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THE IMPACT OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Intergovernmental relations (IGR) play a crucial part in shaping service delivery effectiveness globally. Intergovernmental collaborations empower governments to consolidate resources, distribute expert knowledge. It is upon this that this paper sought to assess the impact of intergovernmental relations. Specifically the paper sought to; investigate the impact of intergovernmental relations on the effectiveness of service delivery in the water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare sectors within the North Central region of Nigeria, and identify the unique challenges faced by the North Central region in regards to intergovernmental relations and their effect on service delivery. The study adopted the Cross-sectional survey design as its research design. The population of the study consisted of the 98,758 local government officials in the North Central region of Nigeria. Data for the study was gathered from both primary and secondary source. The primary sources consisted of a four point likert scale questionnaire, the findings of the survey revealed that intergovernmental relations heavily influenced the effectiveness of water supply and sanitation services. The findings of the survey also revealed that weak coordination and cooperation between different levels of government, difficulties in securing sufficient funding, and the absence of clear and enforceable policies summed up the challenges facing intergovernmental relations in North-Central, Nigeria. The study recommends that; special emphasis should be placed on strengthening intergovernmental collaboration in education, encouraging open communication, shared decision-making, and coordinated planning among various government levels.

Keywords: Intergovernmental, Relations, Effectiveness, Serving Delivery

Introduction

Intergovernmental relations (IGR) play a crucial part in shaping service delivery effectiveness internationally (Hooghe & Marks, 2015; Painter & Pierre, 2015). Positive intergovernmental collaborations empower governments to consolidate resources, distribute expert knowledge, synchronize operations, reconcile disagreements, and muster support for ambitious projects beyond single entity limits (Börzel & Panke, 2013; Feiock & Scholz, 2010). Nevertheless, dysfunctional IGR structures can introduce issues originating from improper frameworks, asymmetric powers, unequal gains, disordered messages, and mistaken assumptions (John, 2013; Knill & Tosun, 2012). Despite occasional setbacks, thriving intergovernmental

spheres supply exceptional opportunities to tackle pressing challenges threatening contemporary societies, such as climate change adaptation, immigrant absorption, cyber threat containment, epidemic management, and digital integration (Salamon, 2016; Skelcher, 2015). Constructive intergovernmental linkages thus rank among lasting targets demanding consistent contemplation, instruction, and adaptive revision (Bouckaert et al., 2015; Goldfinch & Wallis, 2010).

Intergovernmental relations heavily affect service delivery achievement on a global scale (Torres & Pina, 2014; Warwick, 2014). Robust IGR foster collaborative environments where governments join forces to integrate resources, trade specialist insights, match activities, settle disputes, and secure backing

for far-reaching objectives beyond independent means (Heinelt & Helpas, 2014; Morgan, 2013). Meanwhile, flawed IGR frameworks may cause trouble tied to wrong blueprints, uneven authority distribution, unjust payoffs, scrambled signals, and mistaken theories (Verhoest et al., 2015; Yang, 2016). Still, blossoming intergovernmental surroundings harbor huge potential to handle daunting tasks tormenting modern worlds, for example, greenhouse gas emission reduction, border controls tightening, internet crime curtailment, infectious disease restraint, and intelligent automation guidance (Fukuyama, 2014; Haas, 2015). Strengthening intergovernmental bonding consistently counts among prime directives invoking continuous meditation, teaching, and tuning (Howlett & Rayner, 2013; Peters, 2015).

In the national context, intergovernmental relations significantly impact public service delivery in Nigeria. With a complex mixture of federal, state, and local governments, Nigeria faces challenges in coordinating efforts and avoiding conflicts (Suberu, 2013). The constitution grants significant autonomy to each tier of government, leading to potential overlap or gaps in service provision (Adejumobi, 2000). However, there is also scope for synergy and shared responsibility in areas like education, health, and infrastructure development (World Bank, 2018).

Recent attempts to improve intergovernmental relations in Nigeria include the establishment of the National Council on Intergovernmental Relations and the launch of the Open Government Partnership initiative (Abati, 2017; Aluede et al., 2016). Despite these moves, issues such as revenue allocation, budget execution, and accountability mechanisms continue to pose challenges in implementing collaborative service delivery models (Ibeanu, 2013; Omotola, 2018). Further research is required to fully grasp the implications of intergovernmental relations on service delivery at the national level, considering factors such as political stability, economic performance, and social inequality (Anyanwu, 2014; Oluwatayo, 2017).

Focusing on North Central Nigeria, the issue of intergovernmental relations and their impact on public service delivery takes on additional depth.

Often referred to as the "middle belt," this region consists of six states: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau. Historically, the middle belt has experienced frequent ethno-religious conflicts, underdevelopment, and neglect by successive governments, fueling feelings of marginalization and resentment (Usman, 2016).

Addressing these challenges requires stronger intergovernmental relations and coordination, as service delivery is spread across multiple layers of government. Infrastructure development, education, and healthcare are examples of services that can greatly benefit from improved intergovernmental relations (Aransiola & Ifijeh, 2017; Jimoh, 2015). Limited resources, inadequate personnel, and insufficient technical expertise exacerbate the situation, pointing to the need for better collaboration between the federal, state, and local governments (Idris, 2015; Usman, 2016).

However, intergovernmental relations face numerous obstacles in the North Central region. Some of these challenges include political instability, corruption, ineffective communication channels, and mistrust among various tiers of government (Egbon & Abubakar, 2014; Idornigie, 2013; Salawudeen, 2016). Addressing these barriers is critical for enhancing public service delivery and meeting the needs of the region's inhabitants.

Statement of the Problem

The North Central region of Nigeria, home to over twenty million people, faces numerous challenges in the delivery of essential services such as water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare (UNDP, 2019; UNICEF, 2018; WHO, 2019). Effective intergovernmental relations are crucial in addressing these issues, as the responsibility for service provision extends across multiple governmental levels (Ahmed, 2015; Egbon & Abubakar, 2014; IDPN, 2017). However, weak communication, mistrust, corruption, and political instability plague intergovernmental relations in this region, resulting in inefficient resource allocation, conflicting policies, and inadequate preparations for disaster response.

(IDPN, 2017; Mustapha, 2017; ICG, 2019; UNDP, 2019).

The consequences of these challenges are stark, with limited access to safe drinking water and unsanitary living conditions affecting millions of Nigerians (Amoo & Hassan, 2015; Oni & Winters, 2014). Low literacy rates and poor health outcomes are similarly widespread, indicating that the region's service delivery falls short of meeting its inhabitants' needs (Adeniyi, 2015; World Bank, 2020). Adding to these troubles are the persistent farmland conflicts and rising banditry, stretching thin the already overburdened public services (ICG, 2019; Ukiwo, 2018).

Despite efforts from political leaders, the fragmented nature of intergovernmental relations has hindered the formulation and implementation of effective policies (Ahmed, 2015; IDPN, 2017; Mustapha, 2017). Solidarity and collaboration remain elusive, preventing the North Central region from escaping its service delivery quandaries (IDPN, 2017; UNDP, 2019; WHO, 2019).

Previous research highlights the importance of intergovernmental relations in service delivery, yet little attention has been devoted to the specific challenges faced by the North Central region (Ahmed, 2015; Egbon & Abubakar, 2014; IDPN, 2017; Mustapha, 2017). This study fills that gap, offering insights into the unique factors that inhibit the North Central region from overcoming its service delivery obstacles.

Studies investigating intergovernmental relations and service delivery in Nigeria have predominantly concentrated on the entire nation, failing to consider regional variances (Ahmed, 2015; Egbon & Abubakar, 2014; IDPN, 2017; Mustapha, 2017). Moreover, extant literature has yet to thoroughly examine the relationship between intergovernmental relations and specific service delivery sectors within the North Central region (Amoo & Hassan, 2015; Oni & Winters, 2014; Adeniyi, 2015; World Bank, 2020). This presents a significant gap in understanding the nuanced dynamics of intergovernmental relations and service delivery within the North Central region.

This study aims to address these gaps by concentrating on the North Central region and integrating a closer examination of the relationship between intergovernmental relations and specific service delivery sectors, including water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare. By doing so, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by the North Central region and provide actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to improve service delivery in this area.

Research Questions

In pursuit of understanding the relationship between intergovernmental relations and service delivery in the North Central region of Nigeria, this paper formulates the following research questions;

- i. How do intergovernmental relations influence the effectiveness of service delivery in the water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare sectors within the North Central region of Nigeria?
- ii. What are the unique challenges faced by the North Central region in relation to intergovernmental relations and their impact on service delivery?

Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study is to examine the impact of intergovernmental relations on the effectiveness of service delivery in the North Central region of Nigeria, specifically, the paper will seek to;

- i. Investigate the impact of intergovernmental relations on the effectiveness of service delivery in the water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare sectors within the North Central region of Nigeria.
- ii. Identify the unique challenges faced by the North Central region in regards to intergovernmental relations and their effect on service delivery.

Conceptual Review

Intergovernmental Relations

Intergovernmental relations (IGR) refer to the interactions and communications between different levels of government, such as federal, state, and local. Agranoff & McGuire (2015), stated that these relationships involve various forms of collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, as well as possible competition and conflict. IGR plays a crucial role in ensuring effective public service delivery, as it enables the sharing of resources, expertise, and information, as well as the resolution of issues that span across multiple jurisdictions (Poister, 2015).

In federal systems, such as Nigeria, IGR assumes special significance due to the separation of powers and responsibilities between different levels of government (Olowu, 2016). In this context, IGR refers to the formal and informal mechanisms established to facilitate communication, coordination, and collaboration between different government entities (Ali, Abbott, & Douglass, 2015). IGR can occur both horizontally, between different branches or agencies of the same level of government, and vertically, between different levels of government (Baskoy, 2017).

According to Chikulo (2018), IGR can take various forms, including intergovernmental councils, committees, task forces, and working groups, as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements, contracts, and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). These mechanisms can facilitate the exchange of information, the development of common policies and strategies, and the coordination of programmes and services (Berry, Portney, & Thomson, 2015).

Poister (2015), asserted that effective IGR requires the establishment of clear guidelines, rules, and procedures to govern the interactions between different levels of government. Dilger (2016), further stated that, it also requires the development of trust, respect, and mutual understanding between different government entities, as well as the recognition and appreciation of the respective roles, responsibilities, and competencies of each party.

IGR can be influenced by various factors, including institutional arrangements, political ideologies, cultural norms, and power dynamics (Agranoff & McGuire, 2015). For instance, the distribution of resources, finances, and authority between different levels of government can affect the nature and quality of IGR (Madichie & Ngwu, 2016). Similarly, the degree of autonomy, discretion, and flexibility granted to different levels of government can influence the extent to which IGR is characterized by cooperation or conflict (Olowu, 2016).

IGR is particularly relevant to the North Central region of Nigeria, which is characterized by a high degree of diversity, complexity, and dynamism (Osunla, 2017). The region is home to a diverse array of ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups, as well as a variety of natural resources, industries, and markets (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). As such, IGR in the region is likely to be influenced by a range of factors, including the political economy, social structure, and institutional architecture of the region (Osumah, 2017).

IGR in the North Central region of Nigeria faces various challenges, such as inadequate communication, coordination, and collaboration between different levels of government (Olowu, 2016). These challenges can hinder the effective delivery of public services, such as water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare, which are critical to the well-being and development of the region (United Nations Development Programme, 2019; World Health Organization, 2019).

In sum, IGR refers to the interactions and communications between different levels of government, and it plays a crucial role in ensuring effective public service delivery. IGR can take various forms, including intergovernmental councils, committees, and MOUs, and it can be influenced by various factors, such as institutional arrangements, political ideologies, cultural norms, and power dynamics. IGR is particularly relevant to the North Central region of Nigeria, which faces various challenges, such as inadequate communication, coordination, and collaboration between different levels of government.

Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the process through which public, private, or nonprofit organizations provide goods, services, or benefits to specific individuals or communities (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2016). The concept is multifaceted and encompasses various stages, including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (World Bank, 2018). Effective service delivery plays a crucial role in promoting social welfare, economic development, and good governance (OECD, 2017).

Planning is a critical aspect of service delivery, involving setting objectives, identifying target beneficiaries, and allocating resources (European Commission, 2013). During this phase, policymakers and implementers need to consider factors such as affordability, accessibility, and quality (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2015). For instance, the United Nations (2015) highlights the importance of universal access to basic services such as healthcare, education, clean water, and sanitation as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Implementation involves executing planned activities and delivering services to the intended recipients (World Health Organization [WHO], 2010). Frontline workers, including teachers, nurses, and police officers, are responsible for carrying out day-to-day operations and interacting directly with citizens (Perry & Krause, 2017). Their roles are critical in ensuring that services reach the intended beneficiaries and that they are delivered efficiently and effectively (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017).

Monitoring and evaluation are essential components of service delivery, helping to track progress, identify challenges, and improve accountability (USAID, 2012). Monitoring involves tracking service delivery against predetermined indicators, while evaluation entails assessing the overall performance of the service delivery system (Inter-American Development Bank [IADB], 2016). Regular monitoring and evaluation can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that services respond to changing needs and circumstances (Brooks, 2018).

Various factors influence service delivery, including institutional arrangements, governance structures, and resource availability (Bouckaert & Halligan, 2008). Intergovernmental relations, for instance, play a significant role in shaping service delivery outcomes (Considine & Lewis, 2014). Effective coordination and collaboration among different levels of government can help overcome fragmentation and duplication, leading to better service delivery (Peters & Pierre, 2016).

Capacity-building is another critical factor in service delivery, particularly in low-income countries and fragile states (ADB, 2015). Capacity refers to the ability of individuals, organizations, and systems to perform their functions effectively and efficiently (UNDP, 2016). Capacity-building interventions aim to strengthen technical, managerial, and institutional capacities to deliver services (World Bank, 2018).

Technology also plays a significant role in service delivery, offering opportunities for innovation and improvement (UNESCO, 2015). For instance, mobile technologies can help extend access to financial services in remote areas, while digital platforms can facilitate communication and feedback between citizens and service providers (GSMA, 2017).

Finally, citizen engagement and participation are crucial in ensuring that service delivery meets the needs and preferences of the intended beneficiaries (IAP2, 2018). Active participation can help increase awareness, build ownership, and promote transparency and accountability (World Bank, 2017).

In summary, service delivery is a complex and multifaceted concept that involves various stages and factors. Effective service delivery requires careful planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, supported by adequate resources, institutional arrangements, and governance structures. Capacity-building, technology, and citizen engagement are also critical in ensuring that services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

Empirical Review

Manyala (2021), conducted a study on “The Role of Inter-Governmental Relations on Service Delivery in

MultiLevel Systems of Governance in Counties in Kenya". The general objective of the study was to examine the role of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in multi-level systems of governance in counties in Kenya. The contextual scope of this study was limited to the 47 county governments in Kenya. The target population of the study was the 2,061 county government officials from all the 47 counties in Kenya who included the governors, deputy governors, county secretaries, ward administrators and county executive members; and 2,057 officials from the national government side, who included the county commissioners, deputy county commissioners, assistant county commissioners, and chiefs. Results revealed that all the inter-governmental relations had a positive and significant relationship with service delivery of county governments in Kenya. However, the magnitude of the influence was different for the specific inter-governmental relations. Fiscal relations had the largest effect followed by economic relations then political relations and finally the administrative relations. The study concluded that inter-governmental relations had the potential of positively influencing service delivery in terms of timely and quality delivery, improved infrastructure, income and debt management and citizen service satisfaction. The study recommended that national and county governments should adopt a multidimensional approach in implementing inter-governmental relations (administrative, economic, political and fiscal relations).

The study conducted by Manyala (2021) focused on the role of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in multi-level systems of governance in counties in Kenya. While the findings of this study provided valuable insights into the relationship between intergovernmental relations and service delivery in the Kenyan context, it did not address the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria. By addressing this research gap, the study would contribute to the understanding of intergovernmental relations within the specific context of the North Central region of Nigeria. It would provide insights into the dynamics, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of intergovernmental relations in the region and their

implications for service delivery. The findings could inform policy and decision-making processes, guiding efforts to enhance intergovernmental collaboration and improve service delivery outcomes in the North Central region and potentially in other regions of Nigeria facing similar challenges.

Ijimakinwa, Zinsu & Osakede (2015), wrote a paper on "Local Government and Intergovernmental Relations". This paper examined Local Government and Intergovernmental Relations in Nigeria Fourth Republic (1999 to date). The study adopted secondary source of data collection. The paper argued that Local Government is not mutually exclusive of other levels of government. Thus, there is bound to be an interaction between local government and other levels of government. The study revealed that intergovernmental relations among the levels of government in the fourth republic has been in disarray due to the conflicts arisen over issues of tax jurisdiction, revenue allocation, intergovernmental relations fund transfers, overconcentration of power at the center, illegal removal of local government officials etc. The paper recommended that for cordial relationships to take place between the local government and other levels of government, the constitutional status of local government must be clearly spelt out, the issue of joint-state-local government account should be discarded, election rather than appointment should be the means of choosing leaders at the local level, judiciary should be made to be independent and the undue interference on the local government by the state or federal should be properly addressed and there should be direct disbursement of federation allocation to all the levels of government.

The study conducted by Ijimakinwa, Zinsu & Osakede (2015) examined local government and intergovernmental relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999 to date). While the paper provided insights into the conflicts and challenges that arise in intergovernmental relations at the national and local government levels in Nigeria, it did not specifically address the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria. By addressing this research gap, the study will provide valuable insights into intergovernmental relations

within the specific context of the North Central region of Nigeria. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges, conflicts, and opportunities that arise in the relationship between local government and state government. This knowledge can inform policy-making and decision-making processes, facilitating improved intergovernmental coordination, reduced conflicts, and enhanced governance and service delivery outcomes in the North Central region. Additionally, the study's findings may also have implications for other regions in Nigeria facing similar challenges in intergovernmental relations.

Onwughalu, Obiorah & Ishaka (2018), wrote a paper on “Intergovernmental Relations and Development in Nigeria: The Missing Link”. This paper examined the nature of the Nigerian state and challenges of its constitutional provisions skewed in favour of the federal government as evidenced in the Exclusive Legislative List. It argues that this present arrangement inhibits the pace of development in the country. The study was qualitative in approach and gathered data through secondary sources that were content analyzed using the Structural Functional approach developed by Almond as framework of analysis. Because federal ascendancy defines the nature of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria’s federation, the observable functional cooperation is only a vertical pattern of relationship between the federal and state governments on the one hand, and amongst the federal, state and local governments on the other. It found out that in spite of the existence of informal structures like Nigeria Governors’ Forum (NGF), Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (CSSLN) and Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), etc, that should provide platforms for horizontal partnerships and co-operations between or amongst states and between or amongst local government councils, there is no evidence of such functional collaborations in any sphere which is one of the links that is missing in the inward approach to development in the face of challenges posed by the country’s constitution. In conclusion, the recently founded South-East/SouthSouth Governors Forum is a further expansion of horizontal co-operation and integration of states and local government councils in the two

regions, which is a potential viable platform for rapid development and transformation of states in the zones if pursued with sincerity of purpose. It recommends functional partnerships, collaborations and co-operation between or amongst states and between or amongst local government councils in the following areas: tinkering with provisions of the 1999 constitution that are antithetical to development processes within its jurisdiction, recruitment of leaders, infrastructural development, capacity building, resource sharing, etc.

Nosa-Ogbegie, Egobueze, & Nwaoburu (2021), wrote a paper on “Inter-Governmental Relations and the Development of Local Government in Nigeria”. This study assessed the impact of intergovernmental relations on the development of Akuku Toru Local Government Area, Rivers State. Methodologically, the study adopted secondary data and content analysis as methods of data collection and analysis/ The findings of the study revealed that there are challenges in the management of intergovernmental relationship in Nigeria. The 1999 constitution has significant impact on the management of intergovernmental relations and State and Local Government relations have negative impact on the development of Akuku Toru Local Government Council in Rivers State. From the findings, the study recommends that strategies such as constitutional reforms, revenue sharing formula and re-structuring of the federal system of government should be carried out to management the challenges in intergovernmental relations in Nigeria.

While the previous study discussed the challenges in managing intergovernmental relationships in Nigeria and their negative impact on the development of a specific local government council, there is a need for further research focusing on the North Central region. This study aims to fill this gap by specifically evaluating the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery within the North Central region of Nigeria. The study will explore the challenges faced by different levels of government, particularly federal, state, and local, in collaborating and coordinating effectively to deliver essential services. It will examine factors such as policy formulation, resource allocation, decision-making processes, and

implementation strategies that influence service delivery outcomes in the region.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study is the Governance Network Theory.

Governance Network Theory is a conceptual framework that examines the interactions, relationships, and collaborations among multiple actors in the governance process. It recognizes that governance is a complex and dynamic process that involves a diverse range of actors, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, stakeholders, and citizens. The theory posits that effective governance requires the establishment of network structures and the utilization of governance mechanisms to facilitate cooperation, coordination, and collective decision-making.

Proponents of Governance Network Theory argue that traditional hierarchical models of governance are insufficient to address the complexities and challenges of contemporary governance. Instead, they advocate for a network approach that acknowledges the interdependence of actors and the need for collaborative problem-solving.

One of the key proponents of Governance Network Theory is Rod A. Rhodes. In his influential work, Rhodes emphasizes the importance of understanding governance as a networked activity involving both formal and informal relationships. He highlights the role of networks in shaping policy outcomes, arguing that effective governance networks can enhance policy responsiveness, innovation, and adaptability.

Another prominent scholar in this field is Erik-Hans Klijn, who has extensively studied governance networks in various policy domains. Klijn emphasizes the dynamic nature of governance networks and the need for adaptive governance mechanisms. He argues that effective governance networks should possess characteristics such as trust, shared goals, interdependence, and collaborative leadership to effectively address complex societal challenges.

The governance network approach also draws on the work of Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, who emphasize the role of ideas, discourses, and narratives in shaping governance networks. They argue that governance networks are not just structures but also discursive arenas where actors negotiate and construct meanings, norms, and values.

The key concepts within Governance Network Theory include network structure, governance mechanisms, and network outcomes. Network structure refers to the formal and informal relationships, linkages, and connections among actors involved in governance. These relationships can be hierarchical, horizontal, or hybrid in nature. Governance mechanisms encompass the tools and processes used to facilitate cooperation and coordination within the network, such as collaborative decision-making, information sharing, and resource pooling. Network outcomes refer to the policy outputs, collective actions, and service delivery outcomes that result from the interactions within the network.

Overall, Governance Network Theory provides a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to understanding governance dynamics. It recognizes the importance of collaboration, trust-building, and shared decision-making among diverse actors in addressing complex societal challenges. By focusing on network structures, governance mechanisms, and network outcomes, this theoretical framework offers valuable insights into the nature and functioning of intergovernmental relations and their impact on service delivery. It provides a lens through which to analyze the governance processes, identify challenges, and propose strategies for enhancing intergovernmental cooperation and improving service delivery outcomes.

Relevance of the Theory to the Study

The Governance Network Theory is highly relevant to the paper under study, which focuses on the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in North Central, Nigeria. This theory provides a conceptual framework that helps analyze and

understand the complexities of governance processes involving multiple actors.

By understanding the interactions and relationships among various actors involved in governance, the Governance Network Theory enables a deeper examination of the dynamics between federal, state, and local government entities, as well as other stakeholders like community organizations and civil society groups. It offers insights into how these actors collaborate, communicate, and coordinate their efforts in delivering public services.

Collaborative decision-making is a central aspect of intergovernmental relations, and the Governance Network Theory highlights its significance. In the North Central region of Nigeria, different levels of government and stakeholders must come together to make joint decisions on policy formulation, resource allocation, and service delivery strategies. This theory provides insights into how collaborative decision-making can be facilitated, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered and consensus is reached for effective service delivery.

The theory also recognizes the importance of network structures in governance processes. In the context of intergovernmental relations, it helps analyze the formal and informal structures that exist between different levels of government and stakeholders. By understanding these network structures, researchers can identify potential barriers or facilitators to effective intergovernmental relations and service delivery.

Methodology

The study adopted the Cross-sectional survey design as its research design. The researcher selected the Cross-Sectional Surveys research design because it allowed the researcher to capture a snapshot of the current state of intergovernmental relations and the impact of these relations on service delivery outcomes in the North Central region of Nigeria. It provided a comprehensive view of intergovernmental relations and the influence of these dynamics at a specific point in time.

The population of the study will consist of the 98,758 local government officials in the North Central region of Nigeria (Middle-belt Watch, 2021). These officials, including local government chairpersons, councilors, and administrative staff, will be the focus of the research.

One reason why local government officials are fit for the study is their direct involvement in governance and decision-making processes at the local level. As key stakeholders responsible for service delivery within their respective local government areas, they have firsthand knowledge and experience regarding intergovernmental relations and its impact on service delivery outcomes. By studying this population, we can gain valuable insights into their perspectives, challenges, and strategies, thereby enhancing our understanding of the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region.

To get the sample size, the study employed the Yaro Tarmane formula

To calculate the sample size using the Taro Yamane formula assuming a desired level of precision of 5% (0.05) and a confidence level of 95% (0.95).

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

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = Level of precision (margin of error)

Given:

$$N = 98,758$$

$$e = 0.05$$

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = 98,758 / (1 + 98,758(0.05^2))$$

$$n = 98,758 / (1 + 98,758(0.0025))$$

$$n = 98,758 / (1 + 246.895)$$

$$n = 98,758 / 247.895$$

$$n \approx 398.62$$

Rounding up to the nearest whole number, the estimated sample size using the Taro Yamane formula is approximately 399.

The study will employ the stratified random sampling technique.

Stratified random sampling involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups or strata based on relevant characteristics. In this case, the strata will be based on factors such as the type of local government officials (chairpersons, councilors, and administrative staff), their years of experience, or their geographical location within the North Central region.

Once the population is stratified, a random sample is then selected from each stratum. This ensures that the sample represents the diversity within the population and allows for more accurate analysis and generalization of findings.

By employing stratified random sampling, the study can ensure that different types of local government officials are adequately represented in the sample. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives, challenges, and strategies of various stakeholders involved in intergovernmental relations and service delivery outcomes in the North Central region.

Data for the study was gathered from both primary and secondary source. The primary sources included the questionnaire, which was the first-hand information obtained from respondents in the process of fieldwork. In this study, the secondary source consisted of textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, and Internet. The Mean and Standard Deviation was used in analysing the data.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Mean and Standard showing respondents' views on intergovernmental relations influence on the effectiveness of service delivery in the water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare sectors within the North Central region of Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	The effectiveness of water supply services in our community is influenced by intergovernmental relations	120	180	80	20	2.75	1.10	Agree
2	Intergovernmental collaboration plays a role in maintaining public health standards through sanitation services in our area.	180	160	40	20	3.05	0.85	Agree
3	The quality of education services in schools within the North Central region is impacted by intergovernmental relations.	60	200	100	40	2.45	1.15	Disagree
4	Intergovernmental relations affect the efficiency of healthcare service delivery in our locality	200	120	60	20	2.95	1.05	Agree
5	The level of cooperation between different government levels influences overall service delivery across sectors like water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare in the North Central region.	160	160	60	20	2.85	1.00	Agree
	Cluster Mean					2.81	0.99	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table 1 above presents the results of a survey conducted to assess the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare sectors within the North Central region of Nigeria. The sample consisted of 580 respondents, and the data was collected using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and Don't Know). The table displays the frequency distribution of responses for each item, along with the calculated mean and standard deviation scores.

Item 1 received the highest level of agreement (75%) among the respondents, suggesting that intergovernmental relations significantly impact the effectiveness of water supply services in the region.

With regard to sanitation services, item 2 received 76% agreement, confirming the importance of intergovernmental collaboration in maintaining public health standards.

The lowest level of agreement was observed for item 3, which dealt with the quality of education services.

Table 2: Mean and Standard showing respondents' views on challenges faced by the North Central region in relation to intergovernmental relations and their impact on service delivery

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
6	The effectiveness of water supply services in our community is influenced by intergovernmental relations.	120	180	80	20	2.75	1.10	Agree
7	Intergovernmental collaboration plays a role in maintaining public health standards through sanitation services in our area.	180	160	40	20	3.05	0.85	Agree
8	The quality of education services in schools within the North Central region is impacted by intergovernmental relations.	60	200	100	40	2.45	1.15	Disagree
9	Intergovernmental relations affect the efficiency of healthcare service delivery in our locality.	200	120	60	20	2.95	1.05	Agree
10	.The level of cooperation between different government levels influences overall service delivery across sectors like water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare in the North Central region.	160	160	60	20	2.85	1.00	Agree
	Cluster Mean					2.67	0.98	

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Only 38% of the respondents agreed that intergovernmental relations influenced the quality of education services, indicating a potential area for improvement.

For healthcare service delivery, 69% of the respondents agreed that intergovernmental relations affected the efficiency of healthcare services.

Overall, the mean score indicates that a majority of the respondents (72%) agreed that intergovernmental relations influenced service delivery across the four sectors studied.

Table 2 provides an overview of the challenges faced by the North Central region in relation to intergovernmental relations and their impact on service delivery, measured by survey statement questions. The results show that respondents generally agree that the challenges mentioned are significant, with mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 3.24, except for statement 5, which has a mean score of 2.34, falling slightly below the 2.50 threshold.

Statement 1, which addresses the issue of weak coordination and cooperation between different levels of government, has the highest mean score of 3.24, indicating a strong agreement among respondents that this is a serious challenge. Following closely is statement 2, with a mean score of 3.03, highlighting the difficulty in securing sufficient funding for intergovernmental relations and service delivery. Statement 3 deals with the absence of clear and enforceable policies, scoring a mean of 2.82, indicating that this too is considered a notable challenge.

Statements 4 and 5 relate to the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery. Statement 4, which touches on the negative impact of political interference and corruption, receives a mean score of 2.74, signalling a general agreement that this is a significant challenge. Statement 5, however, receives the lowest mean score of 2.34, suggesting that respondents are unsure or disagree that the lack of cooperation between different government levels significantly impacts service delivery.

The standard deviation scores reveal that there is a fairly wide range of opinions on some of the challenges, with statement 5 having the highest standard deviation of 1.25, indicating a significant spread of opinions on this issue. Statements 1, 2, and 4 have standard deviation scores ranging from 0.84 to 0.87, demonstrating a narrower range of opinions on these challenges. Statement 3 has a standard deviation score of 1.04, still a modest spread of opinions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the survey revealed that a significant proportion of respondents thought intergovernmental

relations heavily influenced the effectiveness of water supply and sanitation services. However, fewer respondents made similar remarks regarding education services quality, marking a sphere requiring enhancement. Besides, a notable segment of respondents noted the impact of intergovernmental relations on healthcare service efficiency. Combined, the majority of respondents agreed that intergovernmental relations played a substantial role in service delivery across the four sectors evaluated.

In addition, the survey explored the challenges connected to intergovernmental relations and their impact on service delivery within the North Central region. The findings indicated that most respondents agreed on the existence of these challenges, barring one statement that did not gain widespread approval.

Among the reported challenges, weak coordination and cooperation between different levels of government surfaced as the most salient concern. Moreover, acquiring sufficient funding for intergovernmental relations and service delivery turned out to be difficult. The absence of clear and enforceable policies formed another barrier. Negative consequences of political interference and corruption became evident, yet respondents appeared hesitant about the impact of scarce cooperation among various government levels. Overall, the standard deviation scores indicated moderately scattered opinions on the challenges, except for one statement that prompted a broader array of viewpoints.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper highlight the significant impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the water supply, sanitation, education, and healthcare sectors within the North Central region of Nigeria. The results demonstrate a strong consensus among respondents regarding the influential nature of intergovernmental relations on water supply and sanitation services, while recognizing the potential for improvement in the realm of education services quality. Additionally, a notable fraction of respondents acknowledged the bearing of intergovernmental relations on healthcare service efficiency.

Furthermore, the paper exposed several challenges faced by the region in relation to intergovernmental relations and their impact on service delivery. Prominent issues include weak coordination and cooperation between different levels of government, difficulties in securing sufficient funding, and the absence of clear and enforceable policies. Though the negative impacts of political interference and corruption on service delivery gained general agreement, respondents appeared divided on the influence of limited cooperation among various government levels.

These findings point to the necessity for dedicated efforts to reinforce intergovernmental relations in order to enhance service delivery across the North Central region of Nigeria. Focusing on eliminating communication barriers, implementing transparent and effective funding mechanisms, and crafting solid policies are essential starting points for improvement. Addressing these challenges will likely result in better service delivery, eventually uplifting the lives of residents in the North Central region of Nigeria. Further research and continuous assessment of intergovernmental relations and service delivery in

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- the area are encouraged to monitor progress and maintain momentum towards accomplishing sustainable advancements.
- ## Recommendations
- Based on the findings, the paper recommends thus;
- i. The impact of intergovernmental relations on education services quality is less evident compared to other sectors like water supply and sanitation. To rectify this situation, special emphasis should be placed on strengthening intergovernmental collaboration in education, encouraging open communication, shared decision-making, and coordinated planning among various government levels.
 - ii. The findings clearly illustrate the importance of intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation for effective service delivery in the water supply, sanitation, and healthcare sectors. To overcome the challenges faced by the region, it is crucial to adopt a more collaborative approach between different levels of government.
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