

Policy Without Delivery: Administrative Coordination and Development Outcomes in Nigeria's Multisector Development Plans, 2021–2025

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Abstract

Purpose: This study explores the persistent gap between Nigeria's multisector development plans and actual development outcomes from 2020 to 2025, despite the presence of formal administrative coordination mechanisms.

Research Methodology: This study adopted a purely qualitative design. Secondary data were used from national development plans, sectoral policy documents, official implementation reports, government circulars, and archival materials. The data were thematically analyzed to identify patterns in institutional interaction, coordination dynamics, and implementation challenges.

Results: Administrative coordination remained largely procedural. Key issues include overlapping mandates, fragmented communication systems, and limited integration between federal and subnational authorities. These coordination gaps hamper policy delivery and constrain development outcomes.

Conclusions: This study concluded that administrative coordination gaps significantly contributed to the inability of development plans to achieve their intended outcomes. Recommendations included strengthening inter-agency coordination protocols, institutionalizing structured collaboration mechanisms, and reinforcing monitoring and evaluation units in implementing institutions to improve development performance.

Limitations: This study is limited by its reliance on secondary data, which may not fully capture the complexities of administrative processes or real-time challenges faced by implementation bodies.

Contributions: This study contributes to the understanding of coordination dynamics in Nigerian development policy implementation and offers practical recommendations for addressing gaps in administrative coordination, which could lead to improved policy delivery and development outcomes.

Keywords: *Nigeria, Multisector Development Plans, Administrative Coordination, Implementation Challenges, Inter-Agency Coordination*

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1. Introduction

Across the globe, governments are increasingly relying on comprehensive multisector development plans to address complex and interrelated development challenges, such as poverty reduction, human capital development, infrastructure deficits, and economic transformation ([Shavkatovna, 2025](#); [Wau,](#)

2022). Contemporary development discourse emphasizes that these challenges cannot be effectively addressed through isolated sectoral interventions but instead require coordinated policy action across ministries, departments, and agencies, as well as across levels of government (Peters, 2018). Consequently, administrative coordination has emerged as a central pillar of effective policy implementation and development governance, particularly in contexts where institutional complexity and interdependence are high (Leite & Buainain, 2013; Mwesigwa, Acanga, Oryang, & Oboi, 2023).

In the literature on public administration and development governance, coordination is widely understood as the alignment of policy objectives, implementation processes, and resource allocation across organizational boundaries (Bouckaert, Peters, & Verhoest, 2010). Scholars argue that effective coordination enhances policy coherence, minimizes duplication, reduces inter-agency conflict, and improves service delivery outcomes (Peters, 2018). However, global experience also demonstrates that formal planning frameworks and coordination structures do not automatically translate into effective collaboration or improved development outcomes (Oliveira, Passador, & Ferolla, 2026).

In many developing countries, ambitious development plans coexist with persistent implementation failures, giving rise to what has been described as the “policy–delivery gap” (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017). This gap highlights the disjuncture between policy formulation and actual outcomes on the ground, often driven by weak administrative coordination, limited institutional capacity, and fragmented governance systems (Kashem, Ahmed, & Mohammad, 2025; Mwesigwa et al., 2023). These global insights are particularly relevant in politically complex federal states, such as Nigeria. Nigeria’s development planning history is marked by a succession of well-articulated national plans that have struggled to achieve their intended outcomes (Abasilim, Adelus, & Mudau, 2025).

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021–2025 represents a renewed attempt to address this historical challenge by adopting a multisector, integrated planning framework aimed at accelerating inclusive growth, social development, and institutional reform (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning (Abasilim et al., 2025; Nasution, Yudianto, & Mulyani, 2025). The plan explicitly recognizes the importance of inter-agency coordination, vertical integration across federal, state, and local governments, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems as prerequisites for effective implementation (Ramdhani, Herdiyansah, Putri, & Ridwan, 2025).

Despite these institutional commitments, empirical evidence suggests that Nigeria continues to experience significant coordination challenges that undermine policy delivery across key sectors (Anyebe, 2014). Studies evaluating Nigeria’s national development frameworks consistently identify weak horizontal coordination among ministries, overlapping mandates, poor information-sharing systems, and limited collaboration between the federal and subnational governments as persistent obstacles to effective implementation (Abasilim et al., 2025). These challenges manifest in fragmented service delivery, uneven sectoral performance, and regional disparities in development outcomes, particularly in sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure, which require sustained multisector engagement (Musa, Magaji, & Ismail, 2026).

Moreover, Nigeria’s coordination challenges reflect broader structural governance issues. Research indicates that formal coordination mechanisms often operate in a highly centralized and procedural manner, with limited incentives for collaboration and weak accountability for collective outcomes (Abasilim et al., 2025; Peters, 2018). Consequently, ministries and agencies tend to operate in silos, prioritizing organizational mandates over shared development objectives. Evidence from crisis-response contexts, such as public health emergencies, further illustrates how weak inter-agency coordination and poor vertical integration have constrained unified action and reduced policy effectiveness, reinforcing the systemic nature of coordination deficits in Nigeria’s public sector (Ezenwaka, Mbachu, & Onwujekwe, 2025).

While the growing body of literature on Nigeria’s development planning provides valuable insights, important gaps remain. Much of the existing research focuses on broad governance challenges, such as corruption, political instability, or financing constraints, without systematically interrogating how inter-

agency coordination mechanisms embedded within national development plans function in practice ([Suberu, 2013](#)). Similarly, sector-specific studies often assess implementation outcomes without linking them to the administrative coordination processes that shape delivery performance across sectors. Consequently, there is limited empirical understanding of the extent to which Nigeria's coordination arrangements under the 2021–2025 National Development Plan have facilitated or constrained effective policy delivery ([Adewoye, Lawal, Obadina, & Ibor, 2025](#)).

This study addresses these gaps by foregrounding administrative coordination as a critical explanatory factor in understanding development outcomes in Nigeria. It examines how inter-agency coordination mechanisms within the multisector development planning framework operate in practice and evaluates their effectiveness in fostering coherent action among ministries, departments, and agencies. In addition, it assesses the implications of these coordination dynamics for policy delivery across key development sectors, where the success of interventions depends on sustained collaboration and institutional alignment. By explicitly linking coordination performance to delivery outcomes, this study contributes to both theoretical and policy-oriented debates on why development plans often fail to translate into tangible results, despite strong policy intent and formal institutional frameworks.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Administrative Coordination as a Determinant of Policy Implementation

Administrative coordination, understood as the alignment of activities, mandates, and decision-making across ministries, departments, and agencies ([Grijpma et al.](#)) and among tiers of government, is fundamental to translating Nigeria's multisector development plans into meaningful outcomes. Nigeria's National Development Plan (NDP) 2021–2025 articulates the need for robust coordination mechanisms, including strengthening the Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning as the central coordinating arm and harmonizing monitoring, evaluation, and data systems across MDAs and subnational governments to enhance implementation coherence([Plan, 2018](#)).

Despite these formal structures, persistent coordination weaknesses are well documented in governance research. Institutional constraints, such as fragmented intergovernmental linkages, weak information-sharing infrastructures, and siloed behaviors across agencies, often result in duplication of efforts and fragmented policy action, undermining policy effectiveness and responsiveness ([Abasilim et al., 2025](#)). Scholars have further noted that formal structures alone do not guarantee functional collaboration without shared incentives, clear procedures, reliable data exchange, and accountability frameworks ([Abasilim et al., 2025](#)). Coordination failures also manifest in crisis contexts, such as the COVID-19 response, where weak linkages between national and subnational actors and poor communication impede unified action, illustrating that coordination deficits in Nigeria are systemic and cross-sectoral ([Ezenwaka et al., 2025](#)).

2.2 Policy Delivery and Development Outcomes in the Nigerian Context

Policy delivery reflects the extent to which articulated strategies achieve targeted socioeconomic outcomes. Even when development plans, such as the NDP, are strategically designed, progress is often hindered by weak administrative capacities and poor monitoring and evaluation (FMFBNP, 2021). Research evaluating Nigeria's national development frameworks underscores that structural issues, including limited administrative capacity, institutional fragmentation, and policy discontinuity, constrain the achievement of the plan's targets across sectors such as education, health, and agriculture ([Abasilim et al., 2025](#)). The underlying governance challenges also shape policy delivery. Factors such as underinvestment in capacity building, limited stakeholder engagement, and political instability reduce the ability of government institutions to translate policy ambitions into tangible outcomes. These systemic issues contribute to uneven performance across regions and sectors, limiting the potential of multisector plans to yield equitable and sustainable outcomes ([Abasilim et al., 2025](#)).

2.3 Theoretical framework

This study is anchored in implementation theory, a body of scholarship that emerged in response to the persistent gap between policy formulation and policy outcomes. Implementation theory is most commonly associated with the seminal work of [Pressman and Wildavsky \(1984\)](#), whose analysis of

policy failure in complex administrative systems demonstrated that policy success is contingent not merely on sound design but also on the effectiveness of implementation processes. Subsequent contributions by scholars such as [Sabatier and Mazmanian \(1983\)](#), [Bureaucracy \(1980\)](#), and [Hill and Hupe \(2002\)](#) expanded the theory by examining how institutional structures, administrative coordination, and actor behavior shape policy delivery. Collectively, implementation theory provides a robust analytical lens for understanding why development plans often fail to translate into tangible outcomes despite strong political commitment and comprehensive planning.

At its core, implementation theory rests on the assumption that policy outcomes are determined by the interaction of multiple actors, institutions, and processes across different stages of the policy cycle. [Pressman and Wildavsky \(1984\)](#) argue that implementation involves a long chain of decisions and actions, each of which introduces opportunities for delay, distortion, or failure. In complex governance systems, especially those characterized by multiple implementing agencies and levels of government, coordination failures significantly increase the probability of implementation breakdown. [Sabatier and Mazmanian \(1983\)](#) further assume that successful implementation depends on clear policy objectives, adequate resources, well-defined institutional responsibilities, and effective inter-organizational coordination mechanisms. When these conditions are weak or absent, implementation outcomes are likely to diverge from policy intentions.

A central insight of implementation theory is that administrative coordination is not automatic but must be actively produced through institutional arrangements, incentives, and accountability mechanisms. [Bureaucracy \(1980\)](#) concept of street-level bureaucracy underscores how frontline actors exercise discretion in policy delivery, often adapting policies to local constraints and organizational pressures. This discretion becomes especially consequential in systems with weak coordination, where implementing agencies pursue narrow mandates rather than collective development objectives. [Hill and Hupe \(2002\)](#) further emphasize that implementation is shaped by vertical relationships between central and subnational governments and horizontal relationships among agencies, making coordination a decisive variable in determining policy effectiveness.

The relevance of implementation theory in the analysis of Nigeria's multisector development planning is particularly strong. Nigeria's National Development Plan 2021–2025 is explicitly multi-sectoral and relies on coordination across ministries, departments, and agencies, as well as across federal, state, and local governments ([Ibi, Baba, & Philip, 2025](#); [Olowu, 2025](#)). From an implementation theory perspective, such a policy architecture inherently increases implementation complexity and coordination demands. The theory helps explain why, despite well-articulated strategies and institutional frameworks, Nigeria continues to experience uneven development outcomes across sectors, such as education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure ([Ibi et al., 2025](#)). Empirical studies on Nigeria's development planning consistently highlight fragmented institutional mandates, weak information-sharing systems, and limited intergovernmental collaboration as major impediments to policy delivery ([Abasilim et al., 2025](#)).

The significance of implementation theory for this study lies in its ability to move the analysis beyond normative assessments of policy design toward an examination of how administrative processes and coordination dynamics shape development outcomes ([Sule, Alinno, & Ikwegbe, 2013](#)). Rather than attributing policy failure solely to political will or resource constraints, implementation theory focuses on the institutional conditions under which policies are executed. This perspective is especially valuable in the Nigerian context, where multiple development plans have failed not because of a lack of ambition but because of weak coordination among implementing actors and inconsistent execution across governance levels. By foregrounding coordination as a central explanatory variable, implementation theory provides a conceptual bridge between administrative processes and observed development performance ([Elem, 2016](#)).

In applying implementation theory to Nigeria's multisector development plans between 2021 and 2025, this study conceptualizes administrative coordination as a critical implementation variable that mediates the relationship between policy intent and policy outcomes. The effectiveness of inter-agency

coordination mechanisms, such as joint planning platforms, shared monitoring and evaluation systems, and intergovernmental committees, is examined as a determinant of whether sectoral policies are delivered coherently or fragmented across institutional boundaries. Implementation theory further enables an assessment of how coordination failures generate implementation gaps, manifesting in duplication of efforts, delayed project execution, and uneven service delivery across regions.

In this sense, the theory provides an explanatory framework for understanding the phenomenon of “policy without delivery” as an outcome of systemic coordination deficits rather than isolated administrative inefficiencies. Overall, implementation theory offers a powerful analytical lens for interrogating the disconnect between Nigeria’s multisector development ambitions and their realized outcomes. By emphasizing the roles of coordination, institutional capacity, and inter-organizational dynamics, the theory aligns closely with the objectives of this study and enhances its capacity to generate empirically grounded insights into how development planning can be translated into effective policy delivery in complex federal systems.

3. Methodology

Qualitative research design was adopted to investigate administrative coordination and development outcomes in Nigeria’s multisector development plans for 2021–2025. Secondary data sources included national development plans, sectoral policy documents, official implementation reports, government circulars, and archival materials ([Creswell & Creswell, 2017](#)). The data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify patterns of institutional interaction, coordination dynamics, and implementation challenges across the federal and sub-national levels. This approach facilitated a systematic examination of how administrative structures and inter-agency relationships influenced the translation of policy intentions into tangible development outcomes, highlighting the institutional and operational factors that enable or constrain effective policy delivery ([Hamilton & Finley, 2019](#)).

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of Nigeria’s National Development Plan (NDP) 2021–2025 reveals a comprehensive policy framework with ambitious socioeconomic targets, yet persistent challenges in translating intent into measurable development outcomes. The plan articulates four broad strategic objectives, including establishing a diversified economy and enhancing capacities to strengthen governance and infrastructure ([Plan, 2018](#)). It forecasts lifting 35 million people out of poverty and creating 21 million full-time jobs by 2025, alongside investments amounting to N348.1 trillion (approximately USD 808 billion) ([Oweibia et al., 2024](#)).

However, early indicators of policy implementation suggest that these targets remain largely aspirational because of weak coordination mechanisms across ministries, departments, and agencies ([Grijpma et al. \(2024\)](#)), and among the federal, state, and local government tiers ([Abasilim et al., 2025](#)). A central element of the coordination architecture in the NDP is the Development Plan Implementation Unit (PIU) and the National Steering Committee (NSC) chaired by the Vice-President, designed to harmonize execution across sectors and actors ([Nwachukwu et al., 2008](#)). These structures were intended to integrate planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation functions to align government actions with plan objectives. In practice, however, poor policy coordination remains a significant barrier.

For example, the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) notes ongoing fragmentation between the federal and subnational levels, with local governments often underserved in planning and implementation, weakening the achievement of plan outcomes (Guardian Nigeria, 2025). Similarly, policy inconsistencies and limited clarity in roles across central agencies have persisted despite efforts to strengthen the policy management framework, reinforcing implementation inertia ([Karkare, Odijie, Ukaoha, & van Seters, 2022](#)). Table 1 synthesizes key planned outcomes and administrative coordination mechanisms as outlined in the National Development Plan 2021–2025 and related secondary analyses, highlighting the disconnect between policy frameworks and delivery outcomes.

Table 1. Key NDP 2021–2025 Planned Outcomes and Administrative Coordination Structures\

Dimension	Planned Outcome/Target (2021–2025)	Coordination/Implementation Mechanism	Reported Delivery Status/Challenge
Poverty Reduction	Lift 35 million out of poverty	PIU + NSC + M&E systems	Weak implementation; grassroots misalignment (Guardian Nigeria, 2025)
Job Creation	Create 21 million full-time jobs	Private sector partnerships + public investments	Limited private capital mobilization to date (Oweibia et al., 2024)
Infrastructure Investment	N348.1 trillion mobilized	Public-private partnerships; state inclusion	Funding shortfalls and coordination gaps
Governance Strengthening	Enhance institutional capacity	NSC; inter-agency M&E systems	Policy fragmentation persists (Abasilim et al., 2025; Karkare et al., 2022)

The results show that while the NDP’s multisector development approach is theoretically sound, recognizing the interconnectedness of macroeconomic growth, social services, and governance reforms, its effectiveness is constrained by administrative coordination failures. These structural bottlenecks include limited information sharing across MDAs, political disagreements, and weak involvement of local governments in decision-making and plan execution (Guardian Nigeria, 2025). Major policy initiatives designed to standardize formulation, implementation, and monitoring procedures such as the Draft National Policy Development and Management Framework underline the federal government’s recognition of coordination gaps but have yet to fully resolve operational fragmentation (Karkare et al., 2022)

Discussing the implications of these findings, it is apparent that policy without delivery reflects systemic weaknesses in governance capacity rather than flaws in strategic vision alone. The persistence of implementation challenges, including policy overlaps, duplication of functions, and weak monitoring mechanisms, has diluted potential development outcomes and raised questions about the plan’s ability to realize its targets by 2025 (Abasilim et al., 2025; Karkare et al., 2022). For Nigeria to strengthen development delivery, empirical evidence suggests the need for robust intergovernmental frameworks with clear mandates, strengthened institutional capacities, enhanced roles for subnational and local authorities, and sustained engagement with the private sector and civil society partners. Addressing these administrative coordination deficits is critical to moving from policy formulation to tangible development results.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that Nigeria’s multisector development plans from 2021 to 2025 exhibit strong policy ambitions but fall short in delivery outcomes, primarily due to persistent gaps in administrative coordination. While national frameworks establish clear goals and coordination mechanisms across ministries, departments, and agencies, the lack of effective integration at both horizontal and vertical levels hampers successful implementation. Fragmented interactions between federal and subnational

governments, overlapping mandates, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems contribute to the poor translation of policy goals into meaningful socioeconomic outcomes, sustaining a pattern of "policy without delivery." The study further reveals that underperformance is not rooted in poor planning but in institutional and governance constraints that prevent coordinated action across sectors.

5.2 Research Limitations

This study is constrained by its reliance on secondary data, which limits its scope in capturing real-time challenges faced during the implementation phase. Furthermore, the analysis does not consider in-depth interviews or primary data from key stakeholders involved in the execution of policies, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future studies should evaluate the effectiveness of specific inter-agency coordination mechanisms and their real-time impact on policy delivery, particularly at the subnational level. Research could also explore the roles of local governments and private-sector partnerships in bridging the coordination gap. Additionally, empirical investigations utilizing primary data through interviews and case studies can provide deeper insights into the operational challenges of implementing multisector development plans. Future research should also consider longitudinal studies to track the long-term effects of improved coordination frameworks on development outcomes in Nigeria.

Author Contributions

UK was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, study design, and supervision. EBGE contributed to data collection and analysis. VPC was involved in manuscript drafting and revision. OC provided final approval of the manuscript and contributed to revisions. All authors contributed to the final version of the manuscript.

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