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**PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN SOCIAL INNOVATION AND  
POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN OBINOFIA COMMUNITY IN EZEAGU  
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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in social innovation and policy development in Obinofia Community, Ezeagu Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. Precisely, it investigated partnerships with socio-economic sectors in road infrastructure and discovered the drivers, benefits, and obstacles of local PPPs. A descriptive design was adopted, and data were collected using structured questionnaires, which were analyzed with weighted mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that socio-economic sectors are acknowledged for providing resources, while structural challenges remain a major limitation. However, active participation and strong collaboration between the government and local actors were perceived as weak. The study further showed that PPPs bring significant benefits, including improved service delivery and expanded economic opportunities, and that local actors are motivated by profit, social impact, and sustainability. The study suggests that legal and institutional frameworks, alongside strategies like stronger policies, transparency, and community engagement, were the mechanisms identified as critical for success. The study concludes that PPPs hold substantial promise for sustainable development in Obinofia if challenges are addressed through comprehensive governance and effective policy frameworks.*

## Introduction

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are found in situations where there is a need for social amenity (infrastructure) and the Government and Public come together to facilitate the work; the Government brings the equipment while the partners contribute to the provision of resources/expertise. It could be found in rural Areas, where there is a need for a good road, for instance, in Ezeagu Local Government Area, the Government will provide the equipment while the Public or Investors provide resources and Expertise for the construction of the road. The benefits or revenue are shared between the Government and the Investors. Another good example is the “Heneke Lake and Cave” at the boundary of Obinaofia Ndi Uno and Ndi Agu, where the People- Public provided the land while the government provided the equipment and the expertise through foreign investors. There is a need for a good access road because it is a tourist center. As such, there is also a farm settlement there, but there is no access road; therefore, the Government and public can come together to build a social innovation (road) there. According to Okhade (2021), the government had traditionally taken the responsibility of providing its citizens with a good environment for individuals to live in, according to classical economic thought. However, these environments require infrastructure and even more as the society increases population and requires new Technology; thereby making the Government's ies more complex and the Government is unable to perform these social functions single-handedly. This gives rise to the rise of PPPs by involving Private investors in the production of road infrastructure through a Partnership with the Government.

Public-Private Partnership (PPPs) focus their attention on Innovation and Policy development by forming long-term contractual agreements between the government and private entities to leverage private capital, expertise, and technology for public social benefit (Diyamett and Diyamett 2019). Nevertheless, through this partnership, governments can get new funding and innovative solutions to address societal challenges, whereas private organizations acquire opportunities to benefit from their knowledge and technology, driving growth in areas like road infrastructure, among others.

## Contextual Issues

The main task of this study is to interrogate the PPPs' operations within the context of social innovation and policy development. These issues point us directly to the socio-economic ecosystem in Obinofia, Ezeagu Local Government Area, and raise two major questions: (1) What are the main drivers, benefits, and obstacles of conducting PPPs within the relevant area of the study? (2) What are the main partnerships within socioeconomic sectors in Ezeagu Local Government Area, Enugu State? (3) How have the partnerships on road infrastructure in Obinofia, Ezeagu Local Government Area, Enugu State, fulfilled the main goals of PPPs? In order to address the disparities in human development, social, and economic growth in the area, the relationship between these issues and their connections with social innovation and policy issues ought to be highlighted, especially as it relates to the underprivileged communities. In accordance with this assertion, advancing the social innovation agenda is one of the goals of the local government involvement as a fundamental component of social infrastructure. One way to assess PPP's contribution to community development is by looking at its capacity for social innovation. This is a more effective way to understand and produce social value in all of its manifestations.

Collaboration between the public, business, and community sectors fosters social innovations by offering a chance to address socioeconomic issues in communities by establishing partnerships that benefit all stakeholders. In addition to ensuring that the innovation produces social outcomes that truly address the needs of the communities, active participation by grassroots organizations and rural communities can foster the development of diverse cross-sectoral partnerships involving communities and community-based organizations in promoting social innovation, which is a critical driver for community development. Building relationships based on mutual trust makes it easier to promote social innovation.

This conceptual post will go over how local government units and communities might encourage the development of public-private partnerships for social innovation by engaging the community. The development of cooperative, win-win partnerships that encourage socially creative approaches to local problems is essential to the local government area's

practice of local involvement. Road infrastructure development has been the primary focus of successive governments since the country gained its independence in 1960, according to Kasim and Okafor (2015).

However, the evidence on the ground indicates that local governments are lagging far behind in this regard. Because of this unattractive trend, the federal government of Nigeria has made infrastructure development a top priority for each succeeding administration, despite the fact that the nation is still far behind in this regard. Due to this undesirable trend, the Nigerian federal government implemented public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a means of improving road infrastructure development through the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Act of 2005.

As a result, the writers thoroughly examine Nigeria's public-private partnerships. This was accomplished by employing academics' works, including textbooks, materials, journals, and other publications, as information sources. The study uses the new public management (NPM) theory as its foundation and concludes, among other things, that corruption may be preventing the public-private partnership's aspirations from being effectively realized. As a result, the study suggests that the government step up its efforts to combat corruption.

According to Nwagwu (2021), the Nigerian government's policy announcements over the past 20 years unequivocally demonstrate the nation's commitment to use public-private partnerships (PPPs) to provide much-needed road infrastructure. Only a small number of PPP projects have been realized yet, despite these policy declarations and actions taken to promote PPPs, such as the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC) Act. Thus, the outcomes seem to contradict the government's stated policy objective. In order to determine why this is the case, the article evaluates the performance of PPPs in Nigeria to date. It talks about some of the issues plaguing Nigeria's usage of PPPs for infrastructure delivery and suggests remedies, such as inadequate road networks, poor electrical supplies, low GDP, and low pipe-borne water.

Raheem (2020) examined the idea of public-private partnerships (PPP) as a means of advancing infrastructure development in Nigeria; it evaluated

the efficacy of PPP and proposed certain actions that may help the program succeed as much as possible in Nigeria. The study only used an internet review of the literature that was available. There is ample proof that PPP increases infrastructure efficiency. Given that the majority of shifts to private involvement have involved considerable worker downsizing, the evidence is stronger when considering labor productivity. However, there is conflicting support for private involvement that raises the productivity or quality of the whole factor.

In general, there is also no definitive conclusion about the impact of PPP on affordability and coverage. In fact, selection problems affect the majority of the current research, and one of the primary methodological challenges is the evaluation of infrastructure. The funding of public-private partnerships is an area that still needs improvement. In addition to having the right laws in place, two other crucial components for PPP implementation are sound project management and favorable economic conditions. Nonetheless, neoliberal philosophy was embraced in light of this professional background.

According to Pavlo, Oksana and Olena (2017), it is acknowledged that public-private partnerships are a crucial instrument for fostering innovation. Lack of funding resources and the poor level of commercialization of ideas from public research organizations are just two of the several causes of this. Setting goals in the face of a lack of funding is one way to provide resources for innovation in the economy and other areas of economic life. Another helpful strategy is to use private business opportunities, such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), which are viewed as a sign of social responsibility, real scientific investigations and problem-solving.

In the sphere of innovations, both local scholars (Heyets, Golovinov, Melnik, and Mosiichuk) and foreign researchers (M. Geddes, M. Lakomy-Zinowik, N. Lee, P. De Witte, et al.) examined the issues of PPP development as a form of social responsibility. Portions of general subjects that have not been explored. PPP is a relatively new topic in the field of innovations, and the national scientific community does not adequately evaluate the problem of looking for innovative ways to build the economy based on

social responsibility and collaboration between the public, business, and society.

The goal of the study is to continue analyzing the unique aspects of introducing innovations through the PPP mechanism while keeping social responsibility in mind. The fundamental materials declaration. The article's main focus is on analyzing how public-private partnerships—a type of business collaboration between the public and private sectors—are used in the field of innovation creation. According to the current study, PPP is the creative creation of public infrastructure and the distribution of associated services.

The tasks that the public pursues in the innovation sector through the use of public-private partnerships have been identified. The role of PPP in the innovation sector of specific nations is discussed. In conclusion, the primary goals of PPP in the area of innovations can be the commercialization and release of inventions into the market, the sharing of scientific research findings between the public and private sectors, and the enhancement of the national economy's competitiveness on a worldwide scale.

### Empirical Review

According to Catala, Sava II, and Chaves-Avila (2025), Public-private partnerships, or PPPs, have historically emphasized cooperation between corporate actors and public administration in terms of risk sharing and efficiency. Highlighting how newer strategies place a strong emphasis on integrating (aligning) PPPs with objectives related to sustainability and social value. By looking into energy housing and digitalization cases in Enugu State, the study used PPPs with social economy sectors at the state and its region. It identifies drivers, benefits, and drawbacks in its implementation and presents pioneering cases as models for sustainable growth while achieving a green and digital transition. It highlights the advancement of social innovation, beneficial regional effects, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the works of Ablaev and Akhmethshina (2015), the inefficiency of the current innovation system and the need for its modernization are revealed by the analysis of the innovation activity indicators over the past few years. This demonstrates the wisdom of

developing the innovation system through the use of the public-private partnership (PPP) mechanism, focusing on one of the most promising PPP mechanisms that requires the use of innovation clusters as a key component.

Okhade, (2021) examined the historical evolution as a source of infrastructural development in Nigeria relying of literatures. Findings showcases that PPPs became a popular government approach to infrastructure development from late 1990s – a period which coincided with the transition into the fourth stint of democratic government. The following programmes came into force to aid PPPs. These programmes are National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

National policy of PPPs: National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP), and Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) have been developed to enhance infrastructural development with cogent emphases on PPP as a Core implementation approach. Finally, the study recommended that PPP should be made to further infrastructure, plans in Nigeria. These approaches borrowed from developed countries have not yielded the desired outcome, especially in the rural areas. PPP helped in the proper utilization resources reduces corruption by putting some of the state owned assets into the hands of the private and market; driven choices. PPP also encourages the right expertise to scale through its lifecycle

Eze, Okwueze and Ishiwu (2024) evaluate Enugu State's public infrastructure management and public-private cooperation. Three research questions and three hypotheses were developed in order to accomplish the goal. The research design used in the study was a descriptive survey. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in the investigation. The mean score was used to assess the gathered data. The hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical approach. The results show that PPPs in Enugu State have effectively managed public infrastructures (value  $t = 65.588$  and critical value = 1.99), that the concession agreement pattern enhanced the state's public infrastructure development (value  $t = 68.856$  and critical value = 1.99), and that some of the difficulties in implementing PPPs in Enugu State's infrastructure

development are related to a lack of funding (value  $t = 55.434$  and critical value = 1.99).

According to the study's findings, public-private partnerships, or PPPs, have demonstrated revolutionary potential in Enugu State's public infrastructure administration. Enugu State has seen better infrastructure development, from roads to utilities, by utilizing the knowledge and resources of the private sector. This partnership improves productivity, creativity, and on-time project completion. The Enugu State government should improve its regulatory and policy environment to provide clarity and consistency, providing a secure foundation for public-private partnerships (PPPs) and encouraging private sector engagement in public infrastructure projects, according to the study's recommendations for strengthening the regulatory framework.

Obasa and Oluyomi (2024) cite the necessity of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a finance mechanism in the UN's efforts to help member states, particularly poor nations with significant financing shortfalls, achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The World Bank created the PPP initiative to advise developing nations on policy matters pertaining to the necessity of enlisting the private sector to finance and run infrastructure.

In order for developing nations with limited resources to maximize public utilities and, more crucially, meet the SDG targets by 2030, a contemporary financing

strategy for resource mobilization is the paradigm shift from traditional public service delivery to public-private partnerships (PPPs). The study sheds light on the diverse spectrum of PPP arrangements and the somewhat hazy contractual framework that PPPs operate under. The reasons and justifications for depending on PPPs, as well as the anticipated results of PPP agreements, are given careful consideration.

One important finding from this study is that partnerships should include accountability, people-centeredness, risk-sharing, and revenue distribution between public and private stakeholders in addition to resource sharing if sustainable development goals are to be met in developing economies. The study uses a qualitative research approach, which includes secondary data, books, journals, and online resources.

### **Methodology**

The design of this study was a descriptive survey. The area of study was Obinofia Community. This is one of the towns in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of this study consists of all the elites in Obinofia Community, with a total number of 160. No sampling was done because the whole population was used since it is manageable. Data relevant to this study were collected using a questionnaire, so as to obtain results that are valid and reliable.

### **Data Analysis**

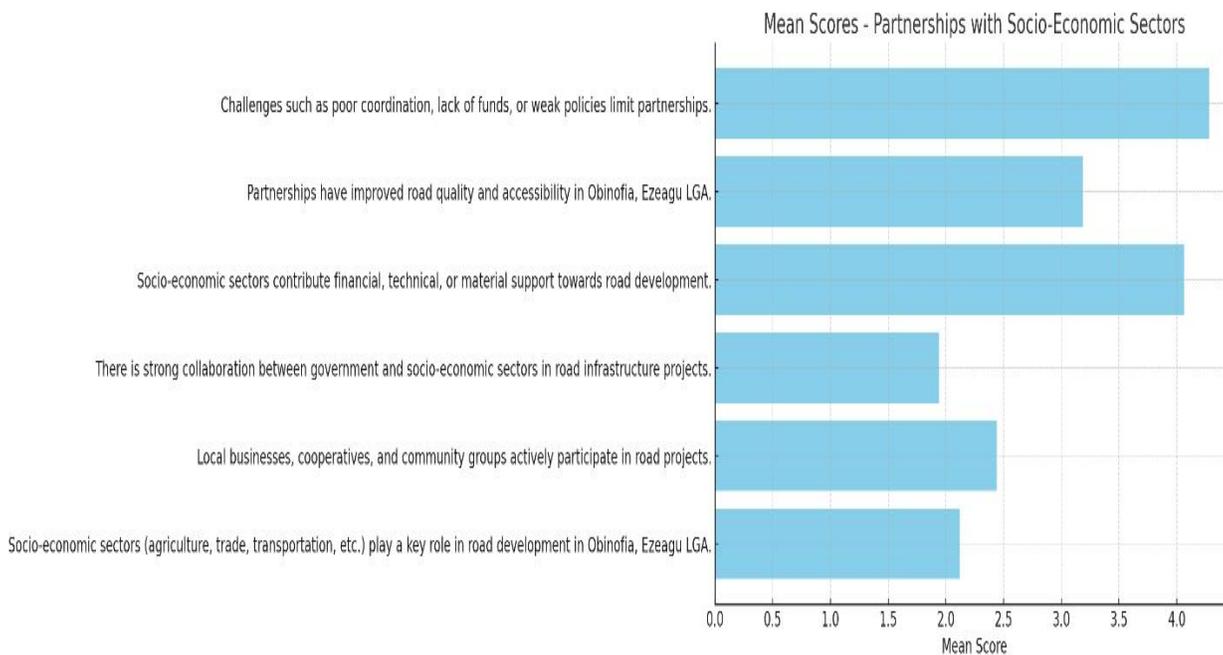
The standard deviation and mean score were used to examine the data. To determine the cut-off point, the scale's values were added ( $5+4+3+2+1=15$ ), and the result was divided by 5 ( $10/5$ ) to yield a mean score of 3.00. Any item that ranks from 3.00 and above was regarded as positive and accepted while anyone below 3.00 was regarded as negative and rejected.

### **Partnerships with Socio-Economic Sectors in Road Infrastructure**

**Table 1**

S/N	Statement	X	SD	D
1.	Socio-economic sectors (agriculture, trade, transportation, etc.) play a key role in road development in Obinofia, Ezeagu LGA.	2.12	0.77	R
2.	Local businesses, cooperatives, and community groups actively participate in road projects.	2.44	0.50	R
3.	There is strong collaboration between government and socio-economic sectors in road infrastructure projects.	1.94	0.85	R
4.	Socio-economic sectors contribute financial, technical, or material support towards road development.	4.06	0.67	A
5.	Partnerships have improved road quality and accessibility in Obinofia, Ezeagu LGA.	3.19	0.65	A
6.	Challenges such as poor coordination, lack of funds, or weak policies limit partnerships.	4.28	0.66	A

**Table 1** shows **Low agreement** that socio-economic sectors (agriculture, trade, transport) play a key role (Mean = 2.12). There is also **Low agreement** that local businesses and cooperatives actively participate in road projects (Mean = 2.44). Thus, **Low agreement** about strong collaboration between government and socio-economic sectors (Mean = 1.94). However, there is **Strong agreement** that socio-economic sectors contribute financial, technical, or material support (Mean = 4.06). Also, **Moderate agreement** that partnerships have improved road quality and accessibility (Mean = 3.19). While there is **Strong agreement** that challenges such as poor coordination, lack of funds, or weak policies limit partnerships (Mean = 4.28).



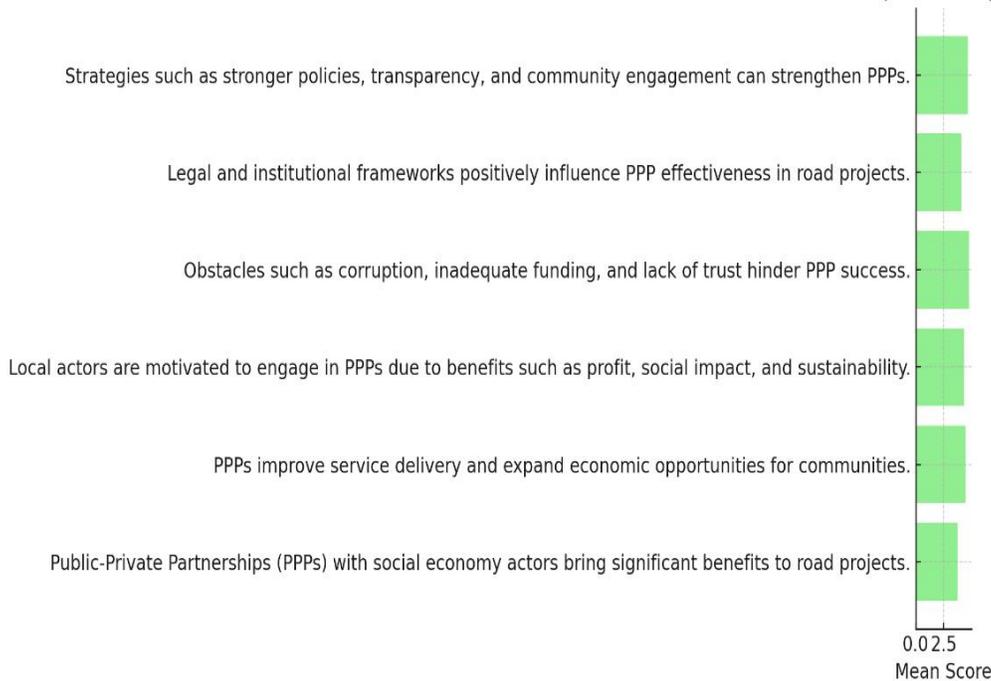
### Drivers, Benefits, and Obstacles of Local PPPs with Social Economy

**Table 2**

S/N	Statement	X	SD	D
1.	Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) with social economy actors bring significant benefits to road projects.	3.75	0.57	A
2.	PPPs improve service delivery and expand economic opportunities for communities.	4.44	0.50	A
3.	Local actors are motivated to engage in PPPs due to benefits such as profit, social impact, and sustainability.	4.31	0.42	A
4.	Obstacles such as corruption, inadequate funding, and lack of trust hinder PPP success.	4.75	0.43	A
5.	Legal and institutional frameworks positively influence PPP effectiveness in road projects.	4.12	0.75	A
6.	Strategies such as stronger policies, transparency, and community engagement can strengthen PPPs.	4.69	0.46	A

**Table 2** shows **Moderate agreement** that PPPs with social economy actors bring significant benefits (Mean = 3.75). There is **Strong agreement** that PPPs improve service delivery and expand economic opportunities (Mean = 4.44). It also shows that **Strong agreement** that local actors are motivated by profit, social impact, and sustainability (Mean = 4.31). Thus, there is **Strong agreement** that obstacles like corruption, inadequate funding, and lack of trust hinder PPPs (Mean = 4.75). However, there is **Strong agreement** that legal and institutional frameworks influence PPP effectiveness (Mean = 4.12). Also, there is **Strong agreement** that strategies such as stronger policies, transparency, and community engagement can strengthen PPPs (Mean = 4.69).

Mean Scores - Drivers, Benefits, and Obstacles of PPPs



**Findings**

Partnerships exist but are weak in terms of active involvement and collaboration. However, socio-economic sectors are acknowledged for providing resources, while structural challenges remain a major limitation. This aligns with the findings of Okhade (2021), which showcases that PPPs became a popular government approach to infrastructure development from the late 1990s – a period which coincided with the transition into the fourth stint of democratic government.

PPPs are largely seen as beneficial, but corruption and weak institutional support are major barriers. Respondents strongly believe that policy reforms, transparency, and inclusiveness are essential for improvement. This is in agreement with the findings of Eze, Okwueze, and Ishiwu (2024), which stated that in Enugu State, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have showcased transformative potential in the management of public infrastructure.

## Conclusion

The study reveals that while partnerships between socio-economic sectors and government in road infrastructure exist in Obinofia Community, they are not very strong or effective. Respondents agree that socio-economic sectors contribute resources, but low collaboration and weak participation decrease the impact of partnerships. On the other hand, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are recognized as beneficial for road development and community growth, but corruption, lack of funding, and poor trust undermine their success. Reinforcement of institutional frameworks and ensuring transparency remain key to successful PPP outcomes.

## Recommendations

Strengthen collaboration between the government and socio-economic sectors to improve inclusiveness in road infrastructure projects. Encourage active participation of local businesses, cooperatives, and community groups. Address corruption and trust issues by promoting transparency and accountability in PPP arrangements. Enhance legal and institutional frameworks to guide PPP implementation and ensure policy continuity.

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