

**CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND LEGISLATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN TENTH
ASSEMBLY: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR DEMOCRATIC
ACCOUNTABILITY**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the role of citizen participation in the legislative process and examined the challenges militating against its effectiveness in Nigeria, utilizing secondary sources such as textbooks, journal articles, newspaper articles, and the internet. The study revealed that a citizen's role in the legislative process is considered a valuable element for democratic sustainability. However, it found that citizen participation in Nigeria's legislative process yields below-par outcomes. Consequently, it concludes that the inactive role of the citizens is the bane of transparency and accountability in the legislative arm of government. To expedite effective citizen participation, the study outlined recommendations, including adopting formal and informal approaches to political education and ensuring regular interaction between constituents and legislators.

Keywords: *Democracy, Citizen Participation, Legislative Process, Nigeria's Tenth Assembly*

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1.0 Introduction

Although Nigeria successfully underwent a democratic transition, the political landscape remains characterized by poor citizen participation in governance.¹ This deficiency results in a lack of accountability, transparency, and ineffective government policies, primarily due to the undemocratic tendencies, deception, violence, apathy, and uncertainties that are replete in Nigerian party politics.² Citizen participation in the political process could, however, bring about positive social and environmental change in governance.

It promotes democratic legitimacy by strengthening the connections between government agencies and the public they serve, which in turn helps improve the quality of agency rulemaking.³ Citizen engagement in shaping and implementing public policies is regarded as a critical ingredient of participatory democracy.⁴ According to Edigheji, the underlying role of participatory democracy is not merely to substitute representative democracy, but rather to supplement and make it more functional.⁵ To this end, participatory democracy serves several important functions: it provides an opportunity and creates conditions necessary for citizens to engage in political life regularly, and not only during elections;⁶ it establishes a framework for citizens to advocate for their legitimate interests, thereby contributing to the development of a vibrant democratic society;⁷ it makes the work of public authorities more transparent and closer to their constituencies;⁸ and, crucially, it contributes to the quality of adopted public policy and its smooth implementation.⁹ The legislature is an indispensable institution of democratic governance, and its effectiveness is central to achieving sustainable development. It serves as the principal forum for citizens' participation in the political process and the preeminent medium through which people seek to articulate their interests via their representatives.¹⁰ Due to its large membership composition, the

¹ F Eniayejuni and I Evcan, 'Electoral Participation in Nigeria' (2015) 12 (3) *Journal of Political Science* 45.

² V Ogbonna, O Ogundiwin and A Uzuegbu-Wilson, 'Voter Apathy in Nigerian Elections' (2012) 15 (2) *African Journal of Governance* 112;

³ L Okpi, *Democratic Disenchantment in Nigeria* (Spectrum Books 2011) 67.

⁴ C Coglianese, J Kilmartin and R Mendelson, 'Citizen Participation and Democratic Rulemaking' (2008) 55 (1) *Public Administration Review* 15–16.

⁵ O Ojo, *Public Policy and Democratic Participation* (University Press 2014) 34. O Edigheji, *A Democratic Developmental State in Africa?* (HSRC Press 2006) 88.

⁶ E Aragones and S Sanchez-Pages, 'The Logic of Participatory Democracy' (2008) 47 (4) *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 544; A Arowolo and S Aluko (n3) 23; A Heywood, *Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan 2007) 301

⁷ C Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge University Press 2012) 109.

⁸ R Schacter, *Transparency and Governance* (World Bank Publications 2006) 78;

⁹ E Falade and P Orungbemi, 'Citizen Participation and Public Policy Implementation' (2010) 10 (3) *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 185;

¹⁰ R Bernick and L Bernick, *The Legislative Branch* (CQ Press 2008) 22

legislature is capable of more accurately representing the range of diversity within the polity and fostering closer connections between representatives and voters.¹¹

Moreover, scholars agree that the exclusion of people in the political process remains the greatest impediment to Nigeria's democratic consolidation.¹² Given these important roles of the legislature in participatory democracy, this study seeks to assess the role of citizen participation in the legislative process and examine the challenges militating against its effective functioning in Nigeria. This study has five sections. In addition to this introduction, the second section deals with the conceptualization of major terms used in the study, including legislature, political participation, and constituents.

The third section discusses the methodology and theoretical framework adopted. The tenth section is centred on the discussion of findings, which includes a practical discourse on citizen participation in the legislative process and possible impediments to it in Nigeria's Tenth National Assembly (Republic). Finally, relevant conclusions are drawn in the fifth section.

1.1 Political Participation and Citizen Participation

Political participation is an aspect of political behaviour that focuses on how individuals engage in politics, and it's considered a vital element of citizenship and the democratic process.¹³ Citizen behaviour regarding political affairs largely determines the nature of the state, its survival, and its economic and social processes.¹⁴

Citizen participation in the political process includes activities such as political campaigns, voter registration, the actual casting of votes, attending political seminars, debates or public hearings, lobbying, and advocacy. These actions are often aimed at elevating a more informed citizenry capable of holding elected representatives more accountable.¹⁵ Citizen participation entails citizens' engagement in the discourse of socio-political issues which shapes government policies and rules.

¹¹ F Oni and M Joshua, 'Legislative Representation and Constituents' (2014) 16 (1) African Review of Political Science 33.

¹² E Falade and P Orungbemi (n9) 186;

¹³ I Cosma and V Jovanova, 'Political Participation and Citizen Engagement' (2013) 23 (1) European Political Review 55.

¹⁴ F Ugwuja, *Citizen Behaviour and State Survival* (University Press 2015) 101.

¹⁵ F Eniayejuni and I Evcan, 'Electoral Participation in Nigeria' (2015) 12 (3) Journal of Political Science 45.

This engagement serves as a yardstick for effective governments and acts as a fundamental building block of democracy.¹⁶ This suggests that the level of citizen participation is a determining factor of a democratic polity.

Scholars describe citizen participation as the process through which individuals play a role in political life, having the opportunity to take part in deciding the common goals of society and the best way of achieving them.¹⁷ It is a voluntary activity involving either direct participation such as contesting for political office and engaging in the formulation and implementation of policies or indirect participation including the selection and election of political leaders, lobbying to influence government policies, and attending political rallies, debates, public hearings, and town hall meetings.¹⁸ The essence of citizen participation, as observed by scholars, is to seek control and acquisition of power, and to influence decision-making.¹⁹ In essence, since sovereignty rests with the people in a democracy, citizen participation is one of the fundamental requirements of democratic governance.

Citizen participation in the political process serves several functions in a democracy. First is the educational function, which increases issue knowledge, civic skills, and contributes to the support for decisions among the participants.²⁰ Second, it functions as an integrative means through which citizens develop feelings of public citizenship and a sense of belonging towards the political system. This integration, in turn, increases transparency and makes government officials more accountable for their decisions.²¹ Furthermore, through citizen participation, the government connects with citizens on its policies, programs, and services. In other words, citizens express concerns towards government policies, and the government, in turn, informs citizens about the implementation of those policies or otherwise.

However, listing these functions doesn't imply that all political systems provide the leverage for robust citizen participation.²² As rightly observed, in many countries, particularly transitional democracies like Nigeria where politics is often characterized by thuggery, election rigging, and

¹⁶ J Gaventa and G Barrett, 'Citizen Participation and Governance' (2010) 7 (2) *Development in Practice* 120 and M McGee and J Gaventa, *The Participatory Society* (Zed Books 2011) 45.

¹⁷ B Adelekan, *Political Participation and Democratic Goals* (Malthouse Press 2010) 90.

¹⁸ A Obasi and L Lekorwe, 'Direct and Indirect Participation' (2014) 15 (3) *African Development Review* 77.

¹⁹ A Arowolo and S Aluko, 'Participatory Democracy in Nigeria' (2010) 8 (1) *Development Studies Quarterly* 22;

²⁰ U Nnanyelugo and S Nwafor (n 14) 161.

²¹ I Mackinnon, *Accountability in Governance* (Palgrave Macmillan 2004) 65

²² Queensland Government, *Citizen Engagement Policy* (Queensland Government Publications 2004) 15

political violence, few citizens are genuinely interested in political activities, while the majority show apathy.²³

Furthermore, it has been revealed that the majority of the citizenry are not effectively represented in government in terms of their contribution, aspirations, demands, and preference in policies.²⁴ The Legislature, the Constituents, and the Legislative Process. The legislature is a unique institution in a democratic setting, composed of elected representatives who actively shape policy and oversee its implementation in ways that reflect the values and interests of the citizenry.²⁵ The legislature, typically chosen through election, is mandated to make, change, and repeal laws, as well as empowered to represent constituent units and control the government.²⁶ Elected legislators in a democratic system represent various regions, ethnic groups, social classes, and occupational interests.

They are expected to act in the interest of the represented (to whom sovereignty belongs) in a manner responsive to them, typically through consultation, the exercise of discretion, and judgment that aggregates the views of the governed.²⁷ The legislature is described as the first estate of the realm, the realm of representation, and the site of sovereignty the only genuine expression of the will of the people.²⁸ This aligns with the position that the authority of the legislature, as a political institution, is derived from the claim that its members are representative of the political community, and that decisions are collectively made according to complex procedures.²⁹

The legislature is the primary mechanism of popular sovereignty that provides for the representation in governance of the diverse interests in a multicultural and subnational society.³⁰ It is a symbol of power and legitimacy because its decisions are based on the collective wisdom of men and women who enjoy the confidence of the constituents.³¹ This presupposes that a transparent, fair, accountable, and participatory legislative process is necessary to enact laws that will bring about real change.

²³ I Cosma and V Jovanova (n 12) 58.

²⁴ A Lafenwa, *Democracy and the Nigerian State* (Ibadan University Press 2009) 111.

²⁵ K Awotokun, *The Legislature in a Democracy* (Malthouse Press 1998) 45.

²⁶ A Lafenwa (n 23) 112; F Fabayi, *Democratic Exclusion in Nigeria* (Malthouse Press 2009) 91.

²⁷ K Anyaegbunam, *The Role of Elected Representatives* (Fourth Dimension Publishers 2000) 50.

²⁸ A Okoosi-Simbine, 'The Legislature and Democratic Consolidation' (2010) 18 (4) *Nigerian Journal of Politics* 75.

²⁹ V Bogdanor, *The Legislature* (Oxford University Press 1991) 10.

³⁰ J Oni, 'Legislative Representation and Constituents' (2013) 16 (1) *African Review of Political Science* 33 and T Balogun, *Popular Sovereignty and Governance* (Ibadan University Press 2012) 60.

³¹ D Poteete, *Trust and Legitimacy in Governance* (Cambridge University Press 2010) 130.

Scholars widely acknowledge that the political power of the legislature originates from the constituents, and that the constituents exercise this sovereign authority through the medium of their representatives.³² This suggests that the legislature is an expression of the constituent power of the people to make and remake the institutional arrangements through which they are governed.

The political power of the legislature is therefore primarily undertaken by those who claim to act in the name of the constituents. As legislators represent various constituencies, they have direct contact with the local populace and are able to have a feel of their needs and concerns.³³ In this light, the fulcrum of legislative activity is to enhance the participation of the people in the legislative process, which strengthens the system in terms of demand and support, and allows the legislature to act as the watchdog of the government to bring about good governance.³⁴ The role of citizens in the legislative process is characterized by a culmination of processes, comprising a series of consultations, questions, interviews, and participation in legislative workshops, seminars, and conferences.³⁵

Where there are descriptive differences or a communication gap between representatives and their constituents, the citizens become detached and alienated from their representatives, note.³⁶ The more access citizens have to participate in the legislative process, the more included they feel in governance, which engenders assured trust, peace, and development.³⁷ Citizen participation in the legislative process may occur at three distinct stages:³⁸

- a. the pre-legislative stage (when the proposed law is in draft form prior to its introduction in parliament);
- b. the legislative stage (which begins when the bill is introduced and ends once it is passed); and
- c. the post-legislative stage (which begins when the bill is enacted).

Extant ways of facilitating citizen participation in the legislative process include a wide array of procedures; facilitating access to legislative records, publication of legal instruments in print and

³² W Willoughby, *The Fundamental Concepts of Public Law* (Macmillan 1924) 55.

³³ V Omoweh, *The Legislative-Constituency Nexus* (Malthouse Press 2006) 70.

³⁴ F Oke, *The Legislature and Good Governance* (Longman Publishers 2010) 120.

³⁵ G Michael and F Michael, *Constituent Power and Political Authority* (Routledge 2017) 25.

³⁶ National Council and the National Democratic Institute, *Citizen Engagement in the Legislative Process* (National Council Publications 2001) 8

³⁷ M Alabi and J Olujinmi, 'Communication and Citizen Inclusion' (2009) 10 (1) *African Journal of Communication* 15.

³⁸ PRS Legislative Research, *Citizen Participation in Lawmaking* (PRS Publications 2011) 5.

electronic forms, conducting public hearings and consultation, incorporating public comments in the final version of bills and rules, providing reasons for rejecting their inclusion, and empowering the judiciary to strike down rules adopted in violation of these reasons.³⁹ Given this approach, citizen participation in the legislative process promotes legitimacy by creating a sense of fairness in rulemaking and achieving the best outcomes for society. The level and pattern of citizen participation in the legislative process determines, to some extent, the success and stability of the political system.

It is the bedrock upon which the legislature forms its policies for the purpose of creating a stable society.⁴⁰ For instance, in most parliaments, members are provided with funds to establish constituency offices and employ staff to enable legislators to maintain a close link with the electorate and put the job of representing and enhancing the participation of the people on a more professional platform.⁴¹ The underlying philosophy here is that constituents have a sense of belonging when representatives pay close attention to them.

This is because grievances and demands can easily be reported at the constituency office of the lawmaker, who is expected to process and channel this information for onward discussion in the legislature. By implication, several legislative proposals that eventually become laws are expected to be a reflection of the desires and aspirations of the people as expressed through their representatives.⁴² The legislature, therefore, occupies a key position in the machinery of government because it is the "people's branch," purposed for articulating and expressing the collective will of the populace.

However, scholars note that the Nigerian political system limits the citizen's role in the political process primarily to periodic voting, such that citizens often lack access to write, call, or visit their elected representatives.⁴³ More distressingly, constituencies have reportedly become instruments of official corruption, fraud, and lubricants of primitive accumulation for lawmakers.⁴⁴

³⁹ A Aparajita, P Mc Connachie, S Sharma, D Mehta, F Carelli and A Dhru, *Transparency in Lawmaking* (World Bank Publications 2011) 40.

⁴⁰ A Golubović, 'The Role of Civil Society in Democratization' (2008) 32 (1) *International Political Science Review* 56; T Carter, *Citizenship and Governance* (Routledge 2006) 60.

⁴¹ R Bernick and L Bernick, *The Legislative Branch* (CQ Press 2008) 25.

⁴² A Arowolo and S Aluko, 'Participatory Democracy in Nigeria' (2010) 8 (1) *Development Studies Quarterly* 22.

⁴³ S Omodia and V Egwemi, 'Citizen Role in the Nigerian Political System' (2011) 12 (3) *Journal of Political Studies* 30.

⁴⁴ L Jinadu, *Corruption and Governance in Nigeria* (Spectrum Books 2011) 150.

1.2 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The study employed a secondary source of data obtained through a literature survey method. Literature on political participation and citizens' involvement in the legislative process in Nigeria were purposefully selected for analysis. Newspaper articles, journal articles, and similar documents constituted additional data sources. The rationale for using secondary data was to sample the opinions of various writers to gather information pertinent to the study. Data were then presented and analyzed using a descriptive method.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the System Political Analysis Theory propounded by David Easton to explain the extent of citizens' participation in Nigeria's legislative process.⁴⁵ Political system analysis conceptualizes policy-making in terms of inputs (demands and support), conversion processes (policy-making and choices), outputs (policy outcomes), and feedbacks (policy impact analysis).⁴⁶ The System theory seeks to explain not only how policy decisions are made, but also how changes and innovations in public policies result from the perceptions of the larger community and the legislature itself.

Public policy and, indeed, governmental actions are thus viewed as the response of a political system to demands arising from its environment (the populace). In other words, public policy is merely a response to the demands of the people.

Inputs into the political system from the environment consist of demands and support. Demands are claims made by individuals and groups (electorates and/or constituencies) on the political system for action to satisfy their interests. Support, on the other hand, is rendered when groups and individuals accept the decisions and actions of the authoritative political system made in response to demands. Through the feedback mechanism (e.g., the media), authoritative decision policies are communicated back to the political system.

The political system continues to function in this process such that the failure of one part to perform its function leads to the disorderliness of the entire political system.⁴⁷ A critical analysis of this model indicates that policy-making in government is an ongoing process a phase in a continuing cycle largely based on the demands placed on the people's representatives (legislators and other

⁴⁵ D Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Prentice-Hall 1965) 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid 51.

⁴⁷ Ibid 55.

elected public officers), as well as the actions of the government itself, all of which are conditioned by the environment (people) and their needs.

Moreover, since one scholar describes Nigerian democracy as elite-oriented,⁴⁸ a deleterious implication is a low quality of representation coupled with low citizen participation in politics. While the citizen's role in the political process has been conditioned to periodic voting during elections, other scholars suggest that citizens often lack access to write, call, or visit elected representatives in their constituencies.⁴⁹ In this sense, the hope that policy can be influenced to reflect citizens' concerns may not be realized.

1.4 Discussion of Findings

Citizen Participation in Legislative Decision Making in Nigeria Exploring Practical Discourse in Nigeria's Tenth National Assembly, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as altered) enshrines the powers of government. The legislative power of the Federal Government is vested in the National Assembly to make laws for the good governance of the country.⁵⁰ The National Assembly consists of two houses:

The Senate; and

The House of Representatives

The Senate's composition is based on equal representation for the 36 states, regardless of size, consisting of three elected Senators from each state and one from the Federal Capital Territory, totaling 109 Senators.

The House of Representatives consists of 360 members, representing constituencies of nearly equal population as far as possible, provided that no constituency falls within more than one state.⁵¹ Members of the National Assembly are elected to represent their senatorial districts and constituencies, to speak for the interests and well-being of the people they represent. By the principle of representation, the legislature is established to voice the views, opinions, desires, and expectations of the people and interest groups.⁵² In this view, citizens' knowledge of politics increases when they participate in the process of decision-making, which also develops a sense of responsibility on the part of those representing them.

⁴⁸ J Arizona, *Elite-Oriented Democracy in Nigeria* (Malthouse Press 2009) 10.

⁴⁹ F Oke, *The Legislature and Good Governance* (Longman Publishers 2010) 120.

⁵⁰ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as altered), s 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid* s 48 and s 49.

⁵² R Bernick and L Bernick, *The Legislative Branch* (CQ Press 2008) 22.

Three major events in Nigeria's Eight National Assembly opened an avenue for citizen participation and significant political change.

The prolonged absence of the late President Muhammadu Buhari due to ill health created a power vacuum in the executive. They protested the President's failure to transfer power to the Vice President before proceeding on medical treatment. The public outcry prompted the legislature to act. The National Assembly unanimously voted to transfer power to the Vice-President, enabling him to act as President during the prolonged absence. Indeed, the citizens' agitations and protests charged the Nigerian political system, potentially averting a crisis. Consequently, President Muhammadu Buhari proceeded on medical treatment, he willingly wrote to the National Assembly, notifying lawmakers and temporarily handing over the government to the Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo.⁵³

The 'Occupy Nigeria' Protest (2012) On January 1, 2012, the immediate past President Goodluck Jonathan announced the removal of the subsidy from petroleum products, claiming the action would maximize the country's oil wealth, save the nation from economic crisis, and end the vast corruption taking place under the subsidy regime. In response, a socio-political protest tagged 'Occupy Nigeria' began across the country.⁵⁴ In response to the people's demands, the House of Representatives set up an Ad Hoc Probe Panel on fuel subsidy. The panel's report indicted many petroleum marketers and government officials for receiving payments when no petroleum products were imported.⁵⁵

Consequently, where the government was compelled to reverse the full subsidy removal and partially reinstate it, setting the price at N65 per litre (down from N97 per litre) due to the 2012 "Occupy Nigeria" protests, is not the current situation in Nigeria. The fuel subsidy regime has undergone significant and consequential changes since that 2012 event.⁵⁶ The reality in Nigeria is characterized by full deregulation of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) market, driven by the subsidy removal announcement in May 2023. The fuel subsidy has been officially removed.⁵⁷

⁵³ Premium Times, 'President Buhari's Handover to Vice President Osinbajo' (Premium Times, 10 May 2017) 3.

⁵⁴ Vanguard, 'Occupy Nigeria: A Protest Against Subsidy Removal' (Vanguard, 5 January 2012) 1.

⁵⁵ Cable News Network, 'Nigeria Fuel Subsidy Scandal Report' (CNN, 22 April 2012) 2.

⁵⁶ Adekunle, O. and Agbo, U. (2025). 'The Nigerian Economy and Fuel Subsidy Removal' *Journal of Global Economics & Sustainable Development*, <https://journals.e-palli.com/home/index.php/igesd/article/view/4976> accessed 30 October 2025.

⁵⁷ Oladipo, O., 'Subsidy Removal Raises FAAC Payouts to N2 Trillion Monthly' (BusinessDay, 27 October 2025) <https://businessday.ng/news/article/subsidy-removal-raises-faac-payouts-to-n2trillion-monthly/> accessed 30/10/2025.

The Federal Government is no longer paying to keep the price of PMS artificially low.⁵⁸ The price of PMS is now market-determined and is substantially higher than the N65 per litre price point from 2012. Recent reports from late 2025 show the average retail price ranging between N874.50 to over N1,000 per litre, with significant regional variations, depending on the marketer and location. The removal has led to a significant increase in the revenue shared by the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC), with funds now being redirected to infrastructure and other sectors.⁵⁹

The move has caused sharp increases in transportation and food costs (inflation), creating major hardship for citizens, though it is viewed by the government as necessary for long-term fiscal sustainability.⁶⁰

The era of protests compelling a partial reversal to N65 per litre belongs to the historical context of the 2012 fuel subsidy crisis under the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan.⁶¹ The issue of budget padding and misallocation exposed during the scrutiny of recent national budgets (2024 and 2025).⁶² Budget Scandal N628 Billion Allocated to Wrong Agencies'⁶³

This mirrors the scandal's theme as anti-corruption watchdogs have revealed that hundreds of billions of Naira (sometimes exceeding ₦600 billion) are allocated to agencies for projects outside their official mandates (e.g., funding agricultural projects through non-agricultural agencies), and large sums are earmarked for vague "empowerment projects." This practice subverts the public procurement law and approved budgets, creating a mechanism for diversion and self-aggrandizement, much like the illegal purchase of armoured cars circumvented due process.⁶⁴

Broadly, ongoing high-profile probes, such as the alleged \$7.2 billion diversion of funds meant for national refinery maintenance, reinforce the persistence of high-ranking officials allegedly

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Oladipo D. "Subsidy removal raises FAAC payouts to N2 trillion monthly." *BusinessDay Nigeria* (27 Oct 2025) <https://businessday.ng/news/article/subsidy-removal-raises-faac-payouts-to-n2trillion-monthly/> accessed 30/10/2025.

⁶⁰ Amangwai J M and Amos N, 'The Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on the Nigerian Economy' (2025) 8(1) *African Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 42–47 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388545475_The_Impact_of_Fuel_Subsidy_Removal_on_the_Nigerian_Economy accessed 30 October 2025.

⁶¹ Al Jazeera, 'Nigerian petrol prices reach record high after subsidy removal' <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/18/nigerian-petrol-prices-reach-record-high-after-subsidy-removal> accessed 30 October 2025.

⁶² Analyst ST and News Central TV, 'Nigeria's 2024' <https://newscentral.tv> accessed 30 October 2025.

⁶³ (Report on Budget Scrutiny, News Central Africa 2024).

⁶⁴ Bloomberg, 'Nigeria arrests ex-CFO of state oil firm over alleged fraud' (25 June 2025) POLITICO Pro.

misappropriating public funds intended for critical infrastructure for private, illicit ends, directly undermining transparency and accountability.⁶⁵

The committee's report discovered that no budgetary appropriation was in place for the purchase and recommended. It is evident from these events that citizen participation in governance increases legislative control, leading to greater transparency, representation, and accountability that can meet the needs and desires of the populace. As argued by scholars, when citizens are engaged in governance, it improves accountability and helps governmental bodies and authorities in problem-solving.⁶⁶ In a situation where the government and decision-makers ignore necessary actions suggested by citizens to realize a set goal, the political system tends toward an authoritarian or dictatorial regime, causing citizens to distance themselves from political affairs.

Thus, citizen participation helps in changing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of public office holders, which in turn helps improve government performance and increase citizen trust. Challenges of Citizen Participation in Legislative Decision Making in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In the law-making process, the citizen has the legal duty to input demands through lobbying, petitions, public debates, and hearings. In contrast, the political culture in Nigeria is characterized by intolerance, intimidation, assassination, bitterness, and money and ethnic politics.⁶⁷

Furthermore, scholars acknowledge that despite efforts at facilitating participation, the actual process has led to minimal public involvement, as the spaces and means provided to facilitate public participation are fraught with flaws that effectively swell the potential for failure.⁶⁸

Consequently, the demands of the people are streamlined, and those that could affect or jeopardize the interests of policy-makers are often dropped. Poor Representation and Engagement Representation involves listening to those represented and making decisions on their behalf. Although the legislature is the branch of government closest to the people, many Nigerian legislators do not operate constituency offices and rarely interact with their constituents, resulting in a serious disengagement between them and the people they represent.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends* (UNODC Survey Report 2024).

⁶⁶ F Eniayejuni and I Evcan, 'Electoral Participation in Nigeria' (2015) 12 (3) *Journal of Political Science* 48.

⁶⁷ S Oromareghake, *Political Culture and Governance in Nigeria* (Spectrum Books 2013) 70.

⁶⁸ A Arowolo and S Aluko, 'Participatory Democracy in Nigeria' (2010) 8 (1) *Development Studies Quarterly* 25.

⁶⁹ A Okoosi-Simbine, 'The Legislature and Democratic Consolidation' (2010) 18 (4) *Nigerian Journal of Politics* 78.

Inexperienced Legislators

The effectiveness of citizen participation has been hampered by the presence of inexperienced legislators. The Nigerian legislature has had limited space to experience the value of law-making derived from a representative social order because of the prolonged dictatorial and authoritarian rule by the military.⁷⁰ Indeed, many Nigerians elected into the legislative arm since 1999 know little or nothing about legislation and the legislative process outside of constitutional provisions.⁷¹ Most are often unaware of their authority, how to best organize their time, and how to conduct legislative business.

Self-Serving Laws and Lost Trust

Laws made by the legislature are often parochial and self-serving, as citizens have not felt the impact of the laws made.⁷² Legislators are perceived as going to the chamber for the purpose of enriching their pockets rather than for good governance and national development.⁷³ The implication is that average Nigerians have lost interest and trust in their elected representatives. This is confirmed by scholars who describe the law-making function of the legislature as poor and not impactful.⁷⁴ The commotion experienced in the legislature over leadership positions often characterized by physical exchange of blows lends credence to the pursuit of personal aggrandizement rather than the national interest, further encouraging the political apathy of average Nigerians. Watching the law-making process being distorted by parliamentarians can never encourage citizen participation. Lack of Education and Apathy. Lack of education contributes immensely to why citizens do not participate in the legislative process. Most citizens do not know they have an input into the law-making process in the parliament, and they do not even know their rights, let alone how to participate in decision-making.⁷⁵ Many Nigerians are only concerned about their daily activities; as long as the government does not deprive them of their daily enterprise, they remain comfortable with government policies.

⁷⁰ S Saliu and B Mohammad, 'Legislative Authority and Collective Wisdom' (2010) 11 (2) Journal of Public Policy 96.

⁷¹ M Alabi and J Olujinmi, 'Communication and Citizen Inclusion' (2009) 10 (1) African Journal of Communication 18.

⁷² A. Abiona and F Bello, 'The Impact of Legislative Laws on Citizens' (2013) 14 (1) Journal of Public Administration 150.

⁷³ F Oke, *The Legislature and Good Governance* (Longman Publishers 2010) 125.

⁷⁴ A Lafenwa, *Democracy and the Nigerian State* (Ibadan University Press 2009) 115.

⁷⁵ F Eniayejuni and I Evcan, 'Electoral Participation in Nigeria' (2015) 12 (3) Journal of Political Science 49.

1.5 Conclusion

This paper affirms that citizens can play an active and influential role in the legislative process by influencing the decisions of policy-makers on public policies and ensuring greater accountability and responsibility. This influence is typically channeled through various democratic means such as lobbying, petitions, interviews, attending town hall meetings, and joining advocacy groups.

The study therefore concludes that lack of citizen participation in the legislative decision-making process is a fundamental challenge to transparency and accountability in the legislative arm of government in Nigeria. Key impediments identified include low political education, pervasive poverty, frequent public disorderliness within the legislature (commotion), and the overriding influence of legislators' personal aggrandizement and self-interest. These factors collectively exert a negative impact on citizen engagement in the law-making process.

In light of these findings, this paper recommends the urgent need for comprehensive political education in Nigeria. This education should not be confined solely to the formal school system. Both formal and informal approaches must be adopted to orientate citizens on the necessity of active participation in the political system. This can be achieved through mass political enlightenment campaigns in the media, adult education programmes, and active mobilization by civil society organizations.

Furthermore, there should be regular and systematic interaction between constituents and their legislators. This mechanism will foster a crucial sense of belonging and bridge the representational gap, thereby increasing citizens' interest in critical legislative activities such as committee participation, floor debates, and other areas of law-making.

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