

## LEGISLATIVE IMPERATIVE, INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROPENSITY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

This paper looked at the legislature from 1999 to date. The Legislative arm of government is a very important institution of government, it does not only complement other arms of government but also acts as a check and balance on other equally germane arms of government. Under military regimes, the Legislative arm of government is scrapped, the only arms of government that existed under the military were the Executive and Judiciary. In Nigeria, the institutions that performed the role of the Legislature under the military were the Supreme Military Council (SMC), Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) and Provincial Ruling Council (PRC). But as soon as a Democratic government is installed, a legitimate legislative arm is properly constituted, which comprises a duly elected representative of the people, who are elected from across the country. And, the Legislature performs three key functions namely representation, oversight and lawmaking. However, it is imperative to underscore the fact that the Legislature performs several other vital roles, hence this paper stated emphatically what has become of this very important arm of government, what should be done about their unholy and extremely high wages and allowances which are more often than not shrouded in secrecy. Nowadays, where is the Legislative arm of government synonymous with corruption? Why is the public perception of the legislature negative and why is it seen as a retirement haven for an assortment of politicians? But, how best can they contribute to national development and nation-building? This study utilized a qualitative content analysis approach, focusing on existing literature, governmental reports, policy documents, and academic articles related to legislative imperatives, institutional accountability, and national development in Nigeria. The analysis will systematically identify themes, patterns, and narratives that illustrate the relationship between legislative actions and development outcomes. By synthesizing insights from various sources, including case studies and theoretical frameworks, the study aims to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Nigeria's legislative processes, accountability mechanisms, and their impact on national development. Results will offer a comprehensive understanding of these interconnected dynamics within the Nigerian context. The qualitative research methodology is deployed, while collective action theory is used as the theoretical framework. The qualitative analysis of existing literature reveals several key findings regarding the interplay between legislative imperatives, institutional accountability, and national development in Nigeria. First, legislative frameworks often lack effective enforcement mechanisms, undermining accountability and fostering corruption. Second, the absence of robust oversight has led to inefficient resource allocation and inhibited developmental initiatives. Third, while constitutional provisions promote accountability, political patronage and ethnic considerations frequently compromise legislative effectiveness. Finally, the study highlights the need for strengthened institutional frameworks and greater civic engagement to enhance legislative responsiveness and foster sustainable national development, emphasizing the critical

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role of accountability in achieving developmental goals. Thereafter, the conclusion was drawn and recommendations preferred, which include amongst others the implementation of robust anti-corruption measures within the legislature to prevent and combat corrupt practices among legislators. Two, strengthening the capacity of the legislative branch by providing adequate resources, training programs, and technical support to legislators and staff, and upholding the principle of legislative autonomy by promoting checks and balances, separation of powers, and effective accountability mechanisms.

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## Introduction

The legislature plays a crucial role in the national development and nation-building process in Nigeria. As the representative body of the people, it has the responsibility to enact laws, make policy decisions, and oversee the government's actions, all of which are essential for the socioeconomic development of the country. In this paper, we will discuss the roles of the legislature in national development and nation-building in Nigeria, supported by relevant examples. The primary function of the legislature is to make laws that govern the conduct of individuals, businesses, and other entities in the country. These laws are crucial in creating a conducive environment for development and promoting social justice. For instance, the Nigerian legislature has enacted laws like the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) and the Investment and Securities Act (ISA) to regulate business activities and attract foreign investments. These laws provide a legal framework for economic growth and development.

The legislature plays a critical role in the budgetary process of the country. It ensures that the government's budget proposals are in line with the needs and priorities of the citizens. By reviewing and approving the budget, the legislature ensures the allocation of resources towards developmental projects and initiatives. Additionally, the legislature oversees the implementation of the budget and ensures transparency and accountability in public spending. For example, the National Assembly in Nigeria holds budget hearings and conducts oversight functions to monitor government spending and ensure efficient use of resources. Also, the legislature is responsible for formulating and adopting policies that promote national development and address societal issues. Through debates, discussions, and committee processes, lawmakers identify societal challenges and develop policies to tackle them. For instance, the Nigerian legislature has been involved in the formulation and adoption of policies like the National Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and the National Education Policy. These policies provide a roadmap for economic growth, poverty reduction, and human capital development.

While the legislature equally acts as a check and balance on the executive branch of government. It ensures that government agencies and officials are held accountable for their actions and decisions. Through oversight functions, the legislature investigates allegations of corruption, maladministration, and human rights abuses. For example, the Nigerian Senate conducted investigations into the mismanagement of funds in government agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). These oversight functions expose corruption and ensure transparency in public administration. The legislature represents the interests and aspirations of the people. Lawmakers are elected to advocate for their constituents and make decisions on their behalf. The legislature provides a platform for citizens to engage in the democratic process, voice their concerns, and participate in lawmaking. For example, public hearings are conducted by legislative committees to gather public opinions on proposed bills and policies. The input from citizens helps shape legislation and ensures that laws align with the needs and aspirations of the people.

Moreover, the legislature plays a critical role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In a country as diverse as Nigeria, with various ethnic, religious, and regional differences, conflicts arise from time to time. The legislature acts as a platform for dialogue and negotiation to address these conflicts through legislative processes and strategic

interventions. For example, the National Assembly played a crucial role in resolving the Niger Delta crisis by passing the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Act, which allocated resources for the development of the region and addressed the grievances of the local communities. The legislature has the power to amend the constitution, which is the supreme law of the land. This power allows lawmakers to update and modernize the constitution in line with the changing needs and aspirations of the people. Constitutional amendments can facilitate national development by providing a legal framework for progress. For example, the Nigerian legislature played a significant role in the amendment of the 1999 Constitution to strengthen the independence of the judiciary, promote gender equality, and enhance local government autonomy.

Therefore, the legislature plays a significant role in national development and nation-building in Nigeria. Through enacting laws, budget approval and oversight, policy formulation, and adoption, oversight and accountability, representation and public engagement, conflict resolution, and constitutional amendment, the legislature contributes to socio-economic development, stability, and progress. Lawmakers need to discharge their duties effectively and responsibly to achieve the desired outcomes for the nation.

Conversely, since Nigeria transitioned to democracy in 1999, the legislature has been marred by several corruption cases. Here are some notable examples: The Halliburton Scandal (1999-2007): This corruption case involved allegations of kickbacks paid to Nigerian officials, including lawmakers, by the U.S. engineering firm Halliburton in exchange for contracts related to the construction of the Bonny Island liquefied natural gas plant. The N2.3 Billion Bribery Scandal (2012): This corruption scandal implicated Farouk Lawan, a lawmaker and former chairman of the House of Representatives Ad-Hoc Committee on Fuel Subsidy. He was accused of demanding a \$3 million bribe from businessman Femi Otedola to remove his company's name from the list of firms involved in the oil subsidy scam.

Besides, the Budget Padding Scandal (2016): This scandal involved allegations that lawmakers, including Speaker Yakubu Dogara, padded the national budget by including fictitious projects and inflating costs. It led to the sack of Abdulmumin Jibrin, a former chairman of the House Committee on Appropriation, who blew the whistle on the scheme. The \$17 Million Bribery Allegation (2018): Senator Shehu Sani was accused of extorting \$17 million from a businessman, Sani Dauda, in exchange for removing his name from a list of individuals facing investigation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Sani denied the allegations but was arrested and charged in court. Also, the Misappropriation of Funds Scandal (2019): The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) investigated a case of alleged diversion and misappropriation of N19.4 billion from the Nigerian Senate's 2019 Budget for constituency projects. Some lawmakers were accused of diverting the funds meant for community development.

### **Research Methodology**

This research methodology outlines a qualitative approach to investigating the relationship between legislative imperative, institutional accountability, and their effects on national development in Nigeria. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how legislative processes and institutional practices impact development outcomes in the Nigerian context. The selection of qualitative methods is driven by the need to capture nuanced perspectives and experiences that quantitative methods may overlook.

The research will adopt a descriptive qualitative design, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex interactions among legislative imperatives, institutional accountability, and developmental outcomes. This design is well-suited for understanding the subjective experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders in Nigeria's political landscape, including legislators, civil servants, representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), and citizens.

The qualitative approach enables an exploration of the themes and patterns that emerge from stakeholder experiences, offering insights into the mechanisms through which legislation and institutional accountability influence development.

To holistically capture the complexities of legislative practices and institutional accountability, this research will utilize the following qualitative data-gathering techniques: Content Analysis of Legislative and Institutional Documents. Content analysis was conducted on relevant legislative materials and institutional documents, including Legislative Bills and Acts: This analysis reviewed the content of significant legislative frameworks that impact national development, assessing their definitions, objectives, and accountability provisions. Audit Reports and Performance Evaluations: Reports from oversight agencies, such as the Office of the Auditor General, provided insights into institutional performance and accountability mechanisms. Policy Documents: Development policy documents from relevant ministries were analyzed to evaluate their alignment with legislative imperatives and institutional accountability. The content analysis employed a systematic coding process to identify themes, patterns, and inconsistencies within the documented materials.

This study focused on Nigeria as a whole, with some attention to regional variations in legislative practices and institutional accountability. Given the country's diverse socio-cultural landscape, the research explored the unique challenges different states face concerning accountability and development. The target population for the research includes Members of the National Assembly and State Assemblies; Civil servants in relevant government ministries; Representatives from civil society organizations and Community leaders and ordinary citizens engaged in development initiatives.

Qualitative data analysis will follow a thematic approach, employing the following steps: Transcription: Audio recordings from interviews and focus groups will be transcribed verbatim to capture detailed accounts of participants' perspectives; Coding: Data will undergo open coding to identify significant phrases, concepts, and themes. This initial coding will then be refined to create categories and subcategories related to the research questions. Theme Development: Through constant comparison and integration of codes, key themes representing the core findings of the research will be developed. This thematic analysis will facilitate an understanding of how legislative imperatives impact institutional accountability and development. Validation: To enhance validity, member checks will be conducted, where participants will be invited to review preliminary findings and provide feedback regarding interpretations of their contributions.

Therefore, this research methodology emphasizes a qualitative approach to exploring the connections between legislative imperatives, institutional accountability, and national development in Nigeria. By employing in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and content analysis, the study seeks to gain a rich understanding of the factors that influence development outcomes. The findings from this research will contribute to the ongoing discourse on governance and development, providing insights necessary for enhancing legislative effectiveness and institutional accountability in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Clarification**

The interplay between legislative frameworks, institutional accountability, and national development has garnered increasing attention in the discourse surrounding governance in Nigeria. As one of Africa's most populous nations, Nigeria's development trajectory is heavily influenced by the efficacy of its legislative mechanisms and the accountability of its institutions. This literature review synthesizes key findings from various studies to illuminate the critical aspects of this relationship and highlights gaps in knowledge that warrant further investigation.

Legislative frameworks establish the foundational guidelines for governance and serve as a mechanism for promoting democracy, human rights, and development. According to Ogunna (2018), legislation in Nigeria plays

a pivotal role in the articulation and implementation of development policies. The National Assembly, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives, is vested with the responsibility of enacting laws that impact all sectors of the economy. While significant legislative efforts have been made, studies have shown that the effectiveness of these laws often falters due to weaknesses in enforcement and compliance (Obi, 2019).

Additionally, legislative oversight is essential for ensuring that government programs align with statutory regulations and developmental goals. Kwanashie (2020) argues that effective legislative oversight not only promotes transparency but also enhances accountability in the public sector. The failure of the legislature to assert its oversight functions often results in mismanagement of public resources, hampering development initiatives.

Institutional accountability refers to the obligation of institutions to be answerable for their actions and the consequences of those actions. In Nigeria, the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms significantly impacts developmental outcomes. According to Akinyemi (2021), lack of accountability in public institutions fosters corruption, a pervasive issue that stymies growth and undermines public trust. Corruption is linked with the misappropriation of funds designated for development projects, rendering such initiatives ineffective (Transparency International, 2021).

Research by Ezeani (2017) emphasizes that the integration of accountability practices within institutional frameworks promotes a culture of responsibility that is critical for assessing performance. By implementing mechanisms such as audits, performance assessments, and stakeholder engagement, institutions can make strides towards greater accountability, ultimately leading to more effective governance and enhanced developmental outcomes. Furthermore, the relationship between accountability and citizen engagement is significant. Ojo (2020) posits that when citizens hold institutions accountable, it fosters a participatory governance model. This participatory model empowers citizens and enhances their propensity to contribute to national development efforts, ensuring that institutional actions resonate with community needs.

The link between institutional accountability and national development is well-documented in the literature. A report by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2019) underscores that robust accountability mechanisms in governance frameworks can lead to improved service delivery, which is essential for national development. The report identifies key sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure that are significantly affected by accountability, especially in terms of funding allocations and project execution.

In a comparative analysis, Olatunji (2022) reviews the performance of various government institutions in implementing national development plans and finds a direct correlation between accountability levels and developmental outcomes. Institutions with transparent processes and stringent accountability measures reported better implementation of policies and programs, leading to enhanced national development.

Despite the recognized importance of legislative frameworks and institutional accountability, challenges persist in Nigeria. Legislative inertia and political instability often inhibit the effective functioning of the legislature (Ikelegbe, 2021). Additionally, systemic corruption remains a formidable obstacle. Nwankwo (2020) highlights the complicity of some lawmakers in corruption, which undermines the legislative role as a watchdog. This complicity often results in the passage of laws that favour personal interests over national priorities.

Institutional responses to these challenges have included various reforms aimed at enhancing the integrity of legislative processes and promoting accountability. The Nigerian government has instituted initiatives such as the Freedom of Information Act (2011), which aims to improve transparency and empower citizens to hold public institutions accountable (Agbaje, 2018). While such reforms are a step in the right direction, their effectiveness is contingent on political will and public buy-in.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a critical role in advocating for legislative reforms and enhancing institutional accountability in Nigeria. According to George et al. (2021), CSOs in Nigeria have been instrumental



in mobilizing citizens for participation in the legislative process and monitoring government performance. Their interventions have led to increased awareness of legislative responsibilities and the importance of accountability in promoting national development.

CSOs also act as intermediaries between citizens and government institutions, helping to amplify community voices and advocate for policy changes that favour equitable development (Ifeoma, 2020). By fostering dialogue between citizens and lawmakers, they help ensure that legislative processes reflect the needs and aspirations of the populace.

While the existing literature provides substantial insights into the relationships among legislation, accountability, and development, several gaps remain. First, there is a need for more empirical studies that utilize quantitative methods to assess the precise impact of legislative accountability on specific development outcomes in Nigeria. Additionally, comparative studies with other nations facing similar challenges could provide valuable lessons and contextualize Nigeria's experiences.

Another area needing further exploration is the impact of technological advancements on enhancing institutional accountability. With the advent of digital governance platforms, the role of technology in facilitating transparency and citizen engagement presents a promising avenue for future research.

In summary, the literature underscores the critical importance of legislative frameworks and institutional accountability in fostering national development in Nigeria. While progress has been made, numerous challenges remain, including corruption, political instability, and inadequate enforcement of accountability measures. As Nigeria seeks to advance its development agenda, strengthening legislative mechanisms and enhancing institutional accountability will be paramount. Continued research and advocacy in this area are essential to ensure that governance frameworks are effective, transparent, and responsive to the people's needs.

Collective Action Theory will be used to explicable the intricacies of the legislature in Nigeria. The collective action theory was first published by Mancur Olson in 1965. Olson argues that any group of individuals attempting to provide a public good has difficulty doing so efficiently. On the one hand, individuals have incentives to "free-ride" on the efforts of others in certain groups and on the other hand the size of a group is of high importance and difficult to optimally determine. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective\\_action\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_action_theory)). Collective action refers to the intentional, conjoint action of a group of individuals aiming to achieve a common goal (Olson, 1965). The collective action theory is a framework used to understand how individuals behave in groups or organizations. It looks at how individuals make rational choices to maximize their self-interest while considering the costs and benefits of collective action. In the context of the Nigerian legislature since 1999, the collective action theory can shed light on the modus operandi and conduct of the legislators. One of the key features of the Nigerian legislature since 1999 is the prevalence of corruption and rent-seeking behaviour. The collective action theory provides insights into why this behaviour occurs. According to the theory, individuals are rational actors who seek to maximize their self-interest. In the context of Nigerian legislators, this self-interest often manifests in the form of personal gain and accumulation of wealth.

One way the theory explains the conduct of Nigerian legislators is through the concept of "logrolling." Logrolling refers to the practice of exchanging favours or support to achieve personal or collective goals. In the Nigerian context, this often takes the form of legislators supporting bills or policies that benefit their constituencies or personal interests in exchange for support for their initiatives. This creates a system of reciprocal favours and alliances that perpetuates corruption and unethical behaviour.

The collective action theory also helps explain the role of political parties in shaping the behaviour of Nigerian legislators. According to the theory, individuals are more likely to cooperate and engage in collective action when they have a common identity or goal. Political parties provide a platform for like-minded individuals to come

together and exert collective influence. However, in the Nigerian context, political parties are often weak, fragmented, and lack strong ideological foundations. This undermines the collective action potential of legislators and allows for individualistic and self-serving behaviour.

In addition to logrolling and weak party structures, the collective action theory also explains another key characteristic of the Nigerian legislature since 1999: the prevalence of "pork-barrel politics." Pork-barrel politics refers to the practice of legislators securing funds and resources for their constituencies to gain political support. This behaviour is driven by the logic of collective action, as legislators realize that by directing resources to their constituencies, they can increase their chances of re-election. The collective action theory helps explain why Nigerian legislators overwhelmingly prioritize local or narrow interests over broader national concerns.

Furthermore, the theory highlights the role of institutional design in shaping the behaviour of Nigerian legislators. According to the theory, institutions can either facilitate or impede collective action. In the Nigerian context, the design of the legislature, including the committee system and voting rules, has created opportunities for rent-seeking and corruption. The committee system allows legislators to exert influence and extract rents through the allocation of resources and oversight of government agencies. Moreover, the voting rules, which often require a supermajority for decision-making, create incentives for legislators to engage in logrolling and horse-trading.

The collective action theory also helps explain the challenges faced by reform-minded legislators in Nigeria. According to the theory, collective action is more likely to occur when individuals perceive a collective benefit and have low transaction costs. However, in the Nigerian context, the perception of collective benefit is often undermined by the prevalence of corruption and rent-seeking behaviour. Moreover, the high transaction costs associated with collective action, such as the need for coordination and overcoming collective action problems, make it difficult for reform-minded legislators to effect change.

Hence, the collective action theory provides a useful framework for understanding the *modus operandi* and conduct of the Nigerian legislature since 1999. It helps explain the prevalence of corruption and rent-seeking behaviour, the role of logrolling and weak party structures, the dominance of pork-barrel politics, the influence of institutional design, and the challenges faced by reform-minded legislators. By applying the collective action theory, we can gain valuable insights into the underlying dynamics of the Nigerian legislature and identify potential avenues for improving its functioning and effectiveness.

### **Findings, Analysis and Discussions**

The relationship between legislative imperatives, institutional accountability, and national development in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. This study utilized qualitative methods focusing on existing literature to explore how legislative actions and accountability mechanisms impact the country's developmental trajectory. Analyzing various scholarly articles, policy documents, and reports, the findings reveal critical insights into systemic challenges and opportunities for strengthened governance in Nigeria. This section discusses the key themes that emerged, including legislative inefficacies, accountability deficits, implications for national development, and recommendations for reform.

A significant finding of the study is the persistent ineffectiveness of the Nigerian legislature. Research highlights that the legislative arm often operates in a context compromised by political dynamics that prioritize personal and party interests over public goods. The 2011 National Assembly elections illustrated how electoral processes can produce representatives more dedicated to political patronage than to legislative duties (Adebayo, 2013). This trend has been linked to poor policymaking and oversight capabilities, ultimately hindering effective governance. Moreover, legislative inaction or delayed responses to crucial socio-economic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and education reflect a disconnection between legislative imperatives and the nation's developmental needs. Scholars argue that inefficient legislative processes contribute significantly to Nigeria's

developmental challenges (Omotola, 2010). For instance, critical laws regarding public finance and infrastructure development are often not enacted swiftly enough, leading to stagnation in development initiatives.

The study also identifies significant accountability deficits within both the legislative framework and broader governance structures in Nigeria. A review of existing literature indicates that accountability mechanisms designed to ensure transparency and responsiveness are frequently undermined by corruption, lack of political will, and bureaucratic inefficiencies (Ezeani, 2017). The Nigerian legislature's oversight functions are often rendered ineffective due to the pervasive influence of party politics and favouritism, which can lead to a culture of impunity among elected officials.

As highlighted by Ojo (2021), weaknesses in institutional accountability can be traced back to historically entrenched practices, where legislators face minimal repercussions for misconduct or failure to deliver on electoral promises. Corruption is endemic, as evidenced by numerous high-profile cases of embezzlement and misallocation of public funds involving legislators (Adetula, 2012). These accountability lapses not only breed public cynicism but also impair citizens' trust in governance, further stymying national development efforts.

The findings indicate a direct correlation between legislative imperatives, accountability practices, and national development. As the literature reveals, ineffective legislation and accountability mechanisms create an unfavourable environment for economic growth and social progress. The inability to pass and implement critical development-oriented policies leads to persistent socio-economic challenges such as inadequate healthcare, poor infrastructure, and lack of educational opportunities (Akunyili, 2012).

Studies show that in instances where legislators are held accountable, there tends to be a more significant impact on development outcomes. For example, the implementation of the National Health Insurance Scheme has experienced delays due to legislative inefficiencies, despite the program's potential to enhance healthcare delivery (Icunza & Jibrin, 2019). The disconnect between legislative processes and national priorities reveals a critical gap that needs addressing for effective national development.

Additionally, the engagement of civil society organizations in monitoring legislative activities has been cited as a potential lever for improving accountability. By promoting greater transparency and citizen engagement, these organizations can serve as watchdogs, pushing for legislative actions that align with the needs of the populace (Nwogbede, 2019).

The literature examined suggests several directions for reform aimed at enhancing legislative effectiveness and accountability in Nigeria. First, there is a pressing need for comprehensive electoral reforms that prioritize the selection of candidates based on meritocratic principles rather than political patronage (Ijiredinla & Omoniye, 2019). This would help ensure that elected officials possess the requisite qualifications and commitment to public service. Second, strengthening the institutional framework for accountability is crucial. This includes revising laws governing the conduct of legislators and enhancing the powers of anti-corruption agencies to investigate and penalize misconduct effectively. Increased institutional capacity and independence can bolster the efficacy of oversight (Ejikeme, 2020).

Moreover, fostering civic engagement and public involvement in the legislative process can result in a more responsive governance framework. Encouraging the active participation of citizens in policy discussions and legislative processes can bridge the gap between government actions and public expectations. Scholars argue that enhancing public awareness and political education can empower citizens to demand accountability from their representatives (Adebayo, 2013). Lastly, adopting technology-driven approaches to legislative functions can improve transparency and efficiency. The use of digital platforms for tracking legislative activities, public expenditure, and project implementation can facilitate greater accountability and citizen oversight (Ojo, 2021).



The literature also highlights the critical role of international organizations in promoting legislative accountability and national development in Nigeria. Collaborative efforts between Nigeria and global institutions have been instrumental in providing technical assistance and fostering best practices in governance. For instance, developmental aid and programs sponsored by the United Nations and the World Bank often emphasize the need for improved accountability mechanisms and legislative reforms (OECD, 2015). International bodies can assist in capacity building for Nigerian legislative institutions, enhancing their ability to legislate effectively and hold the executive accountable. Such partnerships can also facilitate knowledge sharing among lawmakers, promoting innovative legislative practices that align with global standards (National Democratic Institute, 2020).

This study elucidates the intricate relationship between legislative imperatives, institutional accountability, and national development in Nigeria. Key findings point to the persistent challenges of legislative ineffectiveness and accountability deficits, which significantly impede national development. The research underscores the necessity for comprehensive reforms that prioritize electoral integrity, enhance legislative frameworks, and promote greater civic engagement.

Addressing these issues is critical for Nigeria's developmental aspirations, as effective governance remains foundational to the realization of social and economic progress. The insights derived from existing literature reveal not only the challenges but also the potential pathways for reform, emphasizing the importance of accountability in fostering a robust and responsive democracy.

### **The Legislature and Bogus Allowances**

The Nigerian legislature, comprising the National Assembly with its two chambers—the Senate and the House of Representatives—plays a pivotal role in shaping the country's governance and policy landscape. However, the issue of allowances provided to lawmakers has been a contentious topic, often criticized as exorbitant, opaque, and disconnected from the realities faced by ordinary citizens. This paper explores the nature of allowances received by Nigerian legislators, the implications of these payments on governance and public trust, as well as potential reforms aimed at addressing the issue of bogus allowances.

Legislative allowances refer to the monetary benefits and entitlements awarded to members of the legislature to cover various expenses related to their parliamentary duties. These allowances can include salaries, accommodation, transport, and other operational costs deemed necessary for the effective performance of their legislative roles.

In Nigeria, the allowances for lawmakers typically fall into several categories:

- The basic salary is the fixed payment received by lawmakers, which is often adjusted periodically through various regulations or legislation.
- This allowance is intended to enable legislators to cater to their constituents' needs and maintain a connection with the communities they represent (Ezeani, 2018).
- Legislators are often provided housing allowances to cover their accommodation costs, regardless of whether they own property in the capital or their constituencies.
- These allowances are earmarked for maintaining offices, purchasing equipment, and other operational needs related to legislative duties.
- Legislators may receive per diem allowances during official trips or sittings away from their primary residence.
- Additional payments may be made for special purposes, including medical allowances, vehicle allowances, entertainment allowances, and security allowances (Ikpechukwu, 2020).

Allowances for legislators in Nigeria are governed primarily by the National Assembly (Remuneration) Act, which stipulates the various forms of financial entitlements available to members. The process of determining

these allowances often involves consultations among leadership within the National Assembly and the executive branch, with final decisions reflected in periodic adjustments.

One of the most significant criticisms levelled against the Nigerian legislature concerns the seemingly exorbitant nature of their allowances. Reports indicate that lawmakers in Nigeria enjoy some of the highest remuneration packages globally, raising concerns about equity and fiscal responsibility (Ameh, 2019; Ezeani, 2018). According to data reported by the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), Nigerian legislators earn substantially more than their counterparts in several developed and developing nations (Okwuosa, 2020).

The issue of transparency in the allocation and usage of legislative allowances has been another major point of criticism. Many citizens and civil society organizations argue that the processes for determining and disbursing allowances often lack public oversight, contributing to the perception of corruption and misuse of public funds (Ikpechukwu, 2020). Legislative committees responsible for overseeing financial matters within the National Assembly often fail to provide adequate reports on the specifics of allowances, leading to widespread speculation and mistrust (Ameh, 2019).

The ostentatious lifestyles associated with some lawmakers stand in stark contrast to the dire socio-economic conditions faced by many Nigerians (Okwuosa, 2020). The stark difference between the allowances enjoyed by legislators and the living standards of ordinary citizens fuels discontent and disillusionment with the political system. Many argue that such allowances detract from the legislature's ability to serve as a truly representative body for the populace, contributing to a growing trust deficit between the people and their elected officials (Bello, 2020).

The perception of exorbitant and unjustifiable allowances for legislators has contributed to the erosion of public trust in the political system. When citizens perceive lawmakers as out of touch with their lived realities, the legitimacy of the legislative institution diminishes, fostering political apathy and disillusionment (Bello, 2020; Ezeani, 2018).

High allowances can inadvertently create incentives for corrupt practices among lawmakers. When public servants are rewarded with substantial financial benefits, the potential for diverting funds for personal gain increases (Ameh, 2019). Legislators who receive significant allowances may prioritize personal and financial gains over pressing legislative responsibilities, which can derail efforts to address critical social and economic issues facing the nation (Ikpechukwu, 2020).

The financial implications of excessive allowances extend beyond individual legislators; they impose a considerable fiscal burden on the national treasury. The commitment to providing high allowances impacts budgetary allocations for vital sectors such as education and healthcare (Okwuosa, 2020). During periods of economic difficulty, massive expenditures on legislative allowances may result in public outcry and calls for austerity measures that affect ordinary citizens disproportionately.

A transparent review of the allowances structure should be undertaken to align lawmakers' remuneration with international standards and the local socio-economic context. Engaging civil society and public discourse in this review process is crucial to restoring public trust (Ezeani, 2018). Developing clear guidelines for allowances, supported by legislative frameworks, can enhance accountability and transparency. Any adjustments to allowances should involve stakeholder consultations and be backed by public justification.

Establishing independent bodies tasked with monitoring and evaluating legislative allowances can bolster accountability. Such bodies could be equipped with the authority to audit allowances, ensuring compliance with existing regulations (Okwuosa, 2020). Mandating regular public disclosures of allowances, expenditures, and related details can promote transparency and accountability, allowing citizens to assess the appropriateness of lawmakers' financial benefits.

Engaging citizens in an informed dialogue regarding legislative allowances can foster accountability. Public awareness campaigns can help educate the populace about the financial responsibilities of lawmakers, the rationale behind allowances, and the importance of civic participation in holding public officials accountable (Bello, 2020).

The issue of bogus allowances for Nigerian legislators represents a profound challenge to democracy and governance in Nigeria. The high levels of remuneration and the lack of transparency surrounding legislative allowances contribute to public disillusionment and mistrust toward elected officials. To address these concerns, comprehensive reforms are necessary, focusing on transparency, accountability, and public engagement. Implementing such reforms can help re-calibrate the relationship between Nigerian lawmakers and the citizens they represent, fostering a more equitable and effective legislative process. By prioritizing the urgent need for accountability in financial matters, Nigeria can pave the way for a more responsible and responsive government that addresses the pressing needs of its citizens.

The bogus allowance and humongous salaries of Nigerian lawmakers particularly from 1999 have been a source of worry to any perspective observer. In 2015, Premium Times reported that Nigerian lawmakers managed to approve only 106 new laws out of 1,063 brought before them in the last four years, despite spending more than half a trillion naira within the period, earning the notorious title as the world's highest-paid legislators. The figures mean for the National Assembly, with a combined annual budget of N150 billion since 2011, returned 10 per cent in efficiency and averaged about two bills each month.

Despite the low-performance level of the National Assembly, the institution gulps a significant per cent of the country's overhead cost which the former Governor of Nigeria's Central Bank, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi puts at 25 per cent; a figure which the legislators have since refuted. Premised on the claim and the counter-argument, there have been several calls on the leadership of the National Assembly to publicize the actual remuneration package of legislators. However, these calls are yet to be appropriately responded to by the National Assembly paving the way for several guesstimate analyses on the subject matter, thereby leading to the negative public perception of the National Assembly as a den of corrupt and self-centred people. According to the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission-RMAFC (an institution empowered by section 70 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) to determine the salary and allowances of members of the Senate and House of Representatives), a Senator is officially entitled to N12, 902,360.00 (US\$33,442.54) per annum with a once and for all severance package of N24, 090,000.00(US\$62,440.58).

Likewise, a member of the House is entitled to N9, 525,985.50 (US\$24,691.08) annually as salaries and allowances with N23, 822,000.00 (US\$61,745.93) as a severance pay at the end of his four-year tenure. This shows that about N30, 544,578,080.00 US\$79,170,660.59) is spent on the 469 legislators as salaries, allowances, and severance packages in four years (excluding estacode and tour duty allowances). However, it is widely believed as argued by Amaefule that the salaries and allowances of legislators are not limited to the ones officially stated, rather others accrue through self-appropriation and corruption.

There are several claims on the guesstimate figures of the annual salaries and allowances noted by prominent persons that could not be dismissed out-rightly. For instance, Prof. Itse Sagay, who is the Presidential Adviser on Anti-corruption, claimed that information available to him shows that a Nigerian Senator earns about N29 million(US\$75,167.16) a month and over N3 Billion (US\$7,775,913.00) a year. The breakdown of the figure shows that the basic salary is pegged at N2, 484,245.50 (US\$6,439.09) as against the official N2, 026,400.00 (US\$5,252.37) stated by the RMAFC. While the difference in the figure seems marginal, some are widely different with some allowances not captured by the official pay but claimed to be payable to the legislators by Sagay. For example, while the official newspaper allowance is put at N303, 960.00 (US\$787.86) for a Senator

and N297,781.00 (US\$771.84) for a House member, Sagay claimed that a Senator gets a whopping N1, 242, 122.70 (US\$3,219.55) for newspapers annually. In addition, the RMAFC in its official payment breakdown did not make provision for hardship allowance; Sagay claimed that a Senator takes N1, 242, 122.70 (US\$3,219.55) for such. In the same vein, another report of the bogus remuneration of the legislators worthy of note is the one put forward by the Economic Confidential. The NGO claimed that aside from the official remuneration packages of the federal legislators, they corruptly appropriate non-regular allowances for themselves. The table also shows the overall entitlements of the principal officers of both chambers. Despite public outcry and press triggering the Freedom of Information Act in this regard, the National Assembly refuses to publicly declare the actual salaries and allowances of the legislators. (Haliu A. H. & Bakare A.R. (2020).

### **The Legislature and Corruption**

Corruption remains one of the most persistent and debilitating challenges facing Nigeria's political, economic, and social landscapes. The Nigerian legislature, which comprises the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives), serves as a crucial site where laws are made, public policy is developed, and oversight of the executive is performed. Unfortunately, this institution has frequently been associated with corruption, undermining democratic governance, eroding public trust, and stifling socio-economic development. This paper explores the forms and dimensions of corruption within the Nigerian legislature, analyzes the causes and implications of this pervasive issue, and suggests potential reforms for promoting accountability and transparency. Corruption can be broadly defined as the abuse of power or position for personal gain, frequently manifesting in bribery, embezzlement, favouritism, and influence peddling (Transparency International, 2021). Within the context of legislatures, corruption may involve lawmakers engaging in illicit practices that compromise their responsibilities to the electorate and the broader public interest.

- This is the most common form of corruption in the legislature, where lawmakers accept payments to support or block specific legislation or government initiatives (Adebayo, 2020).
- Legislators may divert public funds earmarked for projects or services for personal use or non-transparent allocations, often justifying it through inflated project costs or ghost contracts (Ikpechukwu, 2020).
- Some lawmakers have been implicated in the creation of fictitious employees on the payroll, thus siphoning off salary payments intended for non-existent individuals (Okwuosa, 2020).
- Legislators may leverage their positions to influence government contracts and policies, often favouring companies in which they have a vested interest (Ameh, 2019).

### **Causes of Corruption in the Nigerian Legislature**

- The lack of robust accountability mechanisms and institutions facilitates corruption. Oversight bodies often lack the independence and authority to perform audits and investigations into legislative activities (Adebayo, 2020).
- The existing legal framework often fails to hold corrupt legislators accountable. Many lawmakers operate under a veil of impunity, believing they are shielded from prosecution due to their political status (Ezeani, 2018).
- High levels of poverty and socio-economic inequality create environments conducive to corruption. Legislators, often from marginalized backgrounds, may view corruption as a means of ascending the socio-economic ladder (Ikpechukwu, 2020).
- Political campaigns in Nigeria frequently require immense financial resources. As a result, many legislators turn to corrupt practices to recoup their investments in the political system (Okwuosa, 2020).
- Widespread acceptance of corruption as a part of everyday life often referred to colloquially as “settling” or “greasing palms,” undermines efforts to combat corrupt practices. This normalization of corruption can influence lawmakers’ actions and decisions (Bello, 2020).

- Citizens often lack the information and platforms necessary to hold legislators accountable, creating a disconnect between constituents and lawmakers (Ameh, 2019).

### **Implications of Corruption in the Nigerian Legislature**

The prevalence of corruption within the legislature contributes significantly to the erosion of public trust in the political system. Citizens who perceive corruption among their elected representatives may withdraw from political engagement and civic participation, leading to apathy or disenfranchisement (Ezeani, 2018). When lawmakers are seen as self-serving rather than representative of their constituents' interests, public confidence in governance diminishes.

Corruption within the legislature often results in ineffective governance. Legislators distracted by personal gain may neglect their legislative responsibilities, impairing policy implementation and oversight of the executive branch (Bello, 2020). This failure to govern effectively exacerbates socio-economic problems, stifling national development and perpetuating poverty. Corrupt practices lead to the diversion of public funds from essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure development (Ikpechukwu, 2020). Ghost projects or inflated contracts siphon resources that could otherwise contribute to improving citizens' living standards. Corruption deters both domestic and foreign investment, as potential investors may avoid markets perceived as corrupt (Okwuosa, 2020). This lack of investment stunts economic growth and job creation.

### **Addressing Corruption in the Nigerian Legislature**

Establishing independent anti-corruption agencies with the mandate to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption among legislators is crucial (Adebayo, 2020). These bodies should operate free from political interference to ensure accountability. Introducing reforms aimed at increasing transparency in the legislative process, such as mandatory disclosure of lawmakers' financial records, can help curb corruption (Ikpechukwu, 2020). Educating the public about the negative impacts of corruption and fostering a culture of accountability is critical (Bello, 2020). Engaging civil society organizations can amplify citizens' voices and create platforms for dialogue with lawmakers. Encouraging organizations and advocacy groups to monitor the legislative processes and financial dealings of lawmakers can provide additional layers of accountability (Ameh, 2019).

Establishing regulations that govern campaign financing can help limit the extent of corruption in political campaigns and reduce the financial pressures that contribute to corrupt behaviours among lawmakers (Okwuosa, 2020). Implementing a publicly funded electoral system might reduce candidates' dependency on wealthy donors and interest groups, fostering a reliance on voter support rather than corrupt practices to secure financial backing (Ezeani, 2018).

Corruption within the Nigerian legislature poses a significant threat to the integrity of the democratic process and the socio-economic development of the country. The various forms of corruption undermine public trust, deter effective governance, and exacerbate poverty and inequality. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach encompassing institutional reforms, enhanced civic engagement, and comprehensive political financing regulations.

By fostering transparency, accountability, and public participation, Nigeria can work towards a legislative system that genuinely represents the interests of its citizens and contributes to the country's development. Without serious reforms and sustained efforts to combat corruption, the prospects for genuine democratic governance remain bleak.

### **The Legislature, Performance and Effective Service Delivery**

The Nigerian legislature, which comprises the National Assembly with its two houses—the Senate and the House of Representatives—plays a central role in the governance and democratic process of Nigeria. Given its constitutional responsibility for law-making, representation, and oversight of the executive branch, the



performance of the legislature is critical to effective service delivery across the country. This paper explores the performance of the Nigerian legislature concerning its mandate and assesses how effectively it has delivered on its responsibilities in terms of governance and public service.

The National Assembly of Nigeria is a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate, with 109 members, represents the three geopolitical zones of the country, while the House of Representatives comprises 360 members elected to represent constituencies. The primary functions of the Nigerian legislature include:

- The legislature is responsible for crafting, debating, and passing laws that govern the country. This includes formulating policies across various sectors, including education, health, and infrastructure.
- Legislators represent their constituents' interests at the national level, acting as intermediaries between the populace and the government.
- The legislature exercises oversight over the executive branch, scrutinizing government actions, budgets, and policies to ensure accountability and transparency (Adebayo, 2020).
- The National Assembly has the authority to approve the national budget, which determines how public funds are allocated and spent (Ikpechukwu, 2020).

### **Performance of the Nigerian Legislature**

The performance of the Nigerian legislature can be measured by its legislative output—namely, the number and quality of laws passed. Notably, the 9th National Assembly (2019-2023) aimed to make significant progress by prioritizing key bills in areas such as economic diversification, health, and security (Okwuosa, 2020).

The National Assembly has enacted pivotal laws affecting various sectors, such as the Petroleum Industry Act and the Electoral Act, which directly impact Nigeria's governance framework (Bello, 2021). However, the legislative process is often hindered by corruption and lack of political will. Delays in the passage of critical bills, political disagreements, and inadequate follow-ups on legislation have undermined effective service delivery (Odebiyi, 2019).

Effective representation is a cornerstone of legislative performance. Legislators are expected to advocate for their constituents' needs and ensure their voices are heard at the national level. While many legislators engage actively with their constituents, the extent of such engagement varies. Some legislators prioritize regular town hall meetings and feedback mechanisms, while others are often criticized for being inaccessible (Ayoob, 2020). Reports indicate that the legislature's accountability has been challenged by allegations of corruption and misuse of funds. In 2020, Transparency International ranked Nigeria poorly on corruption perception, reflecting on the public's scepticism toward lawmakers' ability to perform their duties effectively (Transparency International, 2021).

Oversight is essential for effective governance and service delivery, and the Nigerian legislature has a constitutional mandate to monitor the executive's performance. The National Assembly conducts investigations and holds hearings to ensure transparency in government actions. Committees play a crucial role in holding the executive accountable, as they are in charge of examining budgets and policies (Ezeani, 2018). Nonetheless, challenges persist in the oversight function. Political considerations often affect legislative scrutiny, leading to a reluctance to challenge the executive, particularly when the same political party governs both branches. This can result in inadequate checks and balances (Adebayo, 2020).

**Effective Service Delivery: The Impact of Legislation** -The National Assembly has passed laws aimed at improving healthcare, such as the National Health Act, which establishes a framework for enhancing health service delivery and access to care (Ikpechukwu, 2020). Legislative initiatives have focused on education funding

and reforms, though challenges remain with the implementation of policies that directly benefit educational institutions (Odebiyi, 2019).

The legislature also plays a role in addressing pressing social issues, including poverty alleviation and youth empowerment. Legislative actions focused on enhancing social welfare programs have the potential for significant positive impacts on service delivery. Laws supporting social intervention programs aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment have been enacted, with some success reported in reaching vulnerable populations (Bello, 2021). Engaging in legislative actions that promote infrastructure investment indicates a proactive approach to addressing citizens' needs. However, execution often faces challenges due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption within the executive branch (Okwuosa, 2020).

Corruption remains one of the most significant barriers to effective legislative performance. Allegations of bribery, embezzlement, and fraudulent contracts cloud the integrity of the legislature, undermining citizens' trust. Instances of legislators engaging in corrupt activities for personal gain can detract from their focus on legislative responsibilities (Adebayo, 2020). The perception of widespread corruption within the legislative framework contributes to the citizens' distrust of government institutions, complicating service delivery efforts (Ikpechukwu, 2020).

Political instability, often fueled by inter-party conflicts and struggles for power, adversely affects the legislative agenda. Frequent disruptions of legislative sessions due to political disagreements can stall debate on crucial bills and hinder legislative efficiency (Ayoob, 2020). Political considerations often lead lawmakers to prioritize short-term electoral gain over long-term policy development, impacting the sustainability of legislative initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery (Odebiyi, 2019).

To enhance the performance of the Nigerian legislature and ensure effective service delivery, several reforms can be implemented: Enforcing stringent anti-corruption measures and promoting transparency in legislative actions are crucial steps toward restoring public trust (Bello, 2021). Establishing independent oversight bodies to monitor legislative activities and uphold accountability can promote greater integrity within the legislature (Ezeani, 2018). Legislators should engage in regular dialogue with their constituents, facilitating feedback mechanisms and town hall meetings to better understand the needs of the people they represent (Ayoob, 2020). Raising awareness around legislative processes can empower citizens to hold their representatives accountable, promoting a culture of transparency and participatory governance (Ikpechukwu, 2020). Simplifying legislative procedures can improve efficiency in law-making, allowing for quicker responses to pressing national needs (Odebiyi, 2019). Legislators should prioritize developing policies that have long-term implications for service delivery rather than succumbing to short-term political pressures (Bello, 2021).

The Nigerian legislature serves a vital role in the country's governance and effective service delivery. While it has made significant strides in law-making and representation, performance is often hampered by corruption, political instability, and ineffective oversight. To improve legislative performance and ensure that service delivery objectives are met, embracing transparency, accountability, and active citizen engagement is essential. By reforming institutional practices and fostering closer relationships with constituents, the Nigerian legislature can work toward a more effective governance structure that meets the needs of its citizenry.

In the whole of 2021, Nigerian senators held plenary sessions for just 66 days. (Premium Times 2nd January, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic is not a good excuse to stay away from national duties yet collect full allowances and salaries. According to Section 63 of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, lawmakers of both the Senate and the House of Representatives are to "sit for not less than 181 days in a year." In 2019, the National Assembly sat for 149 days, "They have had two months' vacation, 56 days public holiday, 42 days Yuletide, 49 days coronavirus break, (Premium Times 30th August, 2020).

Nigeria's legislature has been plagued with poor performance and low service delivery since 1999. Despite being a vital component of the country's democratic system, the Nigerian legislature has consistently failed to fulfil its responsibilities and deliver quality service to its citizens. This failure has had detrimental effects on the country's overall development and has hindered progress in various sectors. In this essay, we will examine the reasons behind the poor performance of Nigeria's legislature, as well as specific instances where their inefficiency has been evident since the country's return to democracy in 1999.

Firstly, it is essential to understand the role of the legislature in a democratic system. In Nigeria, the legislative arm of government is responsible for making laws that promote the welfare and development of the country. They are also responsible for overseeing the executive arm of government and ensuring that they are held accountable for their actions. In essence, the legislature is meant to serve as a check on the other arms of government and ultimately work towards achieving the best interests of the people. However, in Nigeria's case, the legislature has failed to fulfil this critical role.

One of the main reasons for the poor performance of Nigeria's legislature is the prevalence of corruption and unethical practices. Corruption has become a deeply rooted issue in every aspect of Nigerian society, and the legislature is no exception. Members of the legislature have been known to engage in corrupt practices such as embezzlement of public funds, bribery, and kickbacks. This has resulted in a lack of transparency and accountability in the legislature, leading to a loss of public trust and confidence in their ability to serve their constituents effectively.

Furthermore, the lack of political will to implement necessary reforms and enact laws that will benefit the country has also contributed to the legislature's poor performance. The Nigerian legislature is composed of politicians who are more focused on their interests and maintaining their positions of power rather than working for the betterment of the country. This selfish attitude has resulted in the passage of laws that benefit the political elites rather than the general population. For instance, in 2018, the National Assembly attempted to amend the constitution to provide immunity for legislators from prosecution for corruption-related offences. This move was met with widespread criticism and was eventually dropped due to public outcry. Such actions only serve to highlight the legislature's lack of concern for the country's development and the welfare of its citizens.

Moreover, the legislative process in Nigeria is often riddled with delays, inefficiency, and a lack of proper coordination. Bills take an excessively long time to go through the different stages of the legislative process and often end up being watered down or abandoned entirely. This has resulted in a backlog of critical bills that would have had a significant impact on the country's development. For instance, the Petroleum Industry Bill, which aims to reform the oil and gas sector, has been stuck in the legislative process for more than a decade without being passed into law, despite its potential to boost the country's economy and improve the lives of its citizens.

The poor performance of Nigeria's legislature has also had significant implications for service delivery. The lack of proper oversight and accountability in the legislative arm has led to a lack of efficiency and effectiveness in the utilization of public funds. Constituency projects, which are meant to provide basic amenities and services to citizens, often end up as avenues for corruption and embezzlement. This has resulted in a lack of development and progress in various sectors, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, which are crucial for a country's growth.

Since 1999, there have been several instances where the legislature's inefficiency and poor performance have been evident. In 2016, the Senate President, Bukola Saraki, and his deputy, Ike Ekweremadu, were charged with forgery of the Senate standing rules, a case that dragged on for years and eventually fizzled out without any convictions. This incident not only highlighted the corruption within the legislature but also caused significant

distractions to the work of the National Assembly. This delay in the legislative process has had a direct impact on the country's development.

Another instance of the legislature's poor performance was the 2018 budget padding scandal, where the National Assembly was accused of inflating the budget by over 500 billion naira. This revelation not only highlighted their lack of transparency but also raised concerns about the misuse of public funds at the expense of service delivery and development.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Assembly members were caught flouting the lockdown and travel restrictions imposed by the government to attend a wedding in violation of social distancing rules, further showcasing their disregard for the rule of law and setting a bad example for the citizens they represent.

In conclusion, the poor performance and low service delivery of Nigeria's legislature since 1999 have had dire consequences for the country's development. Corruption, lack of political will, delays in the legislative process, and a lack of proper oversight and accountability have all played a significant role in hindering the legislature's ability to fulfil its responsibilities effectively. Necessary reforms must be implemented to address these issues and ensure that the legislature serves its purpose as a critical component of Nigeria's democratic system. Only then can we see real progress and development for the country and its people.

Despite facing several challenges, it has made significant progress in various areas, contributing to the growth and development of the nation. In this essay, we will discuss the areas in which the Nigerian Legislature has done well and made reasonable progress.

One of the primary areas in which the Nigerian Legislature has excelled is in the passage of bills and laws that promote good governance and address societal issues. The National Assembly has passed several bills that have had a positive impact on the country. For instance, the Pension Reform Act of 2004, which established a new contributory pension scheme, has improved the welfare and living standards of retired civil servants. This law has also helped to curb corruption in the pension scheme, ensuring that retirees receive their entitlements promptly. Furthermore, the Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011, which was enacted to combat the rising threat of terrorism in the country, has helped to reduce the incidence of terrorist attacks and maintain peace and stability.

The Nigerian Legislature has also been active in addressing gender inequality by championing the cause of women's rights and empowerment. The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, which seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and promote their participation in decision-making processes, was passed by the Senate in 2018. This is a significant step towards achieving gender equality in Nigeria. Additionally, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015, which was widely supported by female legislators, criminalizes various forms of violence against women, including rape, sexual harassment, and female genital mutilation. The passage of these laws demonstrates the Legislature's commitment to promoting gender equality and protecting the rights of women.

Moreover, the Nigerian Legislature has made reasonable progress in the fight against corruption, which has been a significant issue in the country for decades. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act of 2003, which established the EFCC to investigate financial crimes, has helped to reduce the level of corruption in the public and private sectors. The Whistle-Blowers Protection Act of 2017 is another significant achievement in the fight against corruption. This law provides a framework for the protection of persons who disclose information on corrupt practices and has encouraged more people to come forward with information on corruption cases. In recent years, the National Assembly has also passed laws that promote transparency and accountability, such as the Public Procurement Act of 2007 and the Freedom of Information Act of 2011.

Furthermore, the Nigerian Legislature has played a crucial role in promoting peace and democracy in the country. The Electoral Act of 2010, which has been amended several times, has helped to improve the electoral process

by introducing measures to ensure free, fair, and credible elections. The Electoral Act Amendment Bill of 2018, which was recently passed by the National Assembly, seeks to make further improvements to the electoral process, including the use of technology to enhance transparency and credibility. The successful conduct of the 2019 general elections, which were largely peaceful and well-organized, can be attributed to the efforts of the Legislature to provide a legal framework for the conduct of elections.

The Nigerian Legislature has also worked to protect the rights of marginalized groups and promote social justice. The National Health Act of 2014, for example, provides for the provision of basic healthcare services to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as women and children. The bill also establishes the National Health Insurance Scheme to provide health insurance coverage for all Nigerians, particularly those in rural and underserved areas. This is a significant step towards achieving universal health coverage and ensuring that every Nigerian has access to quality healthcare.

Moreover, the Nigerian Legislature has made significant progress in the area of education through the passage of laws that promote equal access to education and improve the quality of education. The Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 guarantees free and compulsory education for all children in Nigeria, and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Act of 2011 has increased access to tertiary education by providing funding for infrastructure development and staff training. The Legislature has also passed laws that promote the rights of persons with disabilities, such as the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018, which prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and ensures their full and equal participation in society. Therefore, the Nigerian Legislature has made commendable progress in several areas, contributing to the growth and development of the nation. From enacting laws that promote good governance and address societal issues to championing the cause of gender equality and promoting peace and democracy, the Legislature has played a vital role in shaping Nigerian society. However, there are still areas where improvements can be made, such as enhancing the oversight functions of the National Assembly and addressing the high rate of legislative turnover. Overall, the Nigerian Legislature deserves recognition for its efforts in making laws that have positively impacted the nation and its people.

### **The Legislature and Public Perception**

The Nigerian legislature, composed of the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives), plays a crucial role in the governance and democratic processes of the country. However, its effectiveness and the public's perception of it have been subjects of considerable debate. This essay explores the relationship between the Nigerian legislature and public perception, examining factors influencing this perception, the challenges faced by the legislature, and its implications for democracy in Nigeria.

The Nigerian legislature has a complex history that reflects the country's turbulent political landscape. Established in 1954, the legislature has undergone various transformations, particularly after Nigeria's independence in 1960. The military coups of the 1960s and 1980s interrupted democratic governance, significantly affecting public trust in political institutions (Aiyede, 2018). The return to civilian rule in 1999 marked a renewed interest in democratic governance, yet the public perception of the legislature remains mixed, characterized by scepticism and disillusionment.

One of the predominant factors influencing public perception of the Nigerian legislature is corruption. Numerous reports and surveys have highlighted the pervasive nature of corruption within the legislative body. For instance, a Transparency International report in 2020 indicated that 70% of Nigerians believed that corruption was rampant in government institutions, including the legislature (Transparency International, 2020). This perception is often fueled by high-profile corruption cases involving lawmakers, leading to a general sentiment that legislators prioritize personal gain over public service.



Another significant issue contributing to negative public perception is the perceived lack of accountability. Many citizens feel that legislators are not sufficiently answerable to their constituents. This disconnect is exacerbated by the failure of elected representatives to deliver on campaign promises, leading to widespread frustration among the electorate (Afolabi, 2021). The lack of effective mechanisms to hold legislators accountable diminishes trust in the institution, as citizens increasingly view their representatives as disconnected from their needs.

The effectiveness of the legislature in addressing pressing national issues also influences public perception. Criticism often arises regarding the slow pace of legislative processes and the perceived ineffectiveness of lawmakers in responding to the socio-economic challenges facing the country. For example, issues such as poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure deficits remain largely unaddressed despite legislative assurances (Obe, 2019). This perceived failure to act on critical issues further erodes public confidence in the legislative body.

The media plays a vital role in shaping public perception of the legislature. Coverage of legislative activities, particularly controversies and scandals, often receives significant attention, overshadowing positive legislative achievements. As a result, public perception tends to be more negative, as media portrayals can skew the public's understanding of the legislature's overall performance (Omoera, 2020). Additionally, sensationalist reporting may lead to a generalized view of all legislators as corrupt and ineffective, neglecting the efforts of those who strive to fulfil their duties responsibly.

The Nigerian legislature faces numerous challenges that further complicate public perception. Political instability, party loyalty over constituency interest, and inadequate funding are significant hurdles. Political parties often emphasize loyalty over performance, leading to a lack of independent thinking among lawmakers (Nwankwo, 2022). Furthermore, budget constraints can limit the legislature's ability to function effectively, affecting its capacity to engage in meaningful oversight and representation.

Internal conflicts within the legislature, including factionalism and rivalry between the Senate and the House of Representatives, often hinder legislative productivity. These conflicts can result in gridlock on critical issues, contributing to public frustration and disillusionment (Uche, 2021). When the public perceives legislators as more focused on internal power struggles than on governance, it diminishes trust in the institution.

Public perception of the legislature is crucial for the functioning of democracy in Nigeria. A legislature viewed as corrupt and ineffective undermines democratic principles, leading to apathy among voters. This can result in lower voter turnout and disengagement from the political process, perpetuating a cycle of poor governance (Ezeani, 2020). For democracy to thrive, the legislature needs to rebuild public trust through transparency, accountability, and effective representation.

The Nigerian legislature faces significant challenges that impact public perception. Factors such as corruption, inefficiency, lack of accountability, and media representation contribute to a negative image of lawmakers in the eyes of the public. Addressing these issues is vital for restoring confidence in the legislature and strengthening Nigeria's democracy. By fostering a culture of transparency and responsiveness, the Nigerian legislature can enhance its legitimacy and better serve the interests of its constituents.

The public perception of the Nigerian Legislature is very negative. The Cable in 2017 reported that for 18 good years, the best-kept secret in our country was how much each member of the National Assembly was taking home every month. That was a self-inflicted problem that impacted negatively on the image of this vital arm of government whose members are touted as receiving one of the highest remunerations in the world. Yet, there are more issues. From certificate and bribery scandals to allegations of budget padding and rowdy sessions that sometimes degenerate into fisticuff, every negative episode involving members only serves to erode the credibility

of the legislature. And the situation is not helped by how personal issues are given primacy in the National Assembly.

The Nigerian legislature has often been plagued by criticism and negative public perception. One of the key issues that have contributed to the negative perception of the Nigerian legislature is corruption. Corruption has been a longstanding problem in Nigeria, and the legislature has been no exception. There have been numerous reports of lawmakers engaging in corrupt practices, such as embezzlement of public funds, bribery, and influence-peddling. These practices not only undermine the credibility of the legislature but also erode public trust in the government as a whole.

One of the most high-profile cases of corruption involving the Nigerian legislature was the scandal surrounding the mismanagement of funds allocated for the renovation of the National Assembly complex in 2020. The Senate and House of Representatives had approved a budget of over N37 billion for the renovation project, which sparked outrage among the public, given the economic challenges facing the country at the time. It was later revealed that the funds were misappropriated, with little to no progress made on the renovation of the complex. This incident further tarnished the image of the legislature and reinforced the perception of corruption within its ranks.

Furthermore, the issue of lack of accountability has also contributed to the negative perception of the Nigerian legislature. Lawmakers are often perceived as being unaccountable to the people they represent, with many citizens feeling disconnected from the legislative process. There have been instances where lawmakers have failed to fulfil their campaign promises, neglected their constituencies, or mismanaged public resources without facing any consequences. This lack of accountability only serves to deepen public mistrust in the legislative institution. Another factor that has fueled negative public perception of the Nigerian legislature is the perception of lawmakers as being more concerned with their interests rather than the interests of the people. Many lawmakers have been accused of prioritizing their own financial gain or political survival over the welfare of their constituents. This perception is further reinforced by the lavish lifestyles of some lawmakers, including expensive cars, luxury properties, and foreign trips, which are often seen as out of touch with the realities of ordinary Nigerians.

The issue of legislative inefficiency has also contributed to the negative perception of the Nigerian legislature. Lawmaking in Nigeria is often characterized by delays, inefficiencies, and gridlock, with many bills taking years to be passed or not being passed at all. This inefficiency has hindered the legislature's ability to address critical issues facing the country, such as insecurity, unemployment, and poverty. As a result, many Nigerians see the legislature as ineffective and incapable of delivering on its mandates.

Despite the challenges facing the Nigerian legislature, there have been some efforts to improve its image and effectiveness. One of the key reforms that have been proposed is the need for greater transparency and accountability in the legislative process. This includes measures such as making lawmakers' assets and incomes public, passing anti-corruption laws, and establishing mechanisms for public oversight of the legislature. By holding lawmakers accountable for their actions and decisions, the hope is that public trust in the legislature can be restored.

Another area of reform is the need for better representation of marginalized groups in the legislature. Women, youth, and minority groups are often underrepresented in the Nigerian legislature, which can lead to the neglect of their interests and concerns. Efforts to increase diversity and inclusivity in the legislature can help to ensure that a broader range of voices are heard and that the legislature is more reflective of the country's diverse population.

Hence, the Nigerian legislature plays a vital role in the country's governance system, but it has often been plagued by corruption, lack of accountability, inefficiency, and self-interest. These issues have contributed to the negative perception of the legislature among the public.

### **The Nigerian Legislature vis-à-vis Legislatures in other part of the globe**

The Nigerian legislature, comprising the National Assembly with its Senate and House of Representatives, plays a pivotal role in shaping the country's governance. However, its structure, functioning, and public perception vary significantly when compared to legislative bodies in other parts of the globe. This essay explores the characteristics of the Nigerian legislature concerning several legislative frameworks worldwide, focusing on its composition, functions, challenges, and the political culture surrounding it.

The Nigerian legislature is bicameral, a structure shared with several other nations, including the United States and the United Kingdom. The Senate has 109 members, while the House of Representatives consists of 360 members. This structure aims to provide representation for various regions and constituencies (Igbokwe, 2019). In contrast, some countries, like Sweden and Denmark, have unicameral legislatures, which streamline the legislative process by eliminating the need for bicameral negotiation (Wiberg, 2017). Unicameral systems can sometimes lead to more efficient law-making processes, as seen in Sweden, where the Riksdag often acts swiftly to pass legislation. The efficiency of a unicameral system is often cited as a reason for its effectiveness in representing public interests more directly.

The primary functions of the Nigerian legislature include law-making, oversight of the executive, and representation of constituents. However, the effectiveness of these functions is often questioned. For example, the legislature has been criticized for its inability to enact significant reforms or respond to pressing national issues, such as security challenges and economic instability (Aiyede, 2020).

In contrast, legislatures in countries like Canada and Germany have demonstrated more robust oversight capabilities. In Canada, the House of Commons plays an active role in scrutinizing government actions, with committees regularly holding hearings and producing reports that influence public policy (Smith, 2018). Similarly, the German Bundestag has substantial power over the executive branch, with mechanisms to hold it accountable through various oversight functions.

Public perception of the Nigerian legislature is generally negative, marked by widespread beliefs about corruption and inefficiency. According to a 2020 Transparency International report, a significant portion of the Nigerian populace views the legislature as corrupt, impacting trust in democratic institutions (Transparency International, 2020). This lack of trust can lead to voter apathy and disengagement from the political process, as citizens feel their representatives are not serving their interests. In contrast, countries like New Zealand have higher public trust in their legislative bodies. The New Zealand Parliament has made significant efforts to enhance transparency and public engagement, which has fostered greater public confidence (Morris, 2019). By emphasizing accountability and citizen involvement, New Zealand's legislature exemplifies a model that can effectively counteract public cynicism.

The Nigerian legislature faces several challenges, including political instability, inadequate funding, and internal conflicts. Political party loyalty often supersedes constituent interests, leading to inefficiencies in governance (Nwankwo, 2022). Additionally, internal conflicts among party factions can result in legislative gridlock, stalling critical legislation. Comparatively, the U.S. Congress also grapples with partisan divisions, particularly in recent years, which have led to significant legislative standstills (Friedman, 2021). However, the U.S. system incorporates mechanisms like bipartisan committees that can sometimes facilitate negotiation and compromise. While both legislatures face challenges, the institutional frameworks in other countries often provide mechanisms for better conflict resolution and negotiation.

The culture surrounding the Nigerian legislature often reflects broader societal issues, including tribalism and regionalism. These factors can complicate legislative processes, as lawmakers may prioritize ethnic or regional interests over national unity (Obe, 2019). This is particularly evident in debates over resource allocation and representation, where regional interests can overshadow national priorities. In contrast, countries like Switzerland utilize a consensus-based approach to governance, fostering a culture of collaboration among diverse political groups. The Swiss Federal Assembly operates on principles that emphasize compromise and collective decision-making, which enhances political stability and accountability (Hug, 2020). This approach stands in stark contrast to the often adversarial nature of Nigerian politics, which can hinder collaborative governance.

The Nigerian legislature operates within a complex framework influenced by historical, cultural, and political factors. While its bicameral structure and functions resemble those of other global legislatures, significant challenges in public perception, accountability, and efficiency set it apart. Lessons can be drawn from the legislative practices of other countries, particularly regarding transparency, public engagement, and consensus-building. By adopting these practices, the Nigerian legislature can enhance its effectiveness and rebuild public trust, thereby strengthening the democratic fabric of the nation.

Moreover, the legislatures in Africa are victims of the dynamics of historical exigencies. They were created to be weak, and the legacy of legislatures' subservience to executive control has remained entrenched years after independence. Post-independence political and constitutional developments in many African states further reinforced the weakness. Thus, legislative institutions have suffered outright abolition, suspension or dissolution (and put in abeyance) in the aftermath of successive coup d'état in various parts of Africa. Where they exist, their effectiveness as mechanisms for popular control of governments has been threatened by patrimonial one-party or one-party dominance rule. In many states, they have remained visible, being the main symbol of democracy, but with reduced powers and significance about the executive arm of government which has come to take the front seat in any analysis of the reality of domestic power relations. (Alabi 2009).

The Council on Foreign Relations in 2018 said the Nigerian media has long reported that Nigerian parliamentarians are the most highly paid in the world. Comparison with compensation paid to U.S. senators and representatives might be instructive. U.S. senators or representatives earn a salary of \$174,000 per year. They also receive health insurance, and life insurance, and are enrolled in social security. For these senators must pay premiums out of their salary. U.S. senators and representatives, like their Nigerian counterparts, also receive official allowances. This amount varies according to particular circumstances, such as committee chairmanships, and senators receive more than representatives. In 2010, one estimate was that an average senator received \$3.3 million in allowances to cover staff salaries, office space, postage, and myriad other expenses. Notably, no lodging per diem is paid. Hence, a member of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives receives far more in salary and expenses than a member of the Nigerian National Assembly. Furthermore, a Nigerian politician lacks the resources available to a U.S. member of Congress, such as the fully-developed Congressional Research Service or the Library of Congress. That being said, the resources at the disposal of a U.S. member of Congress are closely governed by law and regulation. By contrast, a member of the National Assembly in Nigeria, one of the poorest countries in the world, can largely spend his allowances in any way he sees fit. Not only is parliamentary compensation in Nigeria massive compared to the overall wealth of the country, but it is largely unregulated and subject to abuse. Levels of parliamentary compensation in Nigeria are so high that there is an understanding that service in the National Assembly is an aspect of patronage/clientage relationships and should be rotated between ethnic groups, local regions, and religions. This is one reason why, following each national election, more than sixty per cent of parliamentarians are new.

According to the Premium Times July 2013, The Economist's review of lawmakers' salaries in 29 nations unsurprisingly hurled Nigeria up the pay rungs, at \$189, 500 (about N30 million) on average annually for each Senator or member of the House of Representatives. The figure is second only to Australia. Relative to each country's per capita- how much each citizen of each nation is worth when their nation's total wealth is shared by her population- Nigeria assumed its rightful top, followed by Kenya and Ghana, two other poor African nations, relative to other matched countries. Put simply, if Nigeria's national cake were shared equitably, and each of its nearly 170 million got \$1,500 (per capita) as the World Bank says, then what the lawmakers are taking is 116 times what the "ordinary" Nigerian receives. On that scale, Kenyan lawmakers take 75 times their citizens, and for Ghana, it is 29.8 times.

Down the ladder, that ratio in Norway, one of the world's most prosperous nations, is 1.8. It is 3.8 in the United States, which pays its lawmakers an average annual salary of \$174 thousand; and it is 2.7 in Britain where a Member of Parliament is paid \$105.4 thousand. When a fortnight ago, the United Kingdom's Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority mulled a raise for the MPs, to about \$113.12 thousand, some lawmakers themselves, vowed to fight the move planned for implementation in 2015. The Labour chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee, Keith Vaz, said: "The last thing MPs should be talking about is their pay rise." For all its jolt, the Nigerian story is far more heinous as the Economist's account merely considered the main salaries and allowances as stipulated by the Revenue and Fiscal Mobilization Commission, which sets lawmakers pay at a few million monthly, all allowances inclusive.

What constitutes the real chunk of the package or, what makes the Nigerian federal lawmaker different, aloofly branded "running cost" by the legislators, and called "jumbo allowance" by Nigerians, were excluded. Side by side, the "jumbo" pay alone, drawn quarterly, rates with, or easily surpasses the entire year's pay which already sets Nigeria ahead of other countries. It is the package the lawmakers have long mastered how to conceal from the public, preferring to divulge only the details of the RMFAC-approved salary.

By 2011, the Senate's quarterly "running cost" was jerked to N45 million per member, while the House members received N36 million. A hostile public response subsequently forced the earnings down to what has remained an unclear rate since. Officially, the lawmakers claimed the package was lowered by 63%, but that has been refuted by lawmakers speaking informally. Since then, the Senate and the House have refused to disclose their member's exact earnings. If such a prospect existed, it seemed foreclosed after both chambers tacitly included the National Assembly amongst several institutions like INEC and courts, given statutory allocations from the budget, meaning their funding would no longer be subject to an executive or even legislative approval. With that new status came more secrecy, as previously available spending details have been curtailed by the public. But insiders have said the farthest reduction both chambers effected at the time, must have lonely limited the Senate's "running cost" to over N30 million, and the House of Representatives to N27 million. For the four quarters annually, that would total between N100 million and N180 million respectively per member (average \$1 million and more) – far more than the earnings of lawmakers in other nations listed by the Economist.

There has been widespread criticism of the high emoluments received by Nigerian legislators in comparison to their counterparts both within Africa and globally. The salaries and allowances of Nigerian lawmakers are some of the highest in the world, drawing attention to issues of inequality, corruption, and lack of accountability. One concrete example of the high emoluments received by Nigerian legislators is their annual salary. As of 2018, a Nigerian senator earns a basic salary of about \$38,000 per annum, making them one of the highest-paid legislators in the world. In comparison, the basic salary of a US senator is around \$174,000 per annum, and a UK member of parliament earns around \$105,000 annually.



Furthermore, Nigerian lawmakers also receive numerous allowances and perks that significantly increase their overall compensation. These allowances include constituency allowances, wardrobe allowances, and estacode allowances for foreign trips, among others. These additional benefits can amount to millions of dollars per year for each legislator, further contributing to the high emoluments they receive. In contrast, lawmakers in other African countries receive significantly lower salaries and allowances. For example, the basic salary of a member of parliament in South Africa is around \$45,000 per annum, while in Kenya, it is around \$30,000 per annum. This disparity in compensation highlights the excessive nature of Nigerian legislators' emoluments compared to their counterparts in other African countries.

The high emoluments of Nigerian lawmakers have been a subject of controversy and public outcry, particularly in a country where a large percentage of the population lives below the poverty line. Critics argue that these excessive salaries and allowances are not justified and reflect a culture of corruption and self-enrichment among Nigerian politicians. Hence, the high emoluments received by Nigerian legislators in comparison to others within and outside Africa are a clear indication of the resource allocation priorities and governance challenges in the country. The disparity in compensation further underscores the need for greater transparency, accountability, and reform in the Nigerian political system to ensure that public resources are used for the benefit of all citizens.

### **The Legislature as Retirement Haven**

The Nigerian legislature has more or less become a retirement haven for ex-governors, ex-military top brass, sons and daughters of political bigwigs and sorts of such characters. Thisday Newspaper reported in 2022 that No fewer than 28 serving and former governors have been elected as senatorial candidates at the just concluded primaries of the various political parties ahead of the 2023 National Assembly election. The new set of senatorial hopefuls who are, currently serving as governors, are AminuTambuwal (Sokoto), IfeanyiUgwuanyi (Enugu) Dave Umahi (Ebonyi), Darius Ishaku (Taraba), Samuel Ortom (Benue), OkezieIkpeazu (Abia), Sani Bello (Niger), Ibrahim Dankwambo (Gombe), Simon Lalong (Plateau), and AtikuBagudu (Kebbi). Former governors who are already in possession of senatorial tickets are, AbdulazizYari (Zamfara), Adams Oshiomhole ((Edo), Gbenga Daniel (Ogun), and GodswillAkpabio (Akwa Ibom).

The former and serving governors will be joining the serving ones in the 9th Senate including AliyuWamakko (Sokoto), Sam Egwu (Ebonyi), Orji Kalu (Abia) Gabriel Suswan (Benue), AdamuAliero (Kebbi), Ibrahim Shekarau (Kano), and SaminuTuraki (Jigawa). Others are: Seriake Dickson (Bayelsa), Ibrahim Gaidam (Yobe), KashimShettima (Borno), DanjumaGoje (Gombe), TankoAlmakura (Nasarawa), ChimarokeNnamani (Enugu), and Kabiru Gaya (Kano).

While some of the serving governors allegedly manipulated the electoral process in their desperate moves to become senators at all costs, one of the former governors currently in the 9th Senate had to defect to another political party when he could not secure the ticket of his party. Specifically, a former governor of Kebbi State, Aliero, dumped the All Progressives Congress (APC) to pick the Kebbi Central senatorial ticket on the platform of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party.

The situation implies that the former governors would constitute about 25 per cent of the 109-member 10th Senate. The decision of the governors to retire into the red chamber had contributed immensely to the loss of institutional memory currently hampering the activities of the apex legislative body in the country as the state chief executives are going there to displace the highly experienced, ranking lawmakers, who are even chairmen of critical committees of the Senate.

Also, in 2019, The Punch Newspaper reported that the Global Centre for Conscious Living Against Corruption warned that the Senate should not be turned to what it called “a retirement home for suspected looters.” The centre’s Director-General, Dr Nwambu Gabriel, made the call in Abuja at a Press conference tagged “Before our

esteemed Senate becomes a haven for some corrupt ex-governors.” Gabriel expressed concerns that the National Assembly, particularly the Senate, is “deteriorating to a haven” for former governors who he said are currently being prosecuted by the nation’s anti-corruption agencies. He said the Senate has been confronted with lots of integrity questions because of the development. He said there was the need for political parties to begin to prevent corrupt former governors or politicians, especially those still standing trial over alleged corruption, from seeking “refuge” in the National Assembly. Gabriel said, as of the last count, about 15 ex-governors who are standing corruption trial are in the Senate. He said, “The Senate should not be a retirement home for looters. “Although former governors standing trial on corruption charges are presumed innocent until proven guilty by a court of competent jurisdiction, some people still argued that it is morally wrong to field such persons to run for any public office.” He argued that the high turnover of alleged corrupt former governors and others will continue to paint the Senate black. He added, “It is, however, worthy to note that the perceived bad image of the Senate did not start with the 7th or the 8th Senate, but it has been with us since the Fourth Republic’s Senate. “But this is not a good reason to continue to live with this embedded virus in the political system of the most populous Black nation in the world. “A former Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Nuhu Aliyu, once stunned his colleagues on the floor of the Senate when he claimed in his outburst that it was a breach of his privilege as a senator to sit in the same chamber with somebody he (Aliyu) arrested for fraud while in office.

One of the key implications of making the National Assembly a retirement place for spent forces is the impact on governance in Nigeria. When individuals who have already served in various capacities in government are elected to the National Assembly, they bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. However, this can also lead to a lack of fresh ideas and perspectives, as these individuals may be more focused on maintaining the status quo rather than driving change and innovation. Additionally, having a National Assembly filled with spent forces can create a culture of complacency and entitlement, as these individuals may feel that they are entitled to their position based on their past service rather than their current performance. This can lead to a lack of accountability and transparency in governance, as these individuals may be less likely to be held to the same standards as their younger and less experienced counterparts.

Furthermore, having a National Assembly filled with spent forces can also lead to a lack of diversity and representation in government. When the same individuals continue to hold positions of power, it can limit the voices and perspectives that are represented in the decision-making process. This can result in policies and laws that do not adequately reflect the needs and interests of the population as a whole. Another implication of making the National Assembly a retirement place for spent forces is the impact on representation in government. When the same individuals continue to hold positions of power, it can limit the opportunities for new and diverse voices to be heard in the decision-making process. This can result in a lack of representation for marginalized groups, as well as a lack of accountability to the electorate. Additionally, having a National Assembly filled with spent forces can also lead to a disconnect between the government and the people. When individuals who have already served in various capacities in government continue to hold positions of power, they may become out of touch with the needs and concerns of the population. This can result in policies and laws that do not address the issues that are most important to the people, leading to a lack of trust and confidence in the government.

Furthermore, having a National Assembly filled with spent forces can also create a sense of elitism and entitlement in government. When the same individuals continue to hold positions of power, it can send a message to the population that only a select few are qualified to lead, further perpetuating a system of nepotism and cronyism. This can result in a government that is more concerned with serving its interests rather than the interests of the people it is meant to represent. One of the biggest implications of making the National Assembly a retirement place for spent forces is the impact on accountability in government. When individuals who have already served

in various capacities in government continue to hold positions of power, they may be less likely to be held to account for their actions. This can create a culture of impunity, where those in power feel that they are above the law and can act without fear of consequences. Additionally, having a National Assembly filled with spent forces can also lead to a lack of transparency in government. When the same individuals continue to hold positions of power, they may be more likely to engage in corrupt practices and backroom deals, knowing that they will not be held accountable for their actions. This can erode public trust.

### **Summary**

There are several reasons for Nigeria's legislature's appalling performance over the years. These factors have hindered the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislative branch, limiting its ability to contribute meaningfully to nation-building and national development. Some of the key reasons for the poor performance of Nigeria's legislature include Corruption, which is a pervasive problem that has plagued Nigerian politics at all levels, including the legislature. Cases of corruption, bribery, and kickbacks have been reported among legislators, leading to a loss of public trust and confidence in the institution. Corruption undermines the credibility of the legislature and diverts resources away from critical development projects, hindering the overall performance of the legislative branch. The Nigerian legislature has faced challenges related to institutional weaknesses, including inadequate capacity, lack of independence, and limited resources. Many legislators lack the necessary expertise, training, and support to effectively carry out their legislative duties.

Additionally, the institution has often been perceived as subservient to the executive branch, compromising its independence and ability to provide effective oversight. Nigeria has experienced periods of political instability, including military coups, political crises, and electoral violence. These disruptions have affected the functioning of the legislature, leading to disruptions in legislative activities, delays in decision-making, and a lack of continuity in policy implementation. Political instability has undermined the stability and effectiveness of the legislative branch, hindering its performance over the years. Partisan politics and party loyalty often take precedence over national interests in the Nigerian legislature. Legislators may prioritize party considerations over the needs of constituents, leading to a lack of accountability and responsiveness to the people. Party loyalty can also hinder constructive debates, collaboration across party lines, and consensus-building, impacting the quality of legislation and policy-making.

Nigeria is a diverse country with various ethnic and religious groups, leading to divisions and conflicts that are often reflected in the legislature. Ethnic and religious considerations can influence legislative decisions, alliances, and priorities, leading to a lack of unity and consensus on key issues. These divisions can impede cooperation, compromise, and coordination among legislators, affecting the overall performance of the legislative branch. Transparency and accountability remain key challenges for the Nigerian legislature. Limited transparency in legislative processes, budget allocations, and decision-making can lead to corruption, inefficiency, and lack of public scrutiny. Without transparency, citizens are unable to hold their representatives accountable, leading to a lack of trust in the legislative institution. The Nigerian legislature has faced challenges related to underfunding, which has limited its capacity to perform its functions effectively. Inadequate budget allocations, lack of resources, and financial constraints have hindered the ability of the legislature to carry out oversight, conduct research, and provide necessary services to constituents. Underfunding can also lead to a lack of motivation among legislators and staff, affecting the quality of legislative work. Special interests, including business groups, lobbyists, and vested interests, can exert undue influence on legislators, compromising their independence and objectivity.

The influence of special interests can lead to the prioritization of narrow agendas, conflicts of interest, and compromised decision-making processes within the legislature. This influence can undermine the legislature's

ability to represent the broader interests of the Nigerian people. The Nigerian legislature has at times struggled to assert its independence and autonomy from the executive branch. The lack of checks and balances, separation of powers, and accountability mechanisms can weaken the legislature's ability to act as a check on the executive and provide effective oversight. Without legislative autonomy, the legislature may be unable to fulfil its constitutional role and responsibilities effectively. Public engagement and participation in the legislative process are essential for a vibrant democracy.

However, the Nigerian legislature has often been criticized for limited public engagement, lack of transparency, and inadequate communication with constituents. Without active public participation, feedback, and accountability, the legislature may lose touch with the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian people, leading to poor performance and a lack of legitimacy. Addressing these underlying issues and reforming the legislative institution are crucial steps towards improving the performance of Nigeria's legislature. By promoting transparency, accountability, professionalism, and independence, the legislature can enhance its effectiveness, strengthen democracy, and contribute meaningfully to nation-building and national development.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria's legislature has faced longstanding challenges that have contributed to its lethargic performance over the years. These issues have hindered the effectiveness, efficiency, and credibility of the legislative branch, limiting its ability to contribute meaningfully to nation-building and national development. In summary, the key reasons for Nigeria's legislature's poor performance can be attributed to corruption, institutional weaknesses, political instability, partisan politics, ethnic and religious divisions, lack of transparency, underfunding, influence of special interests, lack of legislative autonomy, and limited public engagement. Firstly, corruption has been a significant factor affecting Nigeria's legislature. Cases of corruption, bribery, and kickbacks among legislators have eroded public trust and diverted resources away from critical development initiatives. The pervasive nature of corruption has undermined the credibility of the legislature and hindered its ability to enact and enforce laws effectively. Institutional weaknesses within the legislative branch have also contributed to its lethargic performance. Inadequate capacity, lack of independence, and limited resources have posed challenges for legislators in carrying out their duties. The institution has often been perceived as subservient to the executive branch, compromising its autonomy and oversight functions. Political instability in Nigeria has had a detrimental impact on the functioning of the legislature. Periods of instability, including military coups, political crises, and electoral violence, have disrupted legislative activities, leading to delays in decision-making and a lack of continuity in policy implementation. These instabilities have affected the stability and effectiveness of the legislative branch. Partisan politics and party loyalty have often taken precedence over national interests within Nigeria's legislature. Legislators may prioritize party considerations over the needs of constituents, leading to a lack of accountability and responsiveness to the people. Party loyalty has hindered constructive debates, collaboration across party lines, and consensus-building, affecting the quality of legislation and policy-making. Ethnic and religious divisions in Nigeria have exacerbated conflicts and hindered cooperation within the legislature. These divisions can influence legislative decisions, alliances, and priorities, leading to a lack of unity and consensus on key issues. The lack of cohesion among legislators based on ethnic and religious affiliations has impeded cooperation, compromise, and coordination in the legislative process.

### **Recommendations**

Remedying Nigeria's legislature's poor performance and lack of accountability is crucial for achieving good governance, promoting democracy, and advancing national development. Implementing reforms to address the underlying challenges within the legislative branch can help improve its effectiveness, transparency, and

responsiveness to the needs of the Nigerian people. Here are some recommendations to remedy Nigeria's legislature for its poor performance and lack of accountability over the years:

1. Implement robust anti-corruption measures within the legislature to prevent and combat corrupt practices among legislators. These measures should include the enforcement of strict ethics and integrity codes, regular audits of legislators' financial disclosures, transparency in budget processes, and punitive actions against corrupt individuals.
2. Strengthen the capacity of the legislative branch by providing adequate resources, training programs, and technical support to legislators and staff. Enhancing institutional capacities will improve the legislature's ability to conduct effective oversight, research, and legislative functions.
3. Uphold the principle of legislative autonomy by promoting checks and balances, separation of powers, and effective accountability mechanisms. Granting the legislature greater independence from the executive branch will enable it to act as a true check on governmental power and perform its legislative functions without undue influence.
4. Enhance transparency and accountability within the legislative branch by ensuring open legislative processes, public access to information, and regular reporting on legislative activities. Encouraging accountability will help build trust with the public, increase the legislature's credibility, and promote good governance practices.
5. Foster meaningful public engagement by creating channels for citizen participation, feedback, and representation in legislative decision-making processes. Encouraging public engagement will help the legislature better understand the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian people and ensure that policies reflect the interests of the populace.
6. Implement electoral reforms to enhance the credibility, transparency, and fairness of elections for legislative positions. Electoral reforms should include measures to reduce electoral malpractices, promote competitive elections, and increase the representation of diverse voices within the legislature.
7. Enhance oversight mechanisms within the legislature to hold the executive branch accountable, investigate government actions, and review public expenditures. Strengthening oversight will help prevent abuse of power, ensure compliance with laws, and improve governance outcomes.
8. Promote professionalism, ethical conduct, and standards of behaviour among legislators through training, mentoring, and awareness programs. Emphasizing professionalism and ethics will foster a culture of integrity, respect, and service-oriented leadership within the legislative branch.
9. Encourage collaboration across party lines, consensus-building, and prioritization of national interests over partisan considerations. Reducing the influence of partisan politics will enable legislators to work together towards common goals, enhance dialogue, and improve the quality of legislative outcomes.
10. Enhance the effectiveness of the committee system within the legislature by promoting specialization, expertise, and accountability in the review of legislation and oversight of government actions. Strengthening the committee system will improve the efficiency and quality of legislative work.
11. Promote civic education initiatives to raise awareness about the role of the legislature, the importance of civic engagement, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society. Increasing civic education will empower the public to participate actively in the legislative process and hold their representatives accountable.
12. Consider decentralizing legislative powers and resources to promote local representation, empower grassroots communities, and improve governance at the subnational level. Decentralization can enhance accountability, responsiveness, and efficiency in decision-making processes.
13. Nigeria should consider a move from a bicameral legislature to a unicameral legislature to cut waste and minimise redundancy, and elections into the legislature should be based on proportional representation.



14. Nigeria should also put modalities in place for the legislature to work on a part-time basis, already, it works for a few days a year and members take humongous salaries and allowances home that are shrouded in secrecy, hence, it will be most appropriate for the institution to work on a part-time basis.

15. There should also be a provision in the electoral laws that whosoever wants to get into the legislative chamber must be a thoroughbred professional in his/her chosen field, with cognate years of experience and a track record of proven integrity. So that those who will be elected into the hallow chambers will have meaningful contributions to make.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can address the root causes of poor legislative performance and lack of accountability, strengthen its democracy, and advance national development. The government, civil society, and citizens need to work together to support these reforms and ensure the legislature operates effectively and transparently for the benefit of all Nigerians.

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