

Effectiveness of Intergovernmental Grants: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the effectiveness of intergovernmental grants. Although the government has provided grants to various entities, including intergovernmental ones, there has yet to be a comprehensive study that illustrates the effectiveness of these intergovernmental grants. Systematic Literature Review and meta-analysis are used to answer the research question. There are 199 articles found using the keyword "government grants" from 1902 to 2023, which were then filtered based on the article year from 2010 to 2023, articles published in reputable journals indexed in Scopus Q1 to Q4, and several other limitations, resulting in 14 articles that became the data for analysis in this study. Research results show that intergovernmental grants are very effective for regions with budget and resource limitations to support development programs, enhance fiscal capacity and infrastructure, and meet the community's social needs with the hope of increasing development equity and reducing economic disparities. However, the effectiveness of intergovernmental grants depends on how these are managed and used. If not handled properly, grants can become a source of waste and public dissatisfaction, as they may be used for political purposes. In contrast, some local governments tend to use grants for electoral or short-term interests, which can disrupt their fiscal independence. Therefore, creating a balance between grants and local revenue is important. This research contributes by exploring the role, impact, and challenges of intergovernmental grants in supporting regional development in a decentralized government system.

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1. Introduction

The decentralized government system has been claimed to be able to improve public services through the government's proximity to the community (Taamneh et al., 2020; Talitha et al., 2020). In a decentralized system, decision-making related to a lower level of government is carried out at a lower institutional level (Moroni, 2024). Decentralization increases accountability and people's trust in the government (Qiao et al., 2019; Véron et al., 2024). However, the practice of decentralization creates substantive inequalities, including in terms of funding provided by local

governments to the community (Jiang & Xu, 2024; Véron et al., 2024). Other experts argue that a decentralized system has the potential to increase regional inequality (Abimbola et al., 2019; Arends, 2020). One of the central government's interventions in dealing with the complexity of decentralization is through intergovernmental Grants.

Grants are a form of government attention toward the recipient entities, including regions with structurally weak resource-based regions (Tan et al., 2020). Intergovernmental grants have become one of the important instruments in supporting regional development, especially in countries with a decentralized government structure. Regional development in metropolitan areas is increasingly dependent on agglomeration economies and knowledge spillovers (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2020). Grants provide opportunities for local governments to access the availability of financial resources and utilize them for development (Bernard & Keim-kl, 2023). With this grant, local governments receive the financial resources needed to implement various programs and projects aimed at improving community welfare, as well as the use of government grants to support innovation activities (Bakhtiari & Bruno, 2020). In addition, grants increase the resilience of a region due to regional economic development (Shi et al., 2022).

Intergovernmental grant allocations have significantly increased in recent years, reflecting the central government's commitment to strengthening regional autonomy. Regional autonomy describes the political, identity, and territorial power in a particular territory (Amin & Isharyanto, 2022; Anthias, 2022). This improvement is important, especially for regions with budget and resource constraints (Herianti & Marundha, 2024; Hung & Thanh, 2022; Siburian, 2020). With adequate funding, local governments can plan and implement more ambitious and far-reaching projects (Hall, 2008), such as road construction, healthcare facilities, and schools. This helps improve the community's quality of life and encourages more sustainable regional economic growth. Efficient and horizontally equitable grant allocation is crucial to ensure that all regions (Arocena et al., 2022), regardless of their fiscal capacity, can have equal access to the resources needed for development. Meanwhile, the transportation grants provided by the central government in China have significantly improved urban accessibility and mobility (Deng et al., 2016). Areas receiving transportation grants experienced a significant improvement in the quality of public transportation services, which positively impacted local economic growth. This shows that well-designed grants can effectively meet urgent social and economic needs at the regional level.

In this context, grants can encompass various forms of support, ranging from infrastructure, research and development (Tang et al., 2020), education (Liu & Zhou, 2022), and health funds to local economic development. Grants can also be used to support innovative programs in public services. Grants given to local governments for public health programs can enhance spending effectiveness and yield better results than those without grants. Meanwhile, grants allocated for green innovation can drive sustainable economic growth and create jobs in the renewable energy sector. However, the effectiveness of intergovernmental grants is not always guaranteed. Existing political and institutional conditions often influence local government responses to intergovernmental grants. For example, when local governments have incentives to increase their spending, the grants can fund projects that do not always align with the community's needs. This raises the question of how far grants can encourage responsible financial management at the local level.

Furthermore, external grants to local governments in Ghana can reduce the incentive to generate their revenue. In this context, grants can create a potentially harmful dependency, where local governments prefer to rely on grant funds rather than developing their revenue sources. This indicates the need for better policy design to ensure that grants not only serve as short-term solutions but also promote fiscal independence at the local level. In the context of Australia, research has noted that dependence on grant funding can lead to sustainability issues for local government councils in the Northern Territory. Many councils face challenges in planning long-term budgets due to uncertainty regarding grant allocations from the central government. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the amount of grants allocated and how these are managed and implemented to achieve the desired outcomes in regional development. The effectiveness of this grant highly depends on transparency and accountability in its management. Grant usage can prevent misuse and ensure that funds are used for the intended purposes.

2. Methods

This research uses the guidelines for systematic reviews and meta-analysis (PRISMA). PRISMA as a systematic review protocol has been used in many studies. According to (Panic et al., 2013), the quality of reporting and methodology is higher in journals that use PRISMA compared to those that do not use PRISMA during the same period. PRISMA is a valid and reliable systematic review protocol integrated into the SPAR-4-SLR method (Sauer & Seuring, 2023). Although this is not new, this method is still relevant and effective for searching and sorting relevant articles for review or use in this research.

Although there are several reliable article databases, the Scopus database was chosen for this research due to its strict indexing and high citation count. According to (Norris & Oppenheim, 2007), Scopus has superior coverage of social science literature compared to other databases. (Meho & Rogers, 2008) show that Scopus provides a more detailed and sophisticated analysis than Web of Science. Therefore, the author agrees with (Paul et al., 2021) that Scopus is the preferred database for literature search due to its quality assurance.

Using SPAR-4-SLR in the Watase Uake application begins with preparing the necessary keywords, criteria, and limitations, which will then undergo screening to filter articles that meet the requirements. After screening, article searches and the possibility of exclusions due to not aligning with the research focus will be conducted. At the final stage, classification analysis, network analysis, and other necessary tasks are performed.

The keyword used is "Government Grant" under the "article title" criterion in the Watase application. One hundred ninety-nine articles were found from 1902 to June 2023 using those keywords before any filtering was applied. The following criteria are used to narrow the scope of the article:

1. Between the years 2010 and 2023
2. Articles published in reputable journals (Scopus Q1 to Q4)
3. Articles that do not have an abstract
4. Articles that focus on intergovernmental grants

The restriction on the publication period of articles is implemented to minimize the risk of outdated or irrelevant research being included in the review. By focusing on the last few years, researchers can prioritize studies that are more relevant to the research questions and exclude older studies that may no longer reflect current practices or knowledge.

After limiting the publication years of articles between 2010 and 2023, 111 articles were excluded because they were published before 2010. Meanwhile, for the restriction of articles not included in Scopus Q1 to Q4, seven articles were excluded, and six articles do not have abstracts, so they cannot proceed to the screening process.

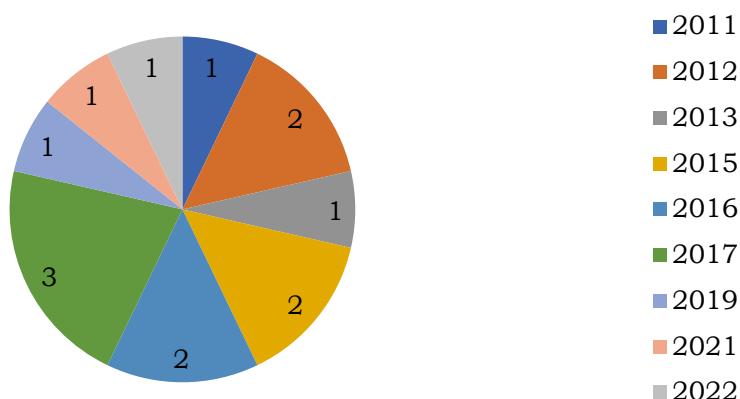
At the screening stage, 75 articles remained. We then proceeded to the retrieval stage to collect the articles and upload them into the Watase application. Twenty-eight articles could not be found, so they were excluded, leaving 47 articles to proceed to the classification and coding stage. At this stage, 33 articles were excluded because the themes discussed did not match the classification, leaving 14 articles for analysis in this study.

Table 1. Article Identification Using Watase Uake

Identification	Filter	Articles
Keyword "Government Grants"		199
Limitations 2010 - 2023	111	
Excluding Q1 – Q4	7	
Without Abstract	6	
Article not found	28	
Not relevant to the topic	33	
Remaining articles		14

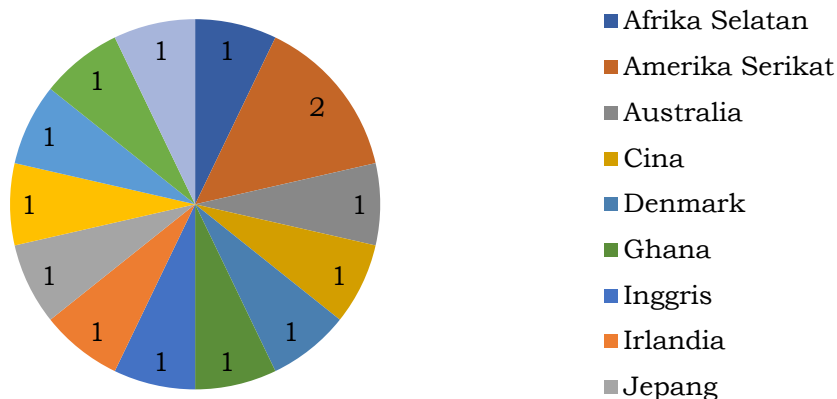
3. Results

Year Of Publication



Based on the image above, intergovernmental grants were used to conduct the most research in 2017, with three publications. This was followed by 2012, 2015, and 2016, with two publications each, and the other years, with one publication each.

Country Of Study



Research on intergovernmental grants is spread across various developing and developed countries (Agrawal et al., 2024). Among the 13 geographical regions covered in this empirical study, the United States has the highest number of intergovernmental grant studies, with two studies, while each country has 1 study. The United States is the largest superpower in the world, with a vast market and high business potential, making it reasonable for intergovernmental grants to be an interesting topic in the country (Caldeira, 2012). This is in line with the numerous citations regarding government grants in the United States, which amount to 473, making it the country with the most citations on this research topic among the 13 countries studying intergovernmental grants.

The significant interest in intergovernmental grants in the United States can be attributed to the country's federal structure, which emphasizes fiscal decentralization and inter-jurisdictional collaboration. Federalism in the United States necessitates a complex system of financial transfers to address disparities among states and local governments, fostering an environment conducive to research on this topic. Moreover, the economic scale and diversity of the United States provide an ideal setting for analyzing the dynamics and outcomes of intergovernmental grants, making it a focal point for scholars and policymakers.

Intergovernmental grants play a crucial role in mitigating regional inequalities and promoting public goods provision in both developed and developing countries. However, the United States'

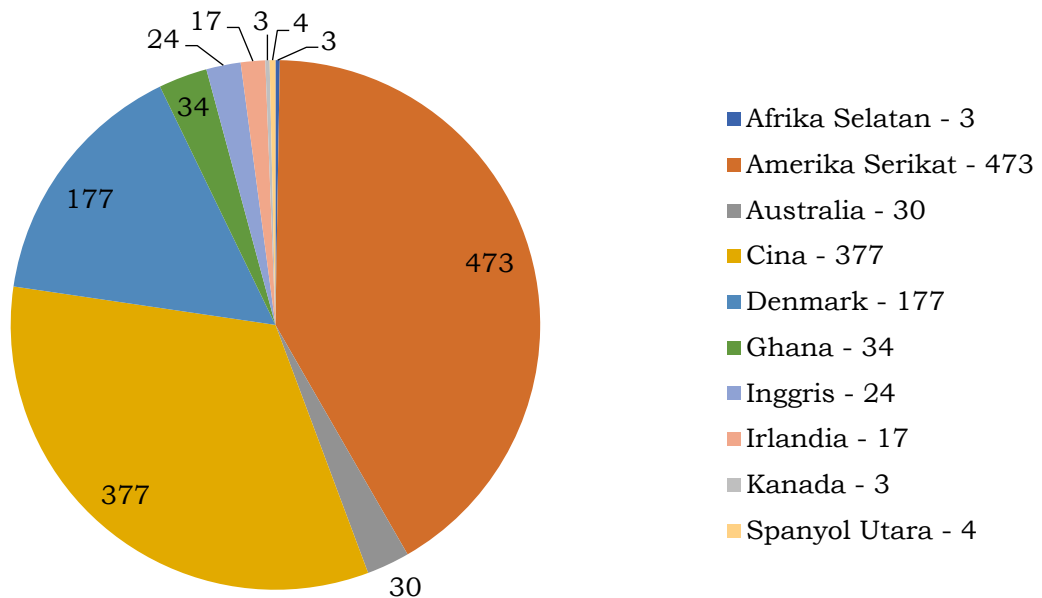
prominence in this field of research highlights the unique challenges and opportunities associated with federal financial systems. The country's extensive data availability and transparency in government operations further encourage academic exploration, resulting in a higher number of studies and citations. For instance, intergovernmental grants in the United States have been extensively studied in terms of their impact on infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and social welfare programs. These studies often analyze how such grants influence state and local government behavior, focusing on efficiency, equity, and accountability.

Comparatively, other countries with fewer studies on intergovernmental grants may face limitations such as less transparent fiscal policies, lack of comprehensive data, or lower prioritization of grant-related research. Nevertheless, the findings from research conducted in the United States often serve as a benchmark or reference point for policymakers and academics globally. The country's leadership in this domain underscores the broader implications of intergovernmental grants, especially in managing fiscal responsibilities and achieving sustainable development goals.

Beyond the United States, the study of intergovernmental grants across the other 12 countries offers valuable insights into diverse fiscal policies and practices. For example, developing countries often rely on intergovernmental grants to address issues related to poverty alleviation, infrastructure deficits, and capacity building at the local level. In contrast, developed nations might focus more on efficiency and innovation in grant allocation. The comparative analysis of these contexts enriches the global discourse on intergovernmental fiscal transfers, highlighting the need for tailored approaches based on specific national and regional characteristics.

The academic contributions from countries outside the United States, despite their lower frequency, are significant in understanding the multifaceted nature of intergovernmental grants. For instance, studies from countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America often emphasize the challenges posed by limited fiscal autonomy and the dependency of local governments on central transfers. These perspectives are crucial for developing strategies to strengthen local governance and improve the effectiveness of grant utilization.

Furthermore, the role of intergovernmental grants in addressing global challenges, such as climate change and urbanization, has gained increasing attention. Grants targeted at environmental sustainability and green infrastructure development are particularly relevant in the current global context, emphasizing the need for collaborative fiscal strategies. In this regard, the United States and other countries with advanced research on intergovernmental grants can contribute valuable knowledge and best practices to the international community.



Grand Theory

Table 2: Theories Used

Grand Theory	Number of Publication Articles	Citation
Economic Theory	7	256
Agency Theory	3	449
Stewardship Theory	1	99
Crowding Theory	1	46
Other Theory	2	-

The grand theory most commonly used in this research is economic theory (Durmaz, 2018), with seven articles, followed by agency theory with three articles, and the remainder from several other theories. The use of economic theory in the article discussing government grants is dominant because economic theory is an investigation into the state and the causes of the wealth of nations. The theory of information asymmetry shows differences in the practical information available to both sides of a transaction in the market simultaneously. It highlights the importance of an independent governance structure, strong shareholder rights protection, and an influential audit committee.

4. Discussion

Intergovernmental grants are transfers of resources from the central government to local governments to support the implementation of development programs. This grant aims to enhance the fiscal capacity of the region, improve infrastructure, and meet the community's social needs. Efficiently allocated grants can enhance the equitable distribution of development across regions and reduce economic disparities. In this context, it is important to understand how the allocation of grants can affect the effectiveness of using those funds locally.

Efficiently allocated intergovernmental grants have the potential to significantly impact local government's ability to implement development programs that cater to their unique needs and challenges. The allocation process often considers various factors, such as population size, poverty levels, and regional development indices, ensuring that the grants target areas with the greatest need. However, the effectiveness of these grants depends not only on the allocation mechanism but also on the capacity of local governments to manage and utilize the funds effectively.

In regions with strong governance structures and skilled administrative personnel, intergovernmental grants can lead to significant improvements in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and public services. For example, local governments with robust planning and monitoring systems can ensure that funds are allocated to priority areas, resulting in tangible improvements in residents' quality of life. These regions often serve as success stories, demonstrating how effective grant management can contribute to sustainable development and reduced economic disparities. Conversely, in areas with weaker governance or insufficient administrative capacity, the impact of intergovernmental grants may be diminished. Issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, and inadequate planning can lead to inefficient use of funds, with little improvement in local development outcomes. In such cases, grants intended to enhance regional development may inadvertently exacerbate disparities as better-governed regions continue to prosper while weaker regions struggle to catch up. This highlights the importance of capacity-building initiatives to strengthen local governance and ensure that all regions can effectively leverage intergovernmental grants.

In addition to governance, the type of grants allocated also influences their effectiveness. Conditional grants, which are tied to specific projects or sectors, can help ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes. For instance, grants earmarked for education or healthcare can directly address critical needs, leading to measurable improvements in literacy rates, school enrollment, or access to medical services. However, the rigidity of conditional grants may limit the local government's ability to respond to unexpected challenges or adapt to changing priorities. On the other hand, unconditional grants provide local governments with greater flexibility in resource allocation, allowing them to address pressing issues specific to their regions. This flexibility can be particularly beneficial in dynamic environments where needs may evolve rapidly. However, the

effective use of unconditional grants relies heavily on the accountability and decision-making capacity of local authorities, making transparency and citizen engagement critical components of successful implementation. The equitable distribution of intergovernmental grants also plays a pivotal role in promoting social cohesion and reducing regional tensions. When regions perceive the allocation process as fair and aligned with their development needs, it fosters trust between central and local governments and strengthens the overall governance framework. Conversely, perceived inequities in grant distribution can lead to dissatisfaction and social unrest, undermining the objectives of fiscal decentralization. As global challenges such as climate change and rapid urbanization intensify, intergovernmental grants are increasingly being used to address cross-cutting issues. Grants aimed at promoting green infrastructure, renewable energy, and sustainable urban development are becoming a priority, reflecting the evolving role of fiscal transfers in supporting long-term resilience and sustainability.

The mechanism for allocating grants between governments is a critical aspect in determining the effectiveness of using those funds. Proper allocation can ensure that grants reach the areas that need them the most. The impact of grants on local property prices shows that improper allocation can cause market distortions and social injustice. Therefore, it is important to implement a fair and transparent allocation model. A concrete example of a successful allocation mechanism can be seen in the education grant programs in several states in the United States. This program allocates funds based on the number of needy students, so areas with more underprivileged students receive more support. This contributes to the improvement of the quality of education in the area. The impact of intergovernmental grants on regional development varies greatly depending on how they are managed and utilized. Well-managed grants can improve infrastructure, public services, and the quality of life for the community. Conversely, grants can become a source of waste and public dissatisfaction if not managed well. Dependence on grants can cause local governments to lose the incentive to increase their original regional revenue.

Data shows that intergovernmental grants can significantly contribute to regional revenue. In Indonesia, for example, grants from the central government contributed about 30% of the total regional revenue in 2021. This shows that grants not only serve as a source of funding but also as an instrument to promote regional autonomy and enhance fiscal independence. However, the effectiveness of this grant highly depends on the distribution and oversight mechanisms implemented. In many areas, grants are used to build roads, schools, and healthcare facilities. This is in line with research findings showing that infrastructure investment can boost local economic growth. In addition, grants can also be used for social programs that support vulnerable groups, such as children and older people.

Meanwhile, grants for social needs, such as public transportation, positively impact community mobility and local economic growth. Therefore, designing grant programs that meet urgent needs and consider long-term potential is important. Nevertheless, challenges in intergovernmental grant management often arise. For example, there is a risk that grants could be used for political purposes or short-term interests. Some local governments tend to use grants for electoral purposes, which can lead to resource wastage. Therefore, transparency and accountability in using grants are necessary to achieve their original objectives, as government grants can be misused to gain political support rather than to meet community needs. In certain political contexts, grants can be used to strengthen the power of incumbents, leading to public dissatisfaction.

To address these challenges, implementing robust oversight and monitoring mechanisms is crucial in ensuring that intergovernmental grants are used effectively and align with their intended purposes. Transparent allocation and utilization of grants can help build public trust and improve the accountability of local governments. This includes regular audits, public reporting of fund usage, and the involvement of independent institutions to oversee grant management. For instance, involving community-based organizations and civil society can enhance oversight and provide an additional layer of accountability, reducing the likelihood of misuse for political or personal gains.

In Indonesia, the decentralization policy has placed significant emphasis on empowering local governments to take greater responsibility for their development priorities. Intergovernmental grants have been instrumental in achieving this objective, particularly in regions with limited revenue-generating capacity. These grants enable local governments to address pressing needs such as improving access to education, healthcare, and essential infrastructure. However, the potential of grants to promote regional autonomy can only be fully realized if the central government provides clear guidelines and ensures equitable distribution across regions, particularly to those most in need.

One approach to improving grant effectiveness is the adoption of performance-based grant systems. These systems allocate funds based on the achievement of specific targets or outcomes, incentivizing local governments to use resources efficiently and focus on measurable improvements. For example, grants could be tied to reductions in poverty rates, increased school enrollment, or improved healthcare access. Performance-based grants not only ensure better resource utilization but also encourage a culture of accountability and results-driven governance. In addition, capacity building for local governments is essential to enhance their ability to manage grants effectively. Many local governments, particularly in developing regions, face challenges such as limited human resources, lack of technical expertise, and insufficient financial management systems. Training programs, technical assistance, and access to digital tools can strengthen local government capacities, enabling them to plan, implement, and monitor grant-funded projects more effectively.

The integration of technology into grant management processes can also play a significant role in enhancing transparency and efficiency. Digital platforms that track fund allocation, project implementation, and expenditure in real time can help reduce corruption and ensure that resources reach their intended beneficiaries. For example, e-governance tools can provide citizens with access to information about grant utilization, fostering greater public participation and scrutiny. Despite the potential benefits, intergovernmental grants must be carefully designed to avoid dependency. Over-reliance on central government transfers can discourage local governments from exploring their own revenue-generating opportunities. To mitigate this, grants should be structured in a way that encourages local governments to mobilize their resources while using grants to address gaps that cannot be covered independently.

Moreover, when local governments become too reliant on grants, they may neglect efforts to increase local revenue. Grants can reduce the incentive for local governments to collect taxes, which can ultimately disrupt their fiscal independence. This indicates that creating a balance between grants and local revenue is important.

5. Conclusion

Intergovernmental grants are important, especially for regions with budget and resource constraints. Wealth transfers between governments aim to support development programs, enhance fiscal capacity and infrastructure, and meet the community's social needs with the hope of increasing equitable development and reducing economic disparities. The effectiveness of intergovernmental grants is measured by the amount of funds allocated and the impact it has on community welfare, infrastructure development, public services, and the quality of education. In this context, it is important to understand how grant allocation can affect the effectiveness of fund usage at the local level. The mechanism for allocating intergovernmental grants is a key aspect in determining the effectiveness of using those funds. Proper allocation can ensure that grants reach the areas most in need. The effectiveness of intergovernmental grants depends on how these are managed and utilized. If not managed properly, grants can become a source of waste and public dissatisfaction. For example, there is a risk that grants can be used for political purposes, where some local governments tend to use grants for electoral or short-term interests. Another issue is that grants can reduce the incentive for local governments to collect taxes, which can ultimately disrupt their fiscal independence. This indicates that creating a balance between grants and local revenue is important.

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