving the quality of education. By promoting access to education, the project contributes to achieving SDG 4. The project would contribute to SDG 1 by reducing poverty in rural areas. Improved access to markets, employment opportunities, and services enables residents to increase their income and economic stability. Enhanced mobility and transportation infrastructure also facilitate access to social services, such as healthcare and education, which are critical for poverty reduction (Akinyooye & Aransi, 2020). By promoting economic growth and improving access to essential services, the project would help reduce poverty and improve the overall well-being of rural residents (Aransi, 2020).

Despite the potential benefits of rural access and mobility projects, there is a dearth of empirical research on the long-term socioeconomic impacts of such projects on rural communities in Nigeria, particularly in Osun State. Existing studies have primarily focused on the physical infrastructure and economic benefits, with limited attention to the social and economic consequences. This study aims to explore the social and economic impacts of the Rural Access and Mobility Project among residents in Osun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study's main objective was to explore the social and economic impacts of rural access and mobility project (RAMP) among residents in Osun state, Nigeria, while, the specific objectives are to;

- 1) investigate the socio-demographic characteristics of the residents within rural access and mobility project in Osun State, Nigeria; and
- 2) assess social and economic impact of the rural access and mobility project among residents in Osun State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- 1) What is the socio-demographic characteristics of the residents within rural access and mobility project in Osun State, Nigeria?
- 2) What is the social and economic impact of the rural access and mobility project among residents in Osun State, Nigeria?

2. METHOD, DATA, ANALYSIS

This study employed a concurrent mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in a single study (Sharma et al., 2023). This design is particularly useful for exploring complex research issues, as it allows researchers to gather insights from multiple perspectives and data sources. By integrating quantitative data (often obtained

through questionnaires) with qualitative data (typically collected through in-depth interviews), researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The mixed-methods approach offers several benefits, including a more complete picture of the research issue, increased confidence in the findings, and the potential for new research directions. By combining open-ended qualitative data with closed-ended quantitative data, researchers can intentionally combine data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This approach enables researchers to tackle complex issues with greater depth and breadth, leveraging the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a richer understanding of the subject matter (Sharma et al., 2023; Aransi, *et al.*, 2026).

The study's target population consisted of rural dwellers residing in villages connected by the RAMP project and RAMP officials in Osun State, Nigeria. Yaro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample frame of four-hundred and fifty (450) out of ten-thousand five-hundred and ninety-six (10,596) residents from the six communities. Iwo, Ife and Ilesha regions were purposively sampled. This was because the RAMP project under consideration focused largely on these three regions within the state. Proportionate stratified and simple random sampling procedures were used to select one-hundred and forty-two (142), one-hundred and thirty-five (135) and one-hundred and seventy-three (173) from Iwo, Ife and Ilesha project regions, respectively. An interview guide was prepared and used for KII.

The study employed a self-designed instrument. This instrument comprised demographic, road infrastructure sustainability subscale and effective strategies subscale, respectively. The Likert scale used ranges from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). This section of the scale was analysed using frequency and percentage of the respondents that picked each of the scale for each item, while mean and standard deviation were used to determine and rank the items in descending order of magnitude.

The instrument's validity was ensured through face and content validation. The items were presented in clear and straightforward language to ensure understandability. The instrument was reviewed by experts at the Institute of Global Affairs and Sustainable Development (GASDI) at Osun State University, and all suggested corrections and observations were incorporated. The instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha method, with 20 respondents from farming communities outside the study area. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient produced 0.87 which confirmed its reliability for the study.

The questionnaire was administered and. Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with 15 participants, comprising 4 RAMP officials, 9 rural dwellers, and 2 commercial transporters. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. The mean, standard deviation, and correlation analysis were used for answering all the research questions, while responses from the KII were thematically analysed.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Female	257	61
	Male	165	39
Total		422	100%
Age	19-29	144	34
	30-39	42	10
	40-49	114	27
	50 and above	122	29
Total		422	100%
Highest Educational Qualifications	No Formal Education	160	38
	Primary	53	13
	Secondary	119	28
	NCE/OND	90	21
Total		422	100%
Religious	Islam	186	44

	Christianity	198	47
	Traditional	38	9
	Total	422	100%
Primary Occupation	Farming	233	55
	Trading	109	26
	Transporting	18	4
	Others	62	15
	Total	422	100%

Table 1 shows that that 257 of the total respondents were females while 165 were males. The gender representation suggests the residents of the RAMPs projects in the three regions had slightly higher female residents than their male counterparts. The findings indicated that one-hundred and forty-four (144), forty-two (42), one-hundred and fourteen (114), and one-hundred and twenty-two (122) of the sampled participants were between 19 and 29, 30 and 39, 40 and 49 as well as 50 years of age and above, respectively. It is indicated that the vast majority of the respondents are within their youthful and active age range of 19–29 and 50 years and above, accounting for 34% and 30% of the total representation. The finding aligns with Adeyinka et al., (2020) who reported that 35% of participants were between 19 and 29 years old, 12% were between 30 and 39 years old, 28% were between 40 and 49 years old, and 25% were 50 years old or above.

Table 1 further shows that one-hundred and sixty (160) respondents had no formal education, fifty-three (53) and one-hundred and nineteen (119) had primary and secondary school certificates, respectively, while ninety (90) of them had Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) or Ordinary National Diploma (OND). However, nine of them had first degree or Higher National Diploma (HND) certificates, Master degree and a Ph. D certificate. The findings also indicated that one-hundred and eighty-six (186), one-hundred and ninety-eight (198) and thirty-eight (38) of the sampled respondents were Muslim, Christian and Traditional worshippers, respectively. Finally, the results indicated that two-hundred and thirty-three (233) participants, which amounted to 55% claimed that farming was their primary occupation. One-hundred and nine (109), and eighteen (18) claimed that their primary occupation was trading and transporting, respectively while sixty-two (62) of them were into other occupation. This showcases that the residents of the RAMP projects in the three regions were farming by their primary occupation.

Table 1. Social and Economic Impact of the Rural Access and Mobility Project among Residents in Osun State, Nigeria

Items	Mean($\bar{x}$)	S. D	Rank
Community development initiatives are highly effective.	3.41	1.34	1 st
The project has increased access to educational institutions.	3.16	1.24	2 nd
Educational resources are readily available.	3.08	1.25	3 rd
Access to information and communication services is reliable.	3.02	1.36	4 th
The project has expanded access to markets for selling products.	3.00	1.46	5 th
The project has improved access to clean water.	2.95	1.38	6 th
Dropout rates have decreased substantially.	2.94	1.16	7 th
Education is now more accessible to vulnerable groups.	2.84	1.47	8 th
Children's attendance and participation in school have improved.	2.83	1.34	9 th
Social protection services are effective.	2.76	1.15	10 th
Household income has increased substantially.	2.62	1.34	11 th
Economic opportunities are now more accessible to vulnerable groups.	2.59	1.13	12 th
Sanitation facilities are widely available.	2.25	1.32	13 th
Economic activities have increased significantly.	1.78	0.94	14 th

The results in Table 2 indicated that the residents considered RAMP project as a component of community development initiatives highly effective ($\bar{x}$ =3.41) ranked first, increased access to educational institutions ($\bar{x}$ =3.16) ranked second, make educational resources readily available and accessible ($\bar{x}$ =3.08) ranked third, ease an access to information and communication services ($\bar{x}$ =3.02) ranked fourth, great expansion in the access to markets for selling products

($\bar{x}$ =3.00) ranked fifth, improved access to clean water ($\bar{x}$ =2.95) ranked sixth, substantive reduction in dropout rates ($\bar{x}$ =2.94) ranked seventh, promote access to education for vulnerable groups ($\bar{x}$ =2.84) ranked eighth, children's attendance and participation in school have improved ($\bar{x}$ =2.83) ranked ninth, social protection services provided by the official are effective ($\bar{x}$ =2. 2.76) ranked tenth, household income has increased substantially ($\bar{x}$ =2.62) ranked eleventh, economic opportunities are more accessible to vulnerable groups via the implementation of the project ($\bar{x}$ =2.59) ranked twelfth, sanitation facilities are widely available ($\bar{x}$ =2.25) ranked thirteenth, and economic activities have increased significantly ($\bar{x}$ =1.78) ranked fourteenth.

The empirical study revealed that the residents perceived the RAMP project as having a positive impact on various aspects of community development, education, and social protection. Specifically, the residents considered the RAMP project as a component of community development initiatives to be highly effective, with a mean score of 3.41. Additionally, increased access to educational institutions ($\bar{x}$ =3.16), educational resources availability ($\bar{x}$ =3.08), access to information and communication services ($\bar{x}$ =3.02), expansion in market access ($\bar{x}$ =3.00), and improved access to clean water ($\bar{x}$ =2.95) were also perceived as effective.

The study also found that the RAMP project had a positive impact on education outcomes, including reduction in dropout rates ($\bar{x}$ =2.94), promoting education for vulnerable groups ($\bar{x}$ =2.84), and improved children's attendance and participation in school ($\bar{x}$ =2.83). Furthermore, the residents perceived the social protection services provided by the project as effective ($\bar{x}$ =2.76). The project's impact on household income ($\bar{x}$ =2.62) and economic opportunities for vulnerable groups ($\bar{x}$ =2.59) were also perceived as positive. These empirical findings are further supported by the submission made by the RAMP officials, commercial transporters and rural dwellers interviewed as thus:

The World Bank Assisted Rural Access and Mobility Project has achieved significant milestones in Osun State, Nigeria, with rural communities now enjoying improved access to social and economic services, thereby enhancing their economic prospects, health, education, and overall well-being **(Male/RAMP-Official/ Osun/KII/2024).**

Provide all-season access to rural communities, thereby facilitating the movement of people, goods, and services. As a result, rural dwellers now have better access to markets, healthcare facilities, schools, and other essential services, which has ultimately contributed to the socio-economic development of the region **(Male/RAMP-Official/ Osun/KII/2024).**

RAMP projects benefit commercial transporters in the community by improving road infrastructure, reducing transportation costs, increasing efficiency, and enhancing access to markets, thereby boosting productivity and profitability **(Male/Ilesha Axis/Transporter/Osun/KII/2024).**

RAMP projects benefit commercial transporters by decreasing travel times, improving road safety, and reducing vehicle maintenance costs, resulting in increased competitiveness and higher earnings for transporters **(Male/Ife Axis/Transporter/Osun/KII/2024).**

Bridged the gap between rural and urban Osun State, Nigeria, by providing all-season roads and facilitating access to essential services, markets and opportunities **(Male/Ilesha Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

RAMP projects enhance the overall quality of life for community members by providing access to clean water, sanitation, and energy, while also promoting social inclusion, gender equality, and community development. **(Male/Ilesha Axis/Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

Bring numerous social benefits to community members, including improved access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, enhanced infrastructure, and

increased social cohesion and community empowerment. **(Female/Ilesha Axis/Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

The implementation of the World Bank Assisted Rural Access and Mobility Project in Osun State, Nigeria has had a profound impact on rural communities, enhancing their connectivity, productivity, and overall well-being **(Male/lfe Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

RAMP projects can also boost economic activity in communities by attracting investments, enhancing market access, and promoting economic diversification, thereby increasing financial stability and improving living standards for community members **(Female/lfe Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

RAMP projects can generate economic benefits for community members through job creation, increased income opportunities, improved infrastructure, and stimulation of local businesses and entrepreneurship, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction and economic growth **(Female/lfe Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

RAMP projects can further benefit communities by promoting skills development, capacity building, and knowledge transfer, enabling community members to take ownership of their development and drive sustainable growth and progress **(Male/lwo Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

The World Bank Assisted Rural Access and Mobility Project has significantly improved access to social and economic services in Osun State, Nigeria, transforming the lives of rural dwellers **(Male/lwo Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

RAMP projects additionally foster community resilience and sustainability by creating jobs, stimulating local economies, and improving infrastructure, ultimately contributing to poverty reduction and enhanced well-being for community members **(Female/lwo Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

However, not all aspects of the project were perceived as effective. The availability of sanitation facilities scored a mean of 2.25, which is below the 2.50 threshold, indicating that the project's impact on this aspect was not considered significant. Moreover, the project's impact on economic activities scored a mean of 1.78, which is significantly below the threshold, suggesting that the residents did not perceive the project as having a substantial impact on economic activities. These empirical findings disagree with the submission made by the respondents of the KII as follows:

The implementation of rural access and mobility projects boost economic activity in communities by attracting investments, enhancing market access, and promoting economic diversification, thereby increasing financial stability and improving living standards for community members **(Female/lfe Axis/Rural Dweller/Osun/KII/2024).**

The empirical outcomes revealed that the RAMP project has had a profoundly positive impact on community development, education, and social protection. Residents perceive the project as a highly effective component of community development initiatives. Additionally, the project has increased access to educational institutions, made educational resources readily available, improved access to information and communication services, expanded market access, and enhanced access to clean water. These aspects are considered effective by the residents. The project has also yielded positive outcomes in education, including a reduction in dropout rates, promotion of education for vulnerable groups, and improved children's attendance and participation in school.

Furthermore, residents perceive the social protection services provided by the project as effective. The project's impact on household income and economic opportunities for vulnerable

groups is also viewed as positive. However, the project falls short in certain areas. The availability of sanitation facilities is not considered significant, and the project's impact on economic activities is perceived as particularly lacking. In agreement, Kamau, Rambo and Mbugua, (2021) found that community participation has a significant low and negative partial moderation effect on the relationship between school infrastructure policy implementation and performance of construction projects.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the Rural Access and Mobility Project (RAMP) had a profoundly positive impact on community development, education, and social protection. The project's effectiveness was evident in increased access to educational institutions, learning resources, and information and communication services, while also expanding market access and improving access to clean water. In education, RAMP contributed to reduced dropout rates, promoted inclusion for vulnerable groups, and improved children's school attendance and participation. Furthermore, social protection services delivered through the project were perceived as effective, positively influencing household income and economic opportunities for vulnerable populations. To enhance RAMP's success and sustainability, officials should prioritize strengthening institutional capacity and stakeholder coordination through targeted training, improved communication mechanisms, and clearly defined roles. Operational challenges such as limited human resources and bureaucratic delays should be mitigated by leveraging technology, streamlining processes, and fostering community engagement. A dedicated project management unit should be established alongside efforts to build local government capacity. Additionally, complementary strategies including budget efficiency, transparent funding, project monitoring, community-based maintenance, climate-resilient infrastructure, participatory planning, environmental assessments, public-private partnerships, community-led sanitation, and technology-driven decision-making should be implemented in a phased manner to maximize rural road project impact.

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