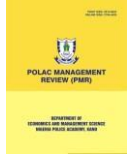




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ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assesses the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North-Central region of Nigeria and its impact in service delivery. By this, the study observed the following; to assess the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria and to evaluate the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the North Central region of Nigeria. Intergovernmental relations play a crucial role in the governance structure of Nigeria, particularly in ensuring effective service delivery to its citizens. Understanding the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in this region and its impact on service delivery is essential for promoting efficient and equitable governance. The study was anchored on the Governance Network Theory. The theory is a conceptual framework that examines the interactions, relationships, and collaborations among multiple actors in the governance process. This study adopted the Cross-sectional survey design, employing a questionnaire-based survey to collect data from the population. The population of the study consists of the 98,758 local government officials in the North Central region of Nigeria. These officials, including local government chairpersons, councilors, and administrative staff. The study reveals that local government officials have sufficient authority and autonomy to make independent decisions regarding service delivery. The study highlights the importance of intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation for effective and efficient service delivery. The study recommends that regular forums should be established for dialogue and exchange between local government officials and higher levels of government to facilitate effective communication and information sharing

Keywords: Intergovernmental relations, North-Central region, Service delivery, Local government officials

Introduction

Intergovernmental relations play a crucial role in the governance structure of Nigeria, particularly in ensuring effective service delivery to its citizens. Understanding the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in this region and its impact on service delivery is essential for promoting efficient and equitable governance.

Nigeria's historical context provides valuable insights into the current state of intergovernmental relations. Adeyemo (2015), stated that the country has undergone significant political transformations, including colonial rule, military regimes, and the transition to democratic

governance in 1999. This transition marked a shift towards a federal system of government, aiming to decentralize power and promote local governance. As a result, intergovernmental relations became a critical aspect of governance, emphasizing collaboration, coordination, and cooperation between the federal, state, and local levels.

At the core of Nigeria's federal system is the distribution of powers, functions, and responsibilities among different levels of government. Akume (2014), stated that the 1999 Constitution delineates the jurisdiction of each level, with the federal government retaining exclusive authority over defense, foreign affairs, and

monetary policies. State and local governments, on the other hand, exercise residual powers in areas such as education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure development. This constitutional framework sets the stage for intergovernmental relations and defines the boundaries within which service delivery occurs.

The structure of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region follows the broader federal framework. It encompasses formal and informal interactions between the federal, state, and local governments, as well as various institutional mechanisms facilitating cooperation and coordination. At the formal level, intergovernmental relations involve regular meetings, consultations, and joint decision-making processes among representatives from different levels of government. These interactions aim to harmonize policies, resolve conflicts, and allocate resources effectively (Bello, 2014).

Informal relationships also shape intergovernmental dynamics in the North Central region. Political alignments, personal networks, and informal channels of communication often influence decision-making processes and resource distribution. These informal aspects can either enhance or impede intergovernmental collaboration, depending on the nature and quality of relationships established among political actors.

The impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the North Central region is multi-faceted. Achimugu, Stephen & Agboni (2013), stated that effective collaboration and coordination between different levels of government can lead to improved planning, resource allocation, and implementation of development programs. When intergovernmental relations function optimally, service delivery can be more efficient, responsive, and accountable to the needs of the local population. Conversely, ineffective or strained intergovernmental relations can result in delays, inefficiencies, and gaps in service provision.

Several factors influence the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations and, consequently, their impact on service delivery. Political dynamics, including power struggles, partisan interests, and electoral considerations, can shape the relationships among

governments. Administrative capacity, financial resources, and human capital also play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of intergovernmental cooperation (Agba, Akwara & Idu, 2013). Furthermore, contextual factors such as socio-economic disparities, security challenges, and cultural diversity in the North Central region can influence the dynamics of intergovernmental relations and service delivery outcomes.

Understanding the interplay between intergovernmental relations and service delivery requires an examination of specific sectors within the North Central region. Key sectors, including healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social welfare, are critical for the well-being and development of the local population. Assessing the performance of these sectors in relation to intergovernmental relations can provide insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement in service delivery.

The North Central region of Nigeria faces significant challenges in intergovernmental relations and their impact on service delivery. Despite the federal structure of governance and the constitutional framework that delineates the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government, there are persistent issues that hinder effective cooperation and coordination.

Firstly, there is a lack of clarity and consensus regarding the distribution of powers and functions among the federal, state, and local governments. This ambiguity often leads to conflicts and overlapping jurisdictions, resulting in delays and inefficiencies in service delivery. The absence of clear guidelines and mechanisms for resolving such conflicts exacerbates the problem.

Secondly, political dynamics and power struggles at various levels of government affect intergovernmental relations and, consequently, service delivery outcomes. Partisan interests, electoral considerations, and personal networks often take precedence over the collective goal of delivering essential services to the citizens. This results in resource allocation that is influenced by political motives rather than the actual needs of the population.

Thirdly, administrative capacity and financial constraints pose significant challenges to effective intergovernmental relations and service delivery. The capacity of state and local governments to plan, implement, and manage development programs is often limited. Insufficient financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel further hinder the provision of quality services.

Moreover, contextual factors specific to the North Central region, such as socio-economic disparities and security challenges, add complexities to intergovernmental relations. These factors require tailored approaches to service delivery, which necessitate effective collaboration and coordination among governments. However, the existing intergovernmental mechanisms often fail to address these contextual variations adequately.

It is upon this background that this study will seek to assess the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria and its impact on service delivery.

In light of the above, the researcher objectively seeks to;

- i. To assess the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria.
- ii. To evaluate the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the North Central region of Nigeria

Concept of Intergovernmental Relations

Intergovernmental relations (IGR) refer to the interactions, collaborations, and coordination between different levels of government within a country. It involves the sharing of powers, functions, and responsibilities among these levels, typically encompassing the central or federal government, regional or state governments, and local governments. The concept of intergovernmental relations is crucial for effective governance, policy formulation, and service delivery.

IGR is based on the principle of federalism, which is a system of government that distributes power and authority between a central governing body and regional or local governments. Federalism recognizes the need for decentralized decision-making and allows for greater autonomy and self-governance at different levels. It aims to strike a balance between a strong central government and the interests and diversity of regional or local entities (Amobi, Vincent, & Uchechukwu, 2014).

In the context of intergovernmental relations, the distribution of powers and responsibilities is typically outlined in a constitution or legal framework. Angahar (2013), asserted that the constitution defines the jurisdiction and authority of each level of government, specifying the areas in which they have exclusive control, concurrent responsibilities, or shared functions. These delineations establish the boundaries within which intergovernmental relations operate.

The nature and mechanisms of intergovernmental relations can vary depending on the specific country and its governance structure. Bello (2014), stated that formal and informal channels and institutions facilitate the coordination and cooperation among different levels of government. These mechanisms include intergovernmental conferences, councils, committees, and joint decision-making processes.

Formal mechanisms of intergovernmental relations often involve regular meetings, consultations, and negotiations among representatives from different levels of government. To Bolatito & Ibrahim (2014), these interactions allow for the exchange of information, harmonization of policies, resolution of conflicts, and collaborative decision-making. Formal mechanisms may also include fiscal arrangements, such as revenue-sharing formulas or grants, through which resources are allocated among the different levels of government.

Informal relationships and networks also play a significant role in intergovernmental relations. Bolatito & Ibrahim (2014), further stated that personal connections, mutual understandings, and informal channels of communication can influence decision-making processes and resource allocation. These

informal aspects of intergovernmental relations can complement or supplement the formal mechanisms, providing avenues for flexibility, trust-building, and problem-solving.

The objectives of intergovernmental relations are multifaceted. Firstly, it aims to facilitate effective governance by promoting cooperation and coordination among different levels of government. By sharing information, expertise, and resources, intergovernmental relations help in collectively addressing complex policy issues, providing checks and balances, and ensuring the efficient delivery of public services (Isioma, 2017).

Secondly, Isioma (2017), stated that intergovernmental relations seek to foster unity and integration within a country. In diverse societies, regional or local governments often represent distinct cultural, linguistic, or ethnic identities. Intergovernmental relations provide a platform for these entities to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making processes, and contribute to national policies while maintaining their unique identities and interests.

Furthermore, Isioma (2017), asserted that intergovernmental relations foster accountability and transparency. By engaging different levels of government in the decision-making process, it allows for increased scrutiny and public participation. This transparency helps to prevent concentration of power, reduce corruption, and ensure that policies and services are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the citizens.

Effective intergovernmental relations have several benefits. It promotes efficient policy implementation by harnessing local knowledge and expertise. Ojo (2014), asserted that local and regional governments often have a better understanding of the specific needs and preferences of their communities, enabling contextually appropriate policy design and delivery. Intergovernmental relations also enhance resource mobilization and allocation, ensuring that financial and human resources are allocated where they are most needed.

However, intergovernmental relations can also face challenges and complexities. Conflicts may arise when there are overlapping jurisdictions or disagreements over resource allocation. Political dynamics, such as partisan interests and power struggles, can hinder effective collaboration and decision-making. Inadequate administrative capacity, limited financial resources, and institutional weaknesses at various levels of government can also impede intergovernmental relations and affect service delivery outcomes.

In conclusion, intergovernmental relations are vital for effective governance and service delivery within a federal or decentralized system of government. It involves the interaction, collaboration, and coordination among different levels of government to share powers, functions, and responsibilities. Formal and informal mechanisms facilitate these interactions, aiming to promote effective governance, unity, integration, accountability, and transparency. While challenges exist, fostering strong intergovernmental relations is crucial for achieving efficient and equitable service delivery and ensuring the well-being and development of a country's citizens.

Service Delivery

Service delivery, in the context of intergovernmental relations, refers to the provision of public services by the government to its citizens. It encompasses a wide range of essential services, such as healthcare, education, infrastructure development, social welfare programs, and other services aimed at improving the well-being and quality of life of the population.

The concept of service delivery is closely linked to the objectives of intergovernmental relations. Adedire (2018), asserted that the effectiveness and efficiency of intergovernmental collaboration and coordination significantly influence the quality, accessibility, and equity of service delivery. The distribution of powers and responsibilities among different levels of government, as well as the allocation of resources, play a crucial role in shaping service delivery outcomes.

Service delivery involves multiple dimensions, including access, quality, responsiveness, and equity. Access refers to the availability and physical proximity of services to the population. It entails ensuring that services are geographically distributed to reach all citizens, including those in remote or marginalized areas. Access also involves removing barriers, such as affordability, cultural sensitivity, or language, that may hinder individuals from utilizing the services they need (Abdumlingo & Mwirigi 2014).

Quality service delivery entails providing services that meet established standards and are effective in achieving their intended outcomes. According to Abe & Oluwaleye (2014), it encompasses aspects such as skilled personnel, adequate infrastructure, appropriate technology, reliable supply chains, and evidence-based practices. Quality service delivery focuses on ensuring that services are delivered in a timely, safe, and respectful manner, and that they address the specific needs and preferences of the recipients.

Responsiveness is another critical aspect of service delivery. To Agba, Akwara, & Idu (2013), it refers to the ability of government agencies to address the evolving needs and demands of the population. Responsive service delivery involves mechanisms for engaging with citizens, receiving feedback, and incorporating their perspectives into policy and program design. It requires flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances, emerging challenges, and technological advancements.

Equity in service delivery emphasizes fairness and the distribution of resources and services based on need. It recognizes that different segments of the population may have varying levels of access to resources and services due to social, economic, or geographical factors. Equitable service delivery aims to reduce disparities, bridge gaps, and ensure that marginalized or vulnerable groups have equal opportunities to access and benefit from public services.

In the context of intergovernmental relations, several factors influence service delivery outcomes. One key factor is the distribution of powers and responsibilities among different levels of government. To Ajam (2014),

the clarity and consistency in defining the roles and functions of each level, as outlined in the constitution or legal framework, determine the areas for which they are accountable and responsible. Effective intergovernmental coordination ensures that these responsibilities are fulfilled and that services are delivered in a coordinated and collaborative manner.

Ajam (2014), further stated that resource allocation is another critical aspect that impacts service delivery. Intergovernmental fiscal arrangements, such as revenue-sharing formulas or grants, determine the financial resources available to different levels of government. Adequate and equitable allocation of resources is crucial to ensure that service delivery needs are met across the various regions or localities. Efficient intergovernmental fiscal transfers and budgetary processes are essential to support service delivery initiatives and address resource gaps.

Administrative capacity also plays a significant role in service delivery. Amina, Agu, & Ogbu, (2017), asserted that the ability of government agencies at different levels to plan, implement, and manage programs and services influences their effectiveness. Adequate staffing, training, and infrastructure are essential for delivering services efficiently. Collaboration and capacity-building efforts among different levels of government can enhance administrative capabilities and improve service delivery outcomes.

Moreover, contextual factors specific to regions or localities can influence service delivery. Socio-economic disparities, demographic characteristics, cultural diversity, and geographic considerations may require tailored approaches to service provision. Effective intergovernmental relations should take into account these contextual variations and ensure that services are responsive to the specific needs and circumstances of different areas.

In conclusion, service delivery is a fundamental aspect of governance, and its outcomes are deeply intertwined with intergovernmental relations. It encompasses the provision of essential public services to citizens, aiming to improve their well-being and quality of life. Access,

quality, responsiveness, and equity are key dimensions of service delivery. Effective intergovernmental collaboration, resource allocation, administrative capacity, and contextual considerations are crucial for achieving efficient, effective, and equitable service delivery outcomes. Strengthening intergovernmental relations and addressing the challenges that hinder service delivery are essential for promoting good governance and meeting the needs of the population.

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 and 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 and 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 and 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, and 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 to be 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 topic under study, which focuses on the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria and its impact on service delivery. 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, 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 the nature and extent of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	Local government officials in the North Central region have sufficient authority and autonomy to make independent decisions.	120	180	80	20	2.75	1.10	Agree
2	Intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation are essential for effective service delivery in the North Central region.	180	160	40	20	3.05	0.85	Agree
3	The current intergovernmental relations framework adequately addresses the needs and concerns of local government officials.	60	200	100	40	2.45	1.15	Disagree
4	Local government officials in the North Central region face significant challenges in accessing resources and support.	200	120	60	20	2.95	1.05	Agree

5	Communication and information sharing impact service delivery in the North Central region.	160	160	60	20	2.85	1.00	Agree
	Average Mean					2.81	0.99	

The table above provides an analysis of the responses to the statement questions related to intergovernmental relations in the North Central region of Nigeria.

Regarding the authority and autonomy of local government officials, the majority of respondents agree that they have sufficient authority and autonomy to make independent decisions regarding service delivery within their respective areas. However, a smaller proportion of respondents express disagreement or uncertainty on this matter.

There is a strong consensus among respondents that intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation are essential for effective and efficient service delivery in the North Central region. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, while a smaller portion express disagreement or uncertainty.

Opinions are divided when it comes to the adequacy of the current intergovernmental relations framework in addressing the needs and concerns of local government officials. While a significant number of respondents agree with the statement, a considerable proportion express disagreement or uncertainty.

Respondents generally agree that local government officials in the North Central region face significant challenges in accessing resources and support from higher levels of government. The majority of respondents strongly agree with this statement, while a smaller portion express disagreement or uncertainty.

Communication and information sharing between local government officials and higher levels of government are considered to significantly impact the quality of service delivery in the North Central region. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, while a smaller portion express disagreement or uncertainty.

Overall, the analysis suggests that while there is agreement on the importance of intergovernmental collaboration and the challenges faced by local government officials, there is less consensus on the sufficiency of authority and autonomy, the adequacy of the intergovernmental relations framework, and the impact of communication and information sharing. These findings highlight areas that may require attention and improvement in the intergovernmental relations in the North Central region.

Table 2: Mean and Standard showing respondents' views on the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the North Central region of Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination positively contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the North Central region.	200	150	30	20	3.25	0.85	Agree
2	The current intergovernmental relations framework adequately addresses the specific service delivery needs of local communities in the North Central region.	120	180	60	40	2.95	1.05	Agree
3	Communication and information sharing between different levels of government significantly impact	180	120	60	40	3.05	1.15	Agree

	the timeliness and quality of service delivery in the North Central region.							
4	Adequate allocation of resources and funding through intergovernmental channels is crucial for improving service delivery outcomes in the North Central region.	160	140	50	50	3.00	1.10	Agree
5	Collaborative decision-making processes between local, state, and federal government entities enhance the overall service delivery performance in the North Central region.	150	160	50	40	3.00	1.05	Agree
	Average Mean					3.05	0.96	

The table presents the analysis of the responses to five statement questions related to the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the North Central region.

For the first statement, a majority of respondents strongly agree that intergovernmental cooperation and coordination positively contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the North Central region. Additionally, a significant number of respondents agree, while a smaller proportion express disagreement or strong disagreement. The mean score for this statement suggests a generally positive perception of the impact of intergovernmental cooperation on service delivery.

The second statement indicates that the current intergovernmental relations framework is perceived to adequately address the specific service delivery needs of local communities in the North Central region. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, while a smaller proportion express disagreement. The mean score suggests an overall agreement with the adequacy of the framework.

The third statement highlights the significant impact of communication and information sharing between different levels of government on the timeliness and quality of service delivery. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, while a smaller proportion express disagreement. The mean score suggests a general agreement on the importance of communication in service delivery.

The fourth statement emphasizes the crucial role of adequate allocation of resources and funding through intergovernmental channels in improving service delivery outcomes. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, while a smaller proportion express disagreement. The mean score suggests an overall agreement on the importance of resource allocation.

The fifth statement focuses on the enhancement of service delivery performance through collaborative decision-making processes between local, state, and federal government entities. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, while a smaller proportion express disagreement. The mean score suggests a general agreement on the positive impact of collaborative decision-making.

Overall, the analysis indicates a generally positive perception of the impact of intergovernmental relations on service delivery in the North Central region. However, there are varying levels of agreement and disagreement on specific aspects, highlighting the need for further attention and improvement in certain areas of intergovernmental relations.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study reveal that there are several key aspects of intergovernmental relations and service delivery in the North Central region that require attention and improvement.

Firstly, the majority of respondents agree that local government officials have sufficient authority and

autonomy to make independent decisions regarding service delivery. However, a smaller proportion of respondents express disagreement or uncertainty on this matter. This indicates that there may be variations in the perceived level of authority and autonomy among local government officials in the region.

Secondly, the study highlights the importance of intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation for effective and efficient service delivery. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, indicating a strong consensus on the significance of coordination among different levels of government.

Thirdly, opinions are divided regarding the adequacy of the current intergovernmental relations framework in addressing the needs and concerns of local government officials. While a significant number of respondents agree with the statement, a considerable proportion express disagreement or uncertainty. This suggests that there is room for improvement in the existing framework to better address the specific service delivery needs of local communities.

Furthermore, the study reveals that local government officials in the North Central region face significant challenges in accessing resources and support from higher levels of government. The majority of respondents strongly agree with this statement, emphasizing the difficulties in obtaining necessary resources for effective service delivery. This finding underscores the importance of addressing resource allocation and support mechanisms to enhance service delivery outcomes.

Lastly, the study highlights the significant impact of communication and information sharing between local government officials and higher levels of government on the quality of service delivery. The majority of respondents agree with this statement, indicating the recognition of effective communication channels as crucial for timely and efficient service delivery.

In conclusion, the findings of the study suggest that there is a need to address various aspects of intergovernmental relations in the North Central region. These include enhancing the authority and autonomy of local

government officials, strengthening the intergovernmental framework, addressing resource access challenges, and improving communication channels between different levels of government. By focusing on these areas, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards improving service delivery outcomes in the region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the dynamics of intergovernmental relations and service delivery in the North Central region, offering valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders. It underscores the significance of collaboration and cooperation among different levels of government as key drivers of effective service delivery outcomes.

Moreover, the study reveals variations in the perceived authority and autonomy of local government officials, indicating the need for further examination of the factors contributing to these differences. Understanding the underlying causes can inform efforts to ensure consistent levels of authority and autonomy across the region, fostering equitable decision-making processes.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of evaluating and potentially enhancing the existing intergovernmental relations framework. This evaluation can guide policymakers in addressing the specific service delivery needs of local communities, leading to more responsive and effective governance structures.

Furthermore, the study highlights the challenges faced by local government officials in accessing resources and support from higher levels of government. Addressing these resource access challenges requires the development of transparent and equitable resource allocation mechanisms, along with capacity-building initiatives to empower local governments in effectively utilizing available resources.

Lastly, the study underscores the critical role of effective communication and information sharing between local government officials and higher levels of government. Strengthening communication channels can facilitate timely and efficient service delivery, enabling the

exchange of best practices, and fostering a culture of collaboration and learning.

In summary, the study's findings provide valuable abstract insights into intergovernmental relations and service delivery in the North Central region. They highlight the importance of collaboration, consistent authority and autonomy, framework evaluation, resource access, and communication. By addressing these aspects, policymakers can work towards enhancing service delivery outcomes and meeting the diverse needs of local communities in the region.

Recommendations

The study recommends that;

1. Regular forums should be established for dialogue and exchange between local government officials and higher levels of government to facilitate effective communication and information sharing. This can promote coordination, foster a culture of collaboration, and improve service delivery outcomes.
2. A comprehensive evaluation of the existing framework should be conducted to identify areas for improvement. Address the specific service delivery needs of local communities by implementing reforms that ensure consistent authority and autonomy, equitable resource allocation, and support mechanisms for local government officials.

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