

EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates executive-legislative relations and service delivery in the South-South zone of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. Data were collected from a sample of 549 respondents comprising 165 executive and legislative officials and 384 electorates using a structured questionnaire and supported by focus group discussions involving 40 purposively selected individuals from six states in the region. The research questions and hypotheses were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean scores, frequency counts) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the relationships between variables. Results shows that executive-legislative relations enhances service delivery. However, the relationship between the variables was found to be weak. Based on this finding, the study recommends that; executive-legislative relations should be effective for ensuring that service delivery meets the needs and growing demands of the population. There should also be improvement in coordination practice between the executive and legislative arms to enhance healthcare delivery in the region. Executive-legislative engagements should equally improve infrastructure development, which is crucial to regional integration and economic growth. To achieve better outcomes in service delivery, institutional reforms that strengthen intergovernmental cooperation are necessary and expedient.

Keywords: *Executive-Legislative Relations, Service Delivery, South-South Zone, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

The South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States, constitutes the country's primary economic hub due to its substantial endowment of crude oil and natural gas resources. As of 2023, the region accounted for over 75 per cent of Nigeria's total crude oil production and contributed a substantial proportion of federally distributed revenues through the federation account (NNPC, 2023). Despite this strategic economic significance, the South-South zone continues to exhibit persistent underdevelopment, characterised by widespread poverty, infrastructural decay, and limited access to basic social services. Empirical evidence from the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) indicates that more than 58 per cent of the region's population lives below the national poverty line, while the World Bank (2021) reports that fewer than 30 per cent of rural communities in the zone have access to all-season road networks. A critical, yet insufficiently examined, factor contributing to this paradox of wealth and underdevelopment is the nature of executive-legislative relations at the state level. In theory, the executive and legislative arms of government are expected to function as complementary institutions within a system of checks and balances, jointly facilitating effective governance and service delivery. In practice, however, their interactions in many South-South states are frequently affected by conflict, rivalry, and institutional dysfunction. Power struggles—often rooted in intra-party disagreements, inter-party competition, and personal political ambitions—have repeatedly disrupted policy formulation, budget approval, and implementation of capital services. These conflicts

undermine governance continuity and weaken the institutional capacity required for sustainable development.

Evidence from specific state-level experiences underscores the development implications of strained executive–legislative relations. In Edo State, the protracted political crisis between the executive and the state legislature in 2019 resulted in the non-inauguration of 14 duly elected lawmakers, thereby paralysing legislative activities and delaying critical service approvals (Ogbole & Amadi, 2020). Similarly, in Rivers and Bayelsa States, reports by civil society organisations and media investigations have documented persistent executive dominance over legislative oversight, particularly in the planning, awarding, and monitoring of capital services (SERAP, 2022). Such dominance weakens accountability mechanisms and erodes the legislature’s constitutional role in safeguarding public interest. Compounding these challenges are pervasive issues of corruption and limited transparency in the execution of capital services. An audit conducted by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2022 revealed that over 40 per cent of constituency and capital services in the South-South zone were either abandoned or not executed, despite full budgetary provisions. This pattern reflects systemic coordination failures and suggests the absence of effective collaboration frameworks between the executive and legislative arms of government. Legislative oversight is frequently compromised by political patronage and elite capture, while executive agencies often sideline legislative input during the conception, budgeting, and implementation stages of service delivery. Moreover, the lack of institutionalised mechanisms for dialogue, joint planning, monitoring, and feedback between the two arms of government further constrains effective service delivery. Rather than operating through integrated and transparent governance structures, service provision in many South-South states is fragmented, politicised, and driven by short-term political considerations. These conditions produce inefficient outcomes, exacerbate public dissatisfaction, and undermine trust in government institutions.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the dynamics of executive–legislative relations in the South-South geopolitical zone, with a specific focus on their implications for effective service delivery. The study seeks to identify the underlying political and institutional factors responsible for dysfunctional intergovernmental relations and to propose evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at fostering collaborative governance. Addressing these relational and structural deficiencies is imperative, as failure to do so may perpetuate slow development and governance deficits in a region whose economic importance to the Nigerian federation remains unmatched.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Executive-Legislative Relations

Aiyede and Isumonah (2002) explicated the imperative of interaction between the executive and the legislature when they posited that democratic consolidation can only occur in a context in which political institutions, especially the executive and legislature, are functional and interact in a way that reinforces confidence in the government and the process through which the offices of these government institutions are filled. In a similar dimension, Kopecky (2004) sees the relationship between the legislature and the executive as one of the key defining characteristics of the functioning of any political system. He noted the vital place that structural and legal factors hold in shaping the relationships between these two political institutions. This position is emphasized by Lijphart (2004) when he argued that the constitutional prerogatives vested in legislatures and the executive are most important because they define the broad framework for interactions between the two powers. Similarly, Posner and Young (2007) averred that institutionalized rules are increasingly becoming relevant in regulating the behaviours of political actors, especially in Africa. This new development, to Fashagba (2010), is heart-warming because it aligns with the postulation that democracy entails an institutionalized arrangement for arriving at political decisions.

While the institutional view of executive-legislature may hold strong as a factor that shapes the relationship between the executive and the legislature, numerous informal rules and conventions, such as the customs concerning nomination of members to the cabinet following an election, are very important as well. Perhaps this is exemplified by Bernick and Bernick (2008) when they affirmed that such relationships are largely shaped by the attitudes and beliefs of the participants. They contend that these relationships are complex, depending on a range of formal and informal practices. Of course, while formal texts of constitutional charters and law are very instrumental to the relationships that exist between the executive and the legislature, however, such relationship hinges on the informal conditions and practices that permit these norms to be implemented in practice.

Constructive relationships between the executive and the legislative arms of government are essential to the effective maintenance of the constitution and the rule of law (Holme, 2007). In recent years, however, the character of these relationships has changed significantly, both because of changes in governance and because of wider societal changes. Scholars have been expressing a wide variety of viewpoints on executive-legislative relations, about conflict and cooperation, whether one or the other dominates, and whether benefits or liabilities result from either. While some see conflict between the executive and legislature as a necessary and beneficial pre-condition to limiting and controlling government (Aiyede, 2005), others view it as contributing to gridlock over major public policy decisions, thus making government ineffective (Mbah, 2007; Dulani & Donge, 2006).

Service delivery

The concept of service delivery has emerged as a critical issue that has generated extensive debate among policy advisors, policymakers, implementers, evaluators, scholars, policy analysts, and publicists (Ejumudo, Douglas & Ejumudo, 2024). Often referred to as the "dividends of democracy," service delivery is central to democratic governance. While democratic governance is frequently associated with governments emerging from free, fair, and credible elections (Diamond et al., 1989; Held, 1996; Ake, 1996), elections merely mark the starting point of a democratic government. True democratic governance extends beyond the protection of human rights, which is reflected in freedoms such as association, speech, and assembly. It also encompasses government responsiveness, accountability, and the tangible delivery of services to citizens. In this regard, service delivery has become a critical benchmark for measuring democratic accountability and responsiveness, including the provision of social services such as primary education and basic healthcare and essential infrastructure, including water supply, sanitation, roads, and bridges (Kayode et al., 2013).

Social services cover a wide range of activities aimed at enhancing societal well-being. Titmus (1968) defines social services as "those services that are concerned with different types of moral transactions embodying the notion of gift-exchange, which have developed in modern societies in institutional forms to bring about and maintain social and community relations." Similarly, Boulding (1962) emphasizes that social services originate from social policy, noting that "social policy deals with unilateral transfers that are justified (outside the fringes of the free market mechanism) by some kind of appeal to status, legitimacy, identity, or community." Olewe and Anga (1994) describe social services as encompassing all efforts aimed at improving the social status of individuals and society at large. In practice, this includes providing essential services such as education, healthcare, transportation infrastructure, housing, potable water, and electricity, while also promoting poverty reduction and the welfare of women and workers (SSC, 2011). According to Geol (1981), social services represent "a process of bringing social change and the implementation of social policy decisions for the total welfare of the community." In essence, social services constitute the mechanisms, actions, and policies through which social policy is transformed into concrete outcomes that improve community well-being.

Impact of Executive-Legislative Relations on the Quality of Social Services Delivered to Citizens

The relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government is fundamental to the quality of governance and the delivery of essential social services to citizens. These two branches are at the heart of public administration, with the executive responsible for policy implementation and the legislature tasked with lawmaking, oversight, and ensuring accountability. Their interactions, whether collaborative or adversarial, significantly influence the effectiveness of governance. In developing democracies such as Nigeria, where institutional frameworks are still evolving, the dynamics of executive-legislative relations are particularly critical for determining the quality and accessibility of social services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure (Ojo, 2018). In theory, the principle of separation of powers underpins the relationship between the executive and legislature, fostering a system of checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power. This constitutional framework is designed to ensure that both arms work in tandem while maintaining their independence. However, in practice, the relationship between these branches is often fraught with challenges, including power struggles, partisan politics, and conflicting interests, which can hinder effective governance (Ekeh, 2019). For instance, delays in budget approval or the misalignment of policy priorities can result in stalled services, inadequate funding for critical sectors, and ultimately, poor service delivery to citizens (Akpan, 2021). The South-South Zone of Nigeria—comprising states such as Delta, Edo and Rivers offers a compelling context for examining the impact of executive-legislative relations on service delivery. Despite being one of the country's most resource-rich regions, particularly due to its oil wealth, the South-South grapples with significant developmental challenges. These include inadequate healthcare facilities, poor educational outcomes, and insufficient infrastructure. Adebayo and Ogunleye (2020) noted that the discord between the executive and legislative arms in the region has often led to delays in service execution, mismanagement of resources, and unmet developmental goals. For example, legislative resistance to executive proposals or executive dominance over legislative functions can derail efforts to improve the quality of life for citizens.

Effective executive-legislative relations are essential for ensuring that service delivery meets the needs of the population. Collaboration between these branches can facilitate timely budget approvals, efficient resource allocation, and the implementation of policies that address pressing social issues. Conversely, strained relations can result in policy gridlock, mismanagement of public funds, and a lack of accountability, all of which undermine governance and development (Ojo, 2018). Understanding the factors that foster or impede such collaboration is therefore crucial for improving governance outcomes in Nigeria. This study seeks to explore the impact of executive-legislative relations on the quality of social services delivered to citizens in the South-South zone of Nigeria. Specifically, it will investigate how the interactions between these two arms of government influence policy formulation, resource allocation, and service implementation in key sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. By analyzing case studies and drawing on empirical evidence, the study aims to identify best practices and propose strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of executive-legislative collaboration in the region.

The South-South zone, consisting of states such as Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, and Cross River, presents a unique context for examining executive-legislative relations. This region, rich in oil resources, has long been a focus of national development efforts and government interventions. However, despite substantial allocations from the federal government and the existence of interventionist agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), service delivery in the region remains inadequate. Factors such as political rivalry, budgetary delays, and institutional corruption have often been cited as obstacles to effective governance. In a democratic setting, the separation of powers is designed to ensure checks and balances. However,

this ideal can be compromised when intergovernmental relations become overly adversarial or too dependent on partisan interests. In the South-South zone, episodes of friction between governors and state assemblies have led to legislative boycotts, impeachment threats, and stalled policy initiatives. Such tensions often derail development programs and prevent the timely execution of services that are vital to the well-being of the population.

Healthcare delivery in the region has particularly suffered due to poor coordination between the executive and legislative arms. Budgetary allocations for health services are frequently delayed or reduced during legislative scrutiny, often due to political bargaining or power tussles. This leads to the abandonment of critical services such as hospital upgrades, procurement of medical equipment, and deployment of health personnel, thereby exacerbating the region's public health challenges. Similarly, the education sector has experienced the adverse consequences of weak executive-legislative synergy. In some states, legislative rejection or delay of budget proposals has hindered the implementation of school feeding programs, teacher recruitment, and renovation of dilapidated classrooms. When executive-legislative relations are robust, however, there tends to be more efficient educational planning, improved funding for educational infrastructure, and greater accountability in program implementation.

Infrastructure development, which is crucial to regional integration and economic growth, is also affected by the nature of executive-legislative engagements. Joint oversight functions and bipartisan cooperation can fast-track road construction, water services, and electrification programs. In contrast, mutual suspicion between both arms of government often results in duplicated services, poor monitoring, and service abandonment, leading to wasted resources and unmet community needs. Moreover, the relationship between these two branches affects not only planning and budgeting but also oversight and accountability. The legislature is constitutionally mandated to oversee the implementation of government policies. However, when it becomes subservient to or overly confrontational with the executive, it loses its capacity to serve as an effective watchdog. This weakens public trust and impedes the delivery of services that require close monitoring and evaluation.

Political party alignment between the executive and legislature can also influence the nature of their relationship. In states where both arms are controlled by the same party, collaboration may be smoother, though not always transparent. Conversely, in states with opposition-controlled legislatures, policy disagreements often take precedence over developmental concerns, leading to administrative delays and legislative gridlocks. Civil society organizations and the media play a vital role in mediating executive-legislative conflicts by fostering transparency and advocating for public interest. Their role becomes even more significant in the South-South, where resource mismanagement and governance failures have provoked public discontent. Encouraging active citizen participation can help hold both branches accountable and foster collaboration that prioritizes service delivery. To achieve better outcomes in service delivery, institutional reforms that strengthen intergovernmental cooperation are necessary. These may include the establishment of executive-legislative liaison committees, periodic policy retreats, and improved budgetary frameworks that promote joint planning. Training programs that enhance mutual understanding of legislative and executive roles can also reduce conflict and promote shared commitment to development goals.

Theoretical Foundation

This paper adopts institutionalist approach as theoretical baseline,

Institutionalist Approach

The institutionalist approach has been a fundamental theoretical framework to the study of legislature-executive relations (O'Donnell, 1994; Linz, 1994; Fish, 2001; Hammond & Butler, 2003; Valenzuela, 2004; Lijphart, 2004). This approach assumes that conflict and cooperation between

the executive and the legislature are conditioned by fundamental questions of institutional design (Linz 1994). According to this theory, features of a country's institutional framework account for observed political, economic and social outcomes in the country (Hammond & Butler, 2003). Institutions do not merely shape the strategies of actors, they also affect the probability distribution of certain political outcomes, and thus, a country's political structure, has great implications on policy outcomes (Lijphart, 2024; Cheibub 2017). While admitting the importance of institutional design as a predictor of legislature-executive relations, it is imperative to note that other informal or para-constitutional behavioural factors equally shape the nature of legislature-executive relations observable in a political system. As argue by Butler (2023) although institutional designs affect government capabilities, several other non- institutional factors sometimes mediate the impact of institutions. A more encompassing theory that will treat a larger number of relations and produce a more complex analysis is therefore desired.

Some critics are of the opinion that structuralism is unlikely to achieve its objectives of providing a scientific theory of the political system because of the difficulties in applying it to the analysis of the political system – such as defining terms operationally and specifying which activities perform functions. They believe that Almond's structural- functionalist model presents a static model of society and, therefore, cannot account for change; it overemphasizes integration and, as a consequence, fails to deal with dysfunction (Charlesworth, 1968; Chilcote, 1998).

The criticisms against the theory of structural-functionalism have however, led to the subsequent work of Almond and Powell (1970) where the dynamism of political development was inculcated into the theory of structural-functionalism (Alexander (1970). Almond and Powell (1975) averred that the theory of structural functionalism can fit many phenomena, which at first sight appear quite disparate and unconnected into one framework. It gives context for and limits at some degree of reciprocal influence among all sorts of things – people, institutions and events. It also gives a number of common denominators for comparisons among outwardly very different polities: It assumes that whatever their institutional trappings and cultural, ideological, economic, and even chronological and spatial differences, all societies share in the performance of a number of crucial political functions. With the theory of structural-functionalism, Almond and Powell (1975) noted that we are encouraged to see how the same political tasks are performed in somewhat different ways in different societies and invited, as it were, to fill in the terms in an equation, having presumably mastered the rudiments of political diagnosis by learning what the equation is.

Despite the criticisms against structural-functionalism, the approach provides a framework for the analysis of legislature-executive relations in this study. By this framework, the government is conceived as a social system and the executive and the legislature are political institutions viewed as structural parts or units of the political system or government. Each of these political institutions (also seen as structures) performs explicitly specified requisite functions that contribute to the stability, continuity and survival of the political system (Ray, 2004). While the legislature is saddled with the role of law making, the executive implements the law. The various functions of these structures are however, contained in the constitution of the land.

Since the executive and the legislature are open systems, these relationships are influenced by internal and external environments and by the presence of a legitimate force holding them together. According to Almond's structural-functional analysis, all political systems must perform certain requisite functions (Peter 2005). These functions include policy making, policy implementation and rule adjudication which are carried out by the various arms of government. Thus, structural functionalism, as a framework for this study, provides an effective measure for assessing the different functions performed by the separate but interdependent organs of government in a presidential democracy. As emphasized by the structural-functional proponents, a study of the functions of these structural institutions is necessary for the understanding of the workings of the political system (Person, 1999).

With Almond's structural-functional theory therefore, legislature-executive relations can be described largely in terms of structure, personality, processes, mechanisms and functions. Radcliffe-Brown (1951) claimed that the rules of conduct within a society lead to a social structure consisting of defined roles that are coordinated by these rules. As these roles are enacted, they contribute to maintaining and stabilizing the social structure. In this regard, the alignment of the executive and the legislature to the rules of these social relations, their mutual interactions and collaboration in the policy process is critical for the stability and survival of the society.

Relevance of the Institutional Approach to the Current Study

The institutional approach is highly relevant to understanding the executive-legislative relationship and social service delivery because it underscores the importance of formal and informal institutions, rules, and norms in shaping governance and policy outcomes. Institutional structures influence how political actors interact, how policies are created, and how social services are provided. The effectiveness of social service delivery is not just about the intentions of political leaders but also about the strength, design, and coordination of the institutions responsible for implementing these services. Therefore, the institutional approach provides valuable insights into the complexities of policy-making and service delivery, especially within the context of institutional frameworks that evolve.

THE STUDY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of a study comprised 296 executive and legislative officials, such as state governors, commissioners, and members of the state houses of assembly across the six states; Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers and 100,000 estimated electorates in the region. The inclusion of electorates in the study was deliberate and justified, as they represent the direct beneficiaries or in some cases, the victims of executive-legislative decisions. Citizens experience the outcomes of governance in the form of completed, delayed, or abandoned services. Their perceptions and lived experiences therefore provide an essential counterbalance to the official narratives offered by political actors. In this way, the electorates serve as a vital source of accountability, offering evidence of how executive-legislative relations translate into tangible service delivery at the community level. The sample size (549) for this study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size determination. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The data was analyzed and hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The analysis was done using version 23 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

A total of 549 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Out of this number, 484 were returned fully and correctly completed, while the remaining 66 were returned but not properly filled. This indicates that 88% of the questionnaires were successfully completed and returned, whereas 12% were incorrectly filled. Consequently, the researcher based the data presentation and analysis on the 484 properly completed questionnaires.

Presentation of Analysis based on Research Questions of the Study

This section discussed the specific objectives of the study follows.

Research Question 1: The nature of executive-legislative relations in the South-South zone of Nigeria

Table 1: The nature of executive-legislative relations in the South-South zone of Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	N	Mean	Decision
1	The executive and legislative arms in my state maintain mutual respect.	484	3.56	Agreed
2	There is consistent communication in policymaking between the two arms.	484	3.66	Agreed
3	Their relationship is largely characterized by conflict and rivalry.	484	3.91	Agreed
4	The legislature is regularly consulted in executive decisions.	484	3.10	Agreed
5	Personal and political egos disrupt executive-legislative relations.	484	3.62	Agreed
6	The legislature functions more as a ceremonial arm than a developmental one.	484	3.41	Agreed
7	A formal structure exists to guide interactions between the two arms.	484	3.12	Agreed

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The data presented in Table 1 provides insights into the nature of executive-legislative relations in the South-South zone of Nigeria, as perceived by respondents. Overall, the mean scores for all items are above the benchmark of 2.50, indicating a generally positive perception of the interactions between the two arms of government. However, a closer examination reveals important nuances. Firstly, there is a strong belief among respondents that mutual respect exists between the executive and legislative arms in their states, as reflected by a mean score of 3.56. This suggests that, at least on the surface, both arms of government recognize each other's roles and accord due regard. Additionally, the mean score of 3.66 for consistent communication in policymaking further affirms that collaboration is present, especially in matters requiring joint decision-making. However, despite these seemingly cooperative elements, the highest mean score (3.91) indicates that the relationship is still largely characterized by conflict and rivalry. This contradiction points to a situation where formal respect and communication exist alongside deep-seated political tensions. These tensions may stem from power struggles, competition over influence, or partisan differences. Furthermore, while the legislature is perceived to be regularly consulted in executive decisions (mean = 3.10), the relatively lower score suggests that such consultations may not always be robust or meaningful. Similarly, the perception that personal and political egos often disrupt executive-legislative relations (mean = 3.62) reflects the influence of individual ambitions and party politics, which can hinder effective governance. Another notable finding is the belief that the legislature functions more as a ceremonial arm than a truly developmental one, with a mean score of 3.41. This indicates that many respondents see the legislative body as playing a limited role in initiating or influencing development policies, possibly due to executive dominance or institutional weaknesses. The existence of a formal structure guiding interactions between the two arms is acknowledged (mean = 3.12). While this is a positive indication, the moderate score may imply that such structures are either inadequate or not consistently adhered to in practice.

Responses from Focus Group Discussion

Based on the responses from the 40 individuals interviewed including farmers, community leaders, and civil servants the working relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government in the state is perceived as mixed. Many respondents, particularly civil servants and local leaders, described the relationship as cooperative but largely dominated by the executive. They noted that the legislature often approves executive proposals quickly, raising concerns about legislative independence. Some respondents, especially farmers and grassroots stakeholders, viewed the

relationship as tense and politicized. They cited frequent disagreements during budget discussions and oversight duties, especially when the two arms belong to different political parties. A few labeled the legislature as a “rubber stamp,” claiming it rarely challenges the executive, often due to political pressure or incentives.

However, others, particularly senior community figures, offered a more positive view, describing the relationship as cordial and focused on development. They pointed to joint achievements such as quick budget passage, rural development services, and coordinated COVID-19 responses as examples of successful collaboration. Instances of conflict were also mentioned. These included allegations of budget padding, delays in confirming executive nominees, impeachment threats, and selective oversight. Such conflicts, respondents noted, often stem from political interests or power struggles rather than genuine governance concerns. In summary, while there have been areas of cooperation, particularly on developmental issues, many respondents believe the executive holds undue influence over the legislature. This, they warned, weakens accountability and the democratic balance of power within the state government.

In summary the survey results indicated that respondents generally perceived executive-legislative relations in the South-South zone as mixed. While there is evidence of communication and respect between the arms, rivalry and political interference remain significant. Many respondents agreed that political egos and party interests frequently disrupt cooperation. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) further revealed that legislatures are often seen as “rubber stamps,” although some collaborative successes were acknowledged.

Hypotheses Testin

There is no significant relationship between the nature of executive-legislative relations and service delivery in the South-South zone of Nigeria.

Table 4.8: Pearson test for the relationship between the nature of executive-legislative relations and service delivery in the South-South of Nigeria

	Nature of executive-legislative relations	Service Delivery
Nature of executive-legislative relations	1	.194**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	484	484
Service Delivery	.194**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	484	484

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.8 shows a weak but positive correlation ($r = 0.194$) between the nature of executive-legislative relations and service delivery in the South-South zone of Nigeria. Although the relationship is not strong, it is statistically significant ($p = 0.000$), meaning the result is reliable and not due to chance. This indicates that better cooperation between the executive and legislative arms slightly improves service delivery, but other factors may have a greater impact.

Discussion of Findings

Nature of Executive-Legislative Relations and Service Delivery

The findings of this study reveal that the nature of executive-legislative relations in the South-South zone of Nigeria is complex, marked by both cooperation and conflict. The survey data indicate that respondents generally agreed that mutual respect exists between the executive and legislative arms (mean = 3.56) and that communication in policymaking is fairly consistent (mean = 3.66). These positive scores suggest that on the surface, both arms recognize the importance of collaboration

and maintain some degree of institutional respect. However, the highest mean score of 3.91 indicates that rivalry and conflict remain the dominant features of this relationship. This contradiction underscores the fragile nature of executive-legislative relations, which oscillate between formal cooperation and underlying political tension.

The correlation analysis ($r = 0.194$, $p < 0.001$) further emphasizes that while better relations between the executive and legislature are associated with improved service delivery, the effect is modest. This weak but significant correlation implies that relations matter, but other variables—such as institutional capacity, bureaucratic efficiency, and corruption—likely play a greater role in shaping outcomes. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) confirmed this duality: while some community leaders and civil servants highlighted instances of joint achievements such as budget approvals and COVID-19 responses, many grassroots stakeholders described the legislature as a “rubber stamp” institution, dominated by executive influence.

These findings align with Suberu (2021), who argues that Nigerian state assemblies often function more ceremonially than developmentally, thereby weakening their role as a check on executive power. Similarly, Mbah and Eze (2020) contend that weak democratic institutions allow personal rivalries and informal patronage networks to dictate relations, rather than adherence to constitutional norms. The implication for governance is that unless legislative independence is strengthened, service delivery will remain vulnerable to executive overreach and political conflict.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding, the study concludes that, there is a weak significant relationship between executive legislative relations and service delivery in the South-south Zone of Nigeria. As such, it's recommended that;

- Executive-legislative relations should be effective for ensuring that service delivery meets the needs of the population.
- There should be improvement in coordination between the executive and legislative arms to enhance healthcare delivery in the region.
- Executive-legislative engagements should improve infrastructure development, which is crucial to regional integration and economic growth.
- To achieve better outcomes in service delivery, institutional reforms that strengthen intergovernmental cooperation are necessary

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