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Political Actors and Intergovernmental Relations in Nigeria: Implication for Nation Building

***Kigbu Yusuf Ombogutsa; **Donald Sabastine Goji; & *Zhebago Emmanuel Peter**

*Department of Public Administration, Isa Mustapha Agwai 1 Polytechnic, Lafia.
**Department of Political Science, Federal University of Lafia
Corresponding Author: kigbuyusuf12@gmail.com
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Abstract

Intergovernmental relations are basically one of the fundamental tenets of federalism. Effective IGR practice is a sin qua non for the sustenance of good governance in a federation like Nigeria. IGR and good governance are two indispensible variables for the development of a multi-tier Nigerian State. This explanatory discourse is aimed at examining how political actors shape resources among the three tiers of government in Nigeria, to ascertain how policies of political leaders affect national development. The study is anchored on the theory of structural functionalism propounded by Almond and Powell (1966), the article explained how and why existing structures of Nigerian federalism affect its ability to function for the development of the state. The study applied a qualitative research method, utilizing data from the secondary source while content analysis and trends analytical techniques were adopted for data analysis. The study found out that the major setback to good governance in the three tiers of government in Nigerian federation is the failure of the 1999 constitution to provide for active synergy and clear devolution of power among the units of government. The study reveals that, the fundamental cause of stunted development among the three tiers of government especially at the grassroots is the skewed, uncooperative and competitive IGR orchestrated by lack of devolution of power and the structural imbalance in the Nigerian federalism which has offered leeway to the states to plunder the funds of local governments. Also, the challenges faced by Nigeria in achieving good governance through effective IGR among the three tiers of government in namely; the federal, state and local governments. The study concluded that good governance is not possible because of the violation of doctrine of non-interference. Meanwhile, targeted policy

recommendations to move attitudes and therefore behaviour toward more predictable, institutionalized and collaborative Intergovernmental Relations. Since law is the only effective means of social control, the study recommended the unambiguous provision of a model of IGR which must protect the powers and functions of the constituent parts of the federation.

Keywords: Political Actors, politics, Fiscal federalism, State–Federal Relations, and Intergovernmental Relations

Introduction

Intergovernmental relations (IGR) in Nigeria refer to the interactions among the three tiers of government i.e federal, state and local government designed to promote cooperation, coordination, and effective service delivery. Nigeria's federal structure was adopted to accommodate diversity and distribute powers, but in practice, its success depends largely on the attitudes and behaviours of political leaders at each level. Effective Inter-governmental Relations (IGR) ensures equitable development, fiscal balance, and administrative harmony, yet these ideals are often undermined by political rivalry, personal interests, and weak institutional commitment Ademola, F. S. (2025)

Since 1999, the return of Nigeria to democratic governance has exposed persistent friction between levels of government, often arising from partisan politics, control of federal allocations, and personality clashes among leaders. Many leaders display authoritarian or centralizing tendencies, which erode cooperative mechanisms like the National Economic Council and the Joint Account Allocation Committee. Instead of collaboration, political competition and distrust dominate intergovernmental interactions, leading to duplication of efforts and policy failures Adesola, S.M. (2021)

Nigeria operates a federal system of government comprising three constitutionally recognized tiers, the federal, state, and local governments. Effective intergovernmental relations (IGR) are therefore critical for ensuring policy coherence, resource sharing, and coordinated development across these levels. Since independence, the dynamics of Nigeria's IGR have been shaped by political leadership attitudes, constitutional ambiguities, and the distribution of fiscal powers. Despite the constitutional provision for cooperation among the tiers of government, relationships have often been marked by competition, distrust, and central dominance rather than partnership Adesola, S.M. (2021)

The period from 2020 to 2025 has witnessed renewed attention to IGR due to the combined effects of economic downturns, insecurity, and increasing demands for state autonomy. The role and attitude of political leaders — presidents, governors, and local government chairpersons have proven decisive in shaping how intergovernmental mechanisms function. While formal institutions such as the National Economic Council (NEC) and the Federation Account

Allocation Committee (FAAC) exist to facilitate coordination, the personal dispositions and political calculations of leaders often determine whether cooperation or conflict prevails Ademola, F. S. (2025).

The quality of IGR in Nigeria is thus not merely a function of institutional design, but largely of political behavior, that is, how leaders perceive and use power, authority, and resources To rule and formulate negative policies that suit their interest. When political actors adopt cooperative attitudes, intergovernmental collaboration can enhance service delivery, fiscal discipline, and national integration. Conversely, when leaders approach IGR from a zero-sum or partisan perspective, the result is policy inconsistency, duplication, and conflict (Nye, 2008).

Nigeria's constitutional design establishes three tiers of government whose effective collaboration is central to governance, service delivery and national cohesion. Yet persistent conflicts—over revenue allocation, jurisdictional authority, security responsibilities and political patronage—undermine critical issues that underpin the idea of intergovernmental relations. While institutions exist for IGR (e.g., National Economic Council, Fiscal Allocation Committee), the behaviour and attitudes of political leaders frequently convert those mechanisms into arenas for short-term bargaining and image politics rather than long-term cooperative governance. The problem addressed here is: how do the attitudes of political leaders (federal and sub-national) shape the quality and effectiveness of IGR in contemporary Nigeria? The research is guided by the following research question as; how does political actors shape the allocation of resources among the three tiers of government in Nigeria?, to what extent does the policies of political leaders affect Nigerian security?, how has the Nigerian constitution impact intergovernmental relations and national integration, and what are the challenges affecting the smooth operation of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria? However, the objectives of this study is to assess how political actors shape the resource allocation in Nigeria among the three tiers of government, to ascertain how policies of political leaders affect Nigerian security, to determine how Nigerian constitution direct intergovernmental relation and National Integration and to identify challenges bedeviling the smooth operation of intergovernmental relation in Nigeria (Adesola, 2021)

Therefore, this research critically examines the attitudes of political leaders towards effective intergovernmental relations in Nigeria. It investigates how leadership orientation, political party influence, and institutional weakness affect cooperation between tiers of government. The study argues that while legal frameworks exist, their success is determined by leaders willingness to cooperate, share power, and prioritize national interest over partisan advantage (Baron, 2000).

Conceptual review

Political Actors: Political actors are individuals who hold positions of authority within political systems and are responsible for making, implementing, and influencing public policies and decisions that affect the lives of citizens. They guide the political direction of a nation, state, or community and play a crucial role in governance, administration, and

representation of the people. According to Weber (1947), political actors are those who possess legitimate authority derived from their position within a political structure, enabling them to direct and coordinate the activities of the state.

Attitude: An attitude is a learned tendency or predisposition to think, feel, and behave in a particular way toward a specific object, person, event, or idea. It reflects an individuals evaluation positive, negative, or neutral of something in their environment. According to Allport (1935), an attitude is "a mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. Similarly, Eagly and Chaiken (1993) define attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavor.

Intergovernmental relations (IGR): Intergovernmental relations describe formal and informal interactions between different government tiers as it involves cooperation, communication, and coordination in executing public policies. In a true federation, each level of government should operate independently within its constitutional jurisdiction while collaborating on shared responsibilities. However, in Nigeria, overlapping functions and revenue dependence have created tension and rivalry, especially between the federal and state governments (Adesola, 2021). Scholars describe intergovernmental relations as a system of linkages among levels of government aimed at achieving common policy goals (Akindele & Olaopa, 2021).

Political Actors and Resources Allocation among the three tiers of Government in Nigeria

The federal government through its institutions controls the collection of many major national revenues (oil rents, customs, company income tax etc) and sets national fiscal policy; the Ministry of Finance coordinates federation receipts before sharing. Practical influences decides proposals to FAAC, submits budgets and circulars, and controls some off-budget flows. The constitutional power make laws on revenue distribution (including Acts that give force to allocation formulas), to approve budgets, and to legislate grants-in-aid or sectoral transfers. Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) is the constitutional agency that monitors Federation Account accruals/disbursements, reviews revenue-sharing formulae and gives policy advice (and recommends salaries/conditions for public officers). Technically provides the formula and technical support for vertical allocation. However, the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) (Federal, States & Local reps + FG MDAs) is the operational body that meets monthly to distribute federation receipts among Federal, States and Local Governments (it issues the FAAC communiqués showing shares). FAAC is the practical "cash-desk" that distributes statutory revenue shares.

The State Governors control state budgets, determine internal generated revenue (IGR) mobilization strategies and make transfers to Local Government Councils subject to State laws; Houses of Assembly approve state budgets and any state revenue laws. Constitution requires each State to maintain a "State Joint Local Government Account".

Policies of political leaders and security agencies

Political leaders can promote national integration through inclusive policies that address economic, cultural, and structural inequalities, fostering a sense of fairness and shared identity. They can implement programs like educational initiatives and national service corps, while ensuring institutions are accountable and free from corruption. Conversely, leadership that prioritizes favoritism, ethnicity, and corruption can significantly undermine national unity.

Nigerian Constitution and National Integration

Nigeria, like many other post-colonial states of Africa, Asia and Latin America, has withnessed perennial political instability occasioned by disharmony among the different ethnic nationalities in the country. The disharmony among the different ethnic nationalities is very visible in the manner different groups sing discordant tunes about the future of the Nigerian nation-state. As Ojo (2009) asserts: Nigeria has a unique problem not experienced by any state in the world past or present. The problem is that achieving solidarity in action and purpose in the midst of hundred of ethnic nationalities each exerting both centrifugal and centripetal forces on the central issue of "the nation, bound in freedom, peace and unity, where justice reigns" (Ojo, 2009).

More so, there is endless clamour for self-determination, greater autonomy, resource control and other separatist tendencies among the different ethnic groups thereby questioning the very existence of the Nigerian State, let alone the oneness of the country. Social Scientists have argues that for Nigeria, like Social Scientists have argued that for Nigeria, like most other post-colonial states, to achieve national unity, cohesion and political stability, concerted efforts must be made at national integration. Essentially, successive administrations have made various attempts at national integration such as the adoption a federal structure, introduction of quota system/federal character, national youth service corps, catchment area for tertiary institutions admission and unity schools, etc. However, as Ifeanacho and Nwagwu (2009) observed, Nigeria's efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely elusive and illusory (Samuel & Deinibiteim, 2020).

The abysmal performance of the Nigerian state in the area of development and national integration since independence in 1960 has been largely attributed to the quality, nature and character of the nation's leaders during these six decades. Obviously, the effects of seemingly unethical and unaccountable political leadership or leadership failure in national integration and nation building anywhere in the world, and in Nigeria in particular, need not be overemphasized. Emelonye and Buergenthal (2011) cited in Onifade and Imhonopi (2013), asserted that, ineffective governance (leadership failure) in Nigeria today have greatly created ethnic divisions leading to misunderstanding, distrust among ethnic and religious groups who see themselves as rivals who must be subjugated or conquered by all means, thus hampering national integration and building a strong nation. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to demonstrate that the principal challenge to national integration and nation building in Nigeria is leadership failure, that is, unethical leadership or ineffective or bad governance. The paper contends that, for Nigeria to achieve national integration and building a virile and unified

nation our leaders must demonstrate palpable capacity to uphold impartiality, fairness and justice to all ethnic groups as well as de-emphasize ethnic cleavages in service to the nation. The government must re-double its efforts through the different state institutions/ structures to ensure all inclusive governance (Samuel & Deinibiteim, 2020).

National integration

The significant task confronted by the leaders of most multi-ethnic nation-states is to generate national identity and unify the state out of the existing differences in language, culture, etc; among the people. This challenge necessitated the articulation by Social Scientists, that leaders of pluralist societies or multi-ethnic countries must necessarily embark on national integration to create a harmonious relationship among the diverse groups. The question here is: what is national integration? Like many other concepts in the Social Sciences, it is difficult, if not impossible, to proffer a straight jacket or one-fit-all definition of the concept, national integration. Rather, in this section attempt would be made to present some articulations to explain what national integration is all about (Ojo, 2009).

Duverger in Ojo (2009) sees national integration as the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious." Similarly, Jacob and Tenue, cited in Ojo (2009) refer to it as "a relationship of community among people within the same political entity... a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes." In his own view, Ojo (2009) describes national integration as a process in which "members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community". Essentially, national integration is examined from the standpoint of the extent to which different parts of a society interact and complement each other in order to constitute viable whole. National integration is often considered to be a broad and all encompassing process and activity of achieving peace and stability as well as socio-economic development in a polity.

National Integration is seen as a process that produces an omnibus of initiatives put in place by a state, its representatives or institutions guided by respect for the unique traditions and cultural background of ethnicities sharing the same polity with the goal of harmonising all interests through a form of dialogue and representation and adores sing differences that may be divisive and conflictual using the instrument of fairness, justices and equity in the sharing of resources, benefits, opportunities and responsibilities in order to guarantee stability, longevity and prosperity of the polity as long as the inhabitants decide to remain within the polity. Onifade and Imhonopi (2013) assert that, national integration is a conscious and deliberate effort towards attainment of coordination and harmony within a state. To this end, Usara (2001) cited in Bakari (2017) defines national integration as "the unity of the various ethnic groups in the country or nation in such a way that they see one another as brothers and sisters devoid of tribal sentiments, nepotism and all other vices that bring polarization of the people." (Bakari, 2017).

As Shah and Ishaque (2017) assert, it is "a consistent development in which diverse sections of society are provided with identical prospects and equal rights to enjoy several amenities devoid of any discrimination". It is important to note that the oneness, unity and harmony among the diverse ethnic groups do not mean that such differences no longer exist, but they are not emphasized in service delivery and development processes, rather all segments of the society/state are viewed through the prism of national identity (that is, Nigerianness of all). Simply put, national integration is a situation whereby citizens of a country, both majority and minority ethnic groups, are deliberately and consciously made to participate in the state processes, especially governance, without prejudice to their ethnic origin. It implies willful acceptance and submission to state structures and institutions by a great majority of the people from both majority and minority ethnic groups (Ishah & Ishaque, 2017).

Nature and Character of Nigerian Leadership

The nature and character of Nigeria's political leadership are widely documented in a plethora of literature. The leadership question in Nigeria among observers, analysts and academics is an endless one, with a great majority, holding the view that "leadership" is the major problem of Nigeria. Considering the nature and character of the Nigerian political leadership since independence, Ogunmilade, Nwoko and Akhigbe (2017) opined that, "the perception rating of the ruling elites is jaundiced by intense power struggle to access statist structure, private economic resources, repressive tendencies and the preoccupation with political struggle to the neglect of critical development issues." Utomi (2020) described the Nigeria's political system and its leadership as one in which those who are out for "greater plunder" mobilise to push out the "lesser plunderers". To him, the arena of public life in Nigeria is an arena of plunder, thus there is a disconnect between the leaders and the led. As Okadigbo (1987) has observed, political leadership in the country is merely focused on sharing state resources rather than improving the living conditions and well-being of the people. Therefore, what is of utmost importance to the leadership is "state capture and the control of the state resources and institutions. Consequently, there is palpable absence of rigour in dealing with problems in the country.

Similarly, Chiamogu and Okafor (2014) argued that the leaders of Nigeria do not have the culture or belief of common good for all the people. This has necessitated the migration of young Nigerians overseas in huge numbers seeking for greener pastures elsewhere, thereby creating the brain-drain situation witnessed in the country, depriving the nation on the much needed human resource for development. The trouble with Nigeria as Achebe (1983) rightly noted in simply and squarely a failure of leadership (Okafor, 2014).

The bulk of leaders in Nigeria are certificated but do not have the knowledge and capacity to lead or govern. It is important to note that since the emergence of political community there has been the debate as to who should govern for the "common good" of all the people of the society. While there are many philosophical interventions from a number of thinkers, Plato's Republic dwelt more richly on this. The leadership situation in Nigeria fits into the situation Plato described as "Prisoners in the temple". In other words, misfits have found themselves in

governance positions. As Plato argued, in this kind of circumstances, where those who are not specially trained to identify the "form of the Good", which in this case is the interest of all, in position of public office, it is not possible for those in authority to govern in the interest of all or for the common good of all.

The incompetence of the ruling class in Nigeria is most visible in its management of the nation's resources, security, inter-ethnic relationship, etc. One major evidence of leadership failure in Nigeria, according to Ochulor (2011) is the fact that as the seventh largest producer of crude oil in the world Nigeria imports fuel for its local consumption. On the other hand, other oil producing nations like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc, do not import fuel, but rather, export refined petrol and petroleum products and had invested their resources to massively improve on the living conditions of their citizenry, while Nigeria is now the "Poverty Capital of the World." The state institutions and structures of government are not functional because of the low capacity and leadership weaknesses of the people manning them. For instance, the parliamentary system of government adopted at independence in 1960 did not work in Nigeria, while it is working well in UK, India, Canada, etc; so also, has the presidential system from 1979-1983, and up till date, yet it is working in USA, etc. This is so because the operators of the system lack adequate knowledge and skills to make them work optimally. As Ochulor (2011) has observed, the leadership of Nigeria suffers from intellectual incapacity, lack of discipline and political inexperience. To him, "intellectual incapacity, lack of discipline and political inexperience on the part of our leaders lead to venality of office". Indeed, it is common knowledge that in Nigeria people bribes their way into public offices in the executive, legislature and judiciary (Ochulor, 2011).

The tendency to grab power at all cost by political elites in Nigeria is to have access to the so-called "National Cake", of which none is prepared to bake the cake. Hence, there is unnecessary ethnic, religious and political violence to grab political power in the country. Interestingly, because of the ethnic cleavages of leaders in public offices most people in power tend to focus on developing their region, communities and giving appointments to people of their ethnic extraction. This explains the agitation by every region/ethnic group to produce the president or governor at the federal and state levels. Commenting on the nature and character of political leadership in Nigeria Oni and Excellence-Oliye (2016), assert that, Nigeria's leaders lack foresight, are reactionary, dwell on falsehood to deceive the people, capitalizing on their ignorance and illiteracy and lack ideas, creativity and innovation. All of these go a long way to impoverish the people and underdeveloped the nation. Obviously, in spite of the enormous blessing of the nation in terms of human and material resources, particularly oil mineral resource, because of the nature and character of the leadership of the country, the nation has remained underdeveloped. All of these make the governance/administration of the country highly inefficient. Also, commenting on the inefficiency of the processes of governance in the country, in and epochal speech on the floor of the National Assembly, in the House of Representative, Honourable Patrick Obahiagbon in 2009, asserted that, because of mismanagement, highhandedness, directionlessness, consciouslessness, purposelessness and planlessness by the nation's leaders, a vast majority of the Nigerian people are living in

squalor and hopelessness, while the very few that find themselves in leadership positions continue to loot the nation's treasury.

Challenges affecting smooth operation of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria

Smooth operation of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria is hindered by significant challenges related to the constitutional framework, fiscal disparities, political interference, and corruption. These issues lead to conflicts over jurisdiction, resource allocation, and autonomy, ultimately undermining effective public service delivery. Some of the key challenges affecting intergovernmental relations in Nigeria include constitutional and jurisdictional ambiguity. The 1999 constitution has open-ended or unclear clauses regarding the functions and jurisdictions of different government tiers which allows the federal government to encroach on state and local government responsibilities. More so, there is a problem of lopsided power distribution, the constitution concentrates significant power and more lucrative functions (e.g., power supply, port management, major revenue sources) at the federal level, creating an imbalance in the functional operation of government tiers.

Also, there is existing disagreements over the formula for sharing national revenue, particularly oil and gas wealth, are a major source of tension. Oil-producing states often demand greater resource control due to perceptions of unfair allocation and environmental degradation. The state and local governments are often left with social assistance functions that have low economic returns, making them fiscally dependent on the federal government. Another issue is the operation of the State-Local Government Joint Accounts, where state governments manage funds meant for local governments, is a significant problem. This system often leads to undue interference, fund diversion, and limited financial autonomy for local councils, making them accountable more to state governors than local electorates (Utomi, 2020).

Another challenges of the intergovernmental relations in Nigeria is the problem of political and institutional issues. Political actors often interfere and take decisions that are central to their interest. Higher levels of government, particularly states over local councils, often exercise excessive control, undermining the autonomy and functionality of the lower tiers. Inadequate and ineffective communication channels among the different tiers of government can exacerbate misunderstandings and hinder coordinated policy implementation. Meanwhile, the existing institutions designed to manage intergovernmental conflicts, such as the National Council on Intergovernmental Relations (NCIR), are often institutionally defective and lack enforcement powers to resolve disputes effectively (Okafor, 2014).

Empirical review

Empirical studies reveal that political leaders attitudes directly influence the quality of intergovernmental cooperation in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Okafor and Akokuwebe (2020) found that personal ambitions and party affiliations of leaders often distort formal intergovernmental relation processes leading to duplication of projects and wastage. Adesola (2021) observed that fiscal dependence of states on federal allocations encourages

subservience rather than partnership, weakening the autonomy of subnational governments. Recent empirical work (2020–2025) documents recurrent sources of friction: revenue allocation and FAAC (Federation Account Allocation Committee) distributions; security responsibilities (debates over creation of state police); and overlapping jurisdictions in service delivery. Some studies show episodic cooperation (e.g., governors publicly supporting federal fiscal reforms or joining joint taskforces), while many other studies and investigative reports show persistent distrust and politicisation of IGR mechanisms. Empirical audits of FAAC disputes and public statements by governors and federal ministers illustrate how fiscal pressures drive competitive attitudes among political leaders. Surveys and qualitative studies also indicate that partisan rivalry and contestation over appointments deepen mistrust between tiers (Adesola, 2021).

Empirical reviews on the attitudes of political leaders towards effective intergovernmental relations (IGR) in Nigeria consistently show that these attitudes are often **conflictual, self-serving, and characterized by a desire for dominance,** which hampers effective cooperation and service delivery (Okafor, 2020).

Babalola (2024) argued that Nigeria's political parties operate with little ideological commitment, leading to loyalty to individuals rather than institutions, which undermines intergovernmental trust. WFD Report (2024) highlighted how partisan considerations during the 2023 elections intensified federal – state conflicts over appointments and funding.

World Bank (2023) noted that despite reforms, Nigeria's fiscal coordination remains fragile because political leaders prioritize power retention over long-term collaboration. Okafor & Akokuwebe (2020) discussed linkages between Intergovernmental Relations and public service delivery emphasizing administrative bottlenecks and coordination failures as core issues.

Adesola (2021) examined fiscal federalism challenges and how opaque fiscal arrangements generate tensions between federal and subnational leaders. Analyses of the 2023 electoral cycle and party politics (e.g., Babalola 2024; WFD political party watch 2024) show a strengthening of partisan calculation in political appointments and resource allocation affecting cooperation across levels. Recent policy reviews and journal articles (2024 – 2025) document the continued prevalence of jurisdictional conflict (education, health, primary service delivery), the weakening of coordinating forums, and the politicization of transfers and appointments. These studies suggest leader attitudes toward centralization and control are important proximate drivers (Adesola, 2021).

Systems Theory

This research is relied on the Systems Theory propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy between (1901-1972), the theory views a given phenomenon, such as the political system and its Intergovernmental Relations, as an organized whole with interrelated functional parts (the different tiers of government: federal, state, and local) that function collectively to sustain the entire system. This framework highlights that the *malfunctioning* (or non-cooperative attitudes) of any single part or subsystem will negatively affect the existence and performance

of the entire system. Effective IGR requires a "symbiotic cooperation" of all parts, emphasizing the need for leaders to foster mutual understanding and collaboration for the success of national development goals. Leaders' attitudes are crucial here in ensuring that their respective government levels work in harmony rather than in conflict.

Gap in the literature

Although many studies document instances of conflict or cooperation, fewer works systematically link *leaders' expressed attitudes* (statements, postures) to measurable effects on IGR outcomes across domains (fiscal, security, service delivery) using the most recent period (post-2020). There is also limited synthesis that combines academic analyses with contemporaneous policy reports and media evidence to capture rapidly evolving issues (e.g., post-COVID fiscal austerity, debates on state policing, and 2023–2025 fiscal reforms). This study fills that gap by synthesizing documentary sources from 2015–2025 and focusing explicitly on political leaders' attitudes as behavioural drivers of Intergovernmental Relations.

Methodology

The study adopted mainly library research approach in the collection of data and content analysis method of data analysis. This means that it was qualitative research in nature. To this end, secondary data were drawn from textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers, magazines, internet materials, etc. These works were selected on the basis of their suitability and relevance to the topic under investigation. The content analysis method in a research work, as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) have argued, is "the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns. It is mainly inductive in application. In this study, content analysis was used to show the relationship between leadership attitude and intergovernmental relation in Nigeria.

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design. The method relies on the systematic collection, review, and analysis of existing documents to derive insights into the attitudes of Nigeria's political leaders toward intergovernmental relations (IGR). Documentary research is appropriate for this study because the topic involves political behaviours and policy interactions that are widely documented in government publications, official statements, academic articles, and media reports rather than through direct field observation.

The design allows for a critical synthesis of written evidence to understand how political leaders' attitudes—expressed through speeches, policy decisions, and institutional engagements—affect the effectiveness of IGR mechanisms in Nigeria between.

Source of Data

The study relies explicitly on secondary data that gathered information from the journal papers, text books, official documents and internet materials to source data.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The process involved the following steps, substantial issues based on the subject matter ware thematically analyzed from which conclusion and recommendations were drawn based on the available scholarly work.

Research Findings

The documentary synthesis yields four dominant attitudes among Nigeria's political leaders and associated behavioural patterns. Many governors and federal officials treat intergovernmental relations primarily as a mechanism for securing fiscal transfers, patronage and political leverage rather than as a cooperative governance space. Disputes over FAAC distributions and opaque fiscal calculations generate public accusations and legal threats. This transactional approach drives short-term bargaining (threats to withhold cooperations or to litigate) rather than investigate in institutionalized coordination. Recent analyses and FAAC reporting show recurrent public rows and pressures on governors to justify allocations, illustrating how money politics shapes attitudes.

From the research investigation, it was revealed that, the major political actors indicates prevalence of centralizing attitudes that many political leaders particularly at the federal executive level and some governors have shown tendencies to centralize decision making. Centralization often translates into dominance over many areas of intergovernmental relations. The study also found that, at the federal level, there is a recurrent tendency to emphasize national control (fiscal centralization, national security leadership) often justified on grounds of national unity or efficiency. While federal actors publicly endorse intergovernmental mechanisms, they sometimes act in ways that reinforce centre-dominance (e.g., control over security apparatus, conditional transfers), which produces resentment at the sub-national level and defensive responses by state leaders. Analyses of federal policies and academic commentary show this centripetal pattern is persistent.

Also, partisan rivalries and personal political ambitions frequently convert institutional forums into platforms for political posturing. When governors are from opposition parties to the federal executive, public disagreements intensify; when they are co-partisan, cooperation is more visible but often instrumental (policy support in exchange for concessions). The Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) sometimes acts as a collective bargaining body, and recent examples show both cooperation with and criticism of the federal government depending on political alignment and strategic benefit.

The study heightened insecurity (banditry, separatist agitation, communal violence) has pushed some leaders to adopt pragmatic attitudes favoring ad-hoc collaborations joint security operations, emergency funds, and calls for reforms like state police. These security pressures can foster cooperative behavior out of necessity; however, they can also exacerbate turf wars when levels of government compete over control of security policy. the debate over state policing exemplifies this; many governors publicly advocate for state police to enable quicker

local responses, while federal authorities stress national security architecture and constitutional constraints.

Conclusion

The attitudes of Nigerian political leaders toward IGR are heterogeneous but patterned: a predominant mix of transactional, centralizing and partisan attitudes tempered by occasional pragmatic cooperation driven by security imperatives or elite bargains. These attitudes reflect structural incentives (fiscal centralisation, weakly enforced rules) and political calculations (patronage, party competition). The net effect has been intermittent cooperation but persistent institutional fragility, which reduces policy coherence and service delivery at crucial moments. The effectiveness of Nigeria's intergovernmental relations depends as much on political leaders attitudes as on formal institutional design. Centralizing and partisan attitudes among leaders have contributed to jurisdictional conflicts, weakened coordinating forums, and inconsistent policy implementation in the 2020-2025 period. Yet where pragmatic incentives exist crisis response, clear mutual gains cooperation occurs. Therefore, reforms must address both the structural incentives and the political behaviours that shape leaders choices. Institutional tweaks alone will be insufficient unless accompanied by measures that change political incentives and build leadership capacity for collaborative governance.

Recommendations

To shift attitudes toward effective and institutionalized IGR, the following are recommended;

i. Strengthen statutory independence and powers of IGR coordination bodies (e.g., give the National Economic Council clearer arbitration powers, regularize intergovernmental planning calendars and performance audits).
ii. Clarify and constitutionally define security roles (including a pathway to legislatively enable state policing with safeguards), combined with joint security funding mechanisms to reduce turf battles.
iii. Strengthen intergovernmental forums with enforcement tools: Empower national/state councils with clearer dispute-resolution mechanisms (e.g., an independent (IGRs) and encourage institutionalized non-partisan technical committees on key service delivery areas (health, education, transport) to create repeated interaction and trust across political divides.
iv. Promote citizen oversight and media scrutiny: Strengthen transparency through public reporting on intergovernmental agreements and expenditures; active civil society can create reputational costs for non-cooperative behavior.

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