



Legislative oversight and delegated legislation in Nigeria, 2015 to 2023

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Abstract

Legislative oversight of delegated legislation plays a vital role in promoting accountability, ensuring regulatory compliance, and protecting the public interest in democratic systems. This study examined the oversight functions of Nigeria's National Assembly, focusing on the mechanisms used to monitor delegated rulemaking by regulatory agencies, their effectiveness, and the challenges undermining their impact. The study adopted the case study research design to examine the relationship between legislative oversight and delegated legislation. It adopted the mixed research methods combining survey data, key informant interviews, and document analysis. It employed the structural functional theory to examine the impact of the oversight function of the National Assembly in ensuring transparency and curbing executive overreach. With this theory, the study explored how National Assembly committees engage with agencies like the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to review rules, approve budgets, and conduct public consultations. Findings showed that although oversight mechanisms like budget reviews and public hearings helped promote transparency and stakeholder engagement, systemic weaknesses persisted. For example, performance audits uncovered inefficiencies in sectors such as energy regulation, but lack of staff capacity hindered deeper analysis. The study recommended institutional reforms to enhance committee resourcing and staffing, the use of technology for real-time oversight, and the institutionalization of regular performance audits. It further proposed stakeholder engagement frameworks to ensure inclusivity, particularly from marginalized groups. Most critically, the study emphasized the need for ethical guidelines and accountability mechanisms to curb political interference in oversight processes. The study concluded that while the National Assembly's oversight mechanisms remain essential in regulating delegated rulemaking, strategic and institutional reforms are necessary to strengthen their capacity and legitimacy in ensuring transparent, responsive, and participatory governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Delegated Legislation, Legislative oversight, National Assembly, Regulatory Agencies.

1. Introduction

Legislative oversight remains a foundational pillar of democratic governance, serving to uphold the doctrine of separation of powers and ensure effective checks and balances among state

institutions (Ginsberg, 2014). Broadly conceived, legislative oversight encompasses the authority of legislatures to scrutinize, monitor, and hold executive and administrative bodies accountable for



the implementation of laws and public policies. Mendes (2022) underscores that oversight is not merely ancillary but a core democratic function that promotes transparency, responsiveness, and constitutionalism. As contemporary governance increasingly relies on delegation and administrative specialization, scholars argue that oversight mechanisms must continuously evolve to safeguard democratic norms and institutional balance (Wahman & Goldring, 2020).

Existing literature demonstrates that the growing complexity of modern states has led legislatures to delegate significant regulatory and rulemaking powers to specialized agencies established by Acts of Parliament. In Nigeria, agencies such as the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) exemplify this trend. Fagbadebo (2018) notes that such delegation has been driven by the need for technical expertise, efficiency, and nationwide regulatory coordination in sectors such as telecommunications, energy, public health, and security. Within this body of scholarship, there is general agreement that delegation enhances administrative efficiency but simultaneously heightens the risk of regulatory overreach and weakened democratic accountability if not adequately supervised.

The Nigerian constitutional framework explicitly addresses this tension. Sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution empower the National Assembly to conduct investigations into the administration of laws and the conduct of agencies charged with executing them. Yusuf and Ojoduwa (2022) emphasize that

legislative oversight assumes heightened significance where agencies exercise delegated regulatory authority, given that such bodies engage in subsidiary lawmaking that directly affects citizens' rights, markets, and service delivery. The prevailing state of knowledge therefore affirms that while delegation decentralizes governance, it does not diminish the legislature's residual responsibility to oversee both the substance and implementation of delegated powers.

Despite this normative clarity, empirical studies on legislative oversight in Nigeria reveal persistent institutional and operational challenges. Olojede et al. (2020) argue that oversight over regulatory agencies is often undermined by vague review procedures, limited technical capacity within legislative committees, and heavy reliance on agency-generated information. Similarly, Punch (2018) and Mnasi et al. (2022) document fragmented committee coordination, weak follow-up mechanisms, and inadequate systems for tracking public and stakeholder complaints regarding regulatory decisions. These studies suggest that existing oversight practices may be insufficient to effectively constrain powerful regulatory agencies operating within complex policy environments.

More recent evaluations further reinforce these concerns. A National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS, 2024) assessment highlights systemic deficiencies in the National Assembly's capacity to monitor the expanding volume of delegated legislation and regulatory actions. While agencies such as NERC, NAFDAC, and NDLEA have received commendation for sectoral reforms and enforcement initiatives, they have also attracted criticism over controversial policy decisions, inconsistent regulatory enforcement, and responses to emerging challenges—particularly in the power sector, drug safety regulation, and



narcotics control. Although the National Assembly employs tools such as public hearings, budget defence sessions, committee investigations, and formal correspondence, evidence suggests that these mechanisms are often applied in an ad hoc rather than systematic manner.

Notwithstanding the growing body of literature on legislative oversight and regulatory governance in Nigeria, a critical gap persists. Much of the existing scholarship is either normative or descriptive, with limited empirical interrogation of the quality, effectiveness, and outcomes of legislative oversight over agencies exercising delegated regulatory powers. There is insufficient analysis of how oversight mechanisms function in practice, the extent to which they influence regulatory behaviour, and the institutional factors shaping their effectiveness. This gap is particularly evident in sector-specific and committee-level studies, which remain underexplored despite their importance to democratic accountability.

This study is therefore motivated by the need to provide a rigorous and systematic assessment of legislative oversight over delegated regulatory agencies in Nigeria. By examining oversight practices, institutional capacities, and coordination mechanisms within the National Assembly, the research seeks to contribute to both scholarly debates and policy reforms on democratic governance. The study is justified on the grounds that strengthening legislative oversight is essential for enhancing transparency, accountability, and public trust in regulatory institutions, especially within Nigeria's evolving twenty-first-century political economy. Ultimately, the research aims to generate evidence-based insights capable of informing institutional reforms and improving the balance between regulatory efficiency and democratic control.

The study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What oversight mechanisms does the National Assembly currently utilize to monitor agencies' exercise of rulemaking powers delegated under various laws?
- 2) How effective are the oversight mechanisms in enabling the National Assembly to monitor, control and check agencies delegated regulatory authority?
- 3) What institutional and operational challenges do the National Assembly face when conducting oversight of delegated legislations in the agencies under investigation?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the impact legislative oversight on delegated rulemaking in Nigeria's fourth republic. The specific objectives are to:

- 1) Examine the oversight mechanisms the National Assembly currently utilises to monitor agencies' exercise of rulemaking powers delegated under various laws;
- 2) Evaluate the effectiveness of the oversight mechanisms in enabling the National Assembly to monitor, control and check agencies delegated regulatory authority;
- 3) Examine institutional and operational challenges the National Assembly face when conducting oversight of delegated legislations in the agencies under investigation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Delegated legislation is defined as laws made by subordinate authorities or bodies under powers granted by a higher legislative authority, typically through an enabling Act of Parliament. Egwummuo (2000) states that "delegated legislation means laws duly made by subordinate legislators ... agencies which have been



delegated the power to make laws that have a direct impact on the activities of the agency or department in question". Benson (2015) further emphasizes that delegated legislation allows for timely and responsive legal frameworks to address details not feasible in primary legislation, describing it as a mechanism for the government to fill in the gaps and provide specific details that may not be practical to include in primary legislation.

Separation of Power

The doctrine of Separation of Powers is a fundamental constitutional principle that divides state powers among distinct branches of government—typically the legislature, executive, and judiciary—to prevent concentration of power and protect democratic governance. Montesquieu, a seminal figure in articulating this principle, argued that liberty is best secured when these powers are separate and balanced, stating: "There is no liberty if the judiciary power be not separated from the legislative and executive" (Montesquieu, 1748, trans. 1989).

In modern governance, the doctrine is understood as a system of checks and balances whereby each branch operates independently within its constitutionally assigned functions yet exercises oversight over the others to prevent abuse of power (Locke, 1689). According to A.V. Dicey, Separation of Powers means that legislative, executive, and judicial functions should not be concentrated in any one individual or body, ensuring the rule of law and limiting arbitrary governance (Dicey, 1959).

Legislative Oversight

What constitutes legislative oversight has been argued in the field of political science and governance across the world. The legislative arm of government deals with the core functions of legislation (lawmaking), representation, and oversight. Therefore, being one of core responsibility, the legislature is expected to

serve as a watchdog of the electorates on the activities of the executive thus, striking a balance in the powers exercised by both the executive and representatives of the different constituencies. Relying on this perception, legislative oversight refers to the process by which the legislative branch of government exercises its authority to monitor, review, and supervise the actions of the executive branch, ensuring accountability and promoting good governance (Stapenhurst *et al.*, 2008). It involves the scrutiny of executive actions, programs, policies, and the investigation of potential wrongdoing by executive branch actors (Bussing and Pomirchy, 2022). Through oversight, the legislature plays a crucial role in maintaining a system of checks and balances, ensuring that the executive branch operates within the confines of the law and serves the best interests of the public (Parker and Dull, 2009).

2.2 Empirical Review

This empirical review synthesizes existing research on delegated legislation, statutory instruments, the doctrine of separation of powers, and legislative oversight, with a particular focus on Nigeria's context. Drawing from historical, comparative, and contemporary studies, it examines the origins, evolution, factors influencing effectiveness, and control mechanisms of delegated legislation. The review highlights empirical findings from case studies, surveys, and analyses across developed and developing democracies, identifying gaps in the literature, especially regarding Nigeria's key agencies such as the National Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

Empirical studies trace the origins of delegated legislation to medieval English jurisprudence, with early examples in statutes like the 1337 Statute for



Exportation of Wool and the 1388 Statute of Staple, where administrative directives formed the basis of governance without explicit authority definitions (Dexter & Dexter, 1978; Onu, 2019). In the 19th century, England saw a surge, enacting 3,000–4,000 pieces annually, addressing social issues and daily governance (Onu, 2022). This growth stemmed from legislators' overwhelming responsibilities, leading to delegation for detailed implementation (McLeod and McLeod, 1993). Dicey (as cited in McLeod and McLeod, 1993) supported this, noting improved law substance when executives handle details.

In Nigeria, empirical evidence links delegated legislation to colonial rule, where the Governor-General issued proclamations under Royal Instructions (Webb, 2014). Notable cases include the Native Lands Acquisition Ordinance (1917) and Native Revenue Ordinance (1924), criticized for enabling colonial control without oversight (Aluko, 2007; Adigun, 2011; Nwabu, 2014; Jemina, 2015). Post-independence, the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions introduced safeguards like parliamentary review, but military regimes misused it, prompting reforms in the 1979 Constitution (Ochieng'Opalo, 2020; Hills, 1998; Library of Congress, 2025).

In the Fourth Republic, studies show a rise due to complex policy challenges and limited legislative resources (Thatcher, 2002). Empirical analyses reveal concerns over transparency and regulatory capture, with initiatives like the Joint Committee on Deregulation addressing these (Donelan, 2022). Definitions from empirical works emphasize its role in efficient implementation: laws by subordinate bodies with direct impact (Egwummuo, 2000; Benson, 2015; Onoge, 2021; Okoeguale, 2019; Oluyede, 2007). Challenges include excessive delegation

undermining accountability (Yarova, 2022; Jombo, 2022; Yusuf et al., 2018).

Forms in Nigeria, empirically documented, include rules (e.g., court procedures under the 1999 Constitution), regulations (e.g., under the National Housing Fund Act), orders, statutory instruments (e.g., S.I. No. 12 of 2018), by-laws, and directions (Onu, 2022; Kumbut, 2021; Ateboh and Raimi, 2018). These enable MDA independence but require oversight to prevent abuse.

Empirical research on Nigeria's bicameral National Assembly (Senate: 109 members; House: 360) highlights its role in lawmaking and oversight under the 1999 Constitution (Sections 4–6) (Omotoso and Oladeji, 2019; Fashagba and Nwankwor, 2021). Committees scrutinize bills, but oversight of delegated legislation is weak compared to Britain, lacking standardized procedures (Benson, 2014; Onoge, 2021; Pollman, 2019). Each enabling act defines its process, leading to inconsistencies.

The Constitution entrusts lawmaking to assemblies but allows delegation with guiding principles (Section 4; Interpretation Act, Section 27(1)) (Benson, 2014; Singh, 2023). Empirical comparisons with Britain show Nigeria's less structured approach, relying on enabling acts without uniform affirmative/negative procedures (Fleming and Ghazi, 2023). Laying before Parliament serves as a check, but safeguards are inadequate (Benson, 2014). Studies identify corruption, financial autonomy deficits, political interference, self-serving behavior, distrust, inter-branch rivalry, and resource shortages as key factors (Yusuf and Ojoduwa, 2022). Corruption links to underdevelopment and erodes trust (Khan and Krishnan, 2019).

Lack of financial independence creates executive dependence, stunting capacity (Yusuf and Ojoduwa, 2022; Osham, 2021; Fagbadebo, 2019; Ochieng'Opalo, 2019). Political parties manipulate processes, prioritizing loyalty over accountability



(Sule et al., 2022). Self-serving behavior undermines hearings (Kazeem, 2013; Jombo, 2019; Nwaegbu, 2022). Public distrust stems from perceived rubber-stamping (Felix, 2023). Inter-branch supremacy struggles hinder checks (Nyongesa, 2019). Resource shortages limit staff and expertise (Adegboro, 2022).

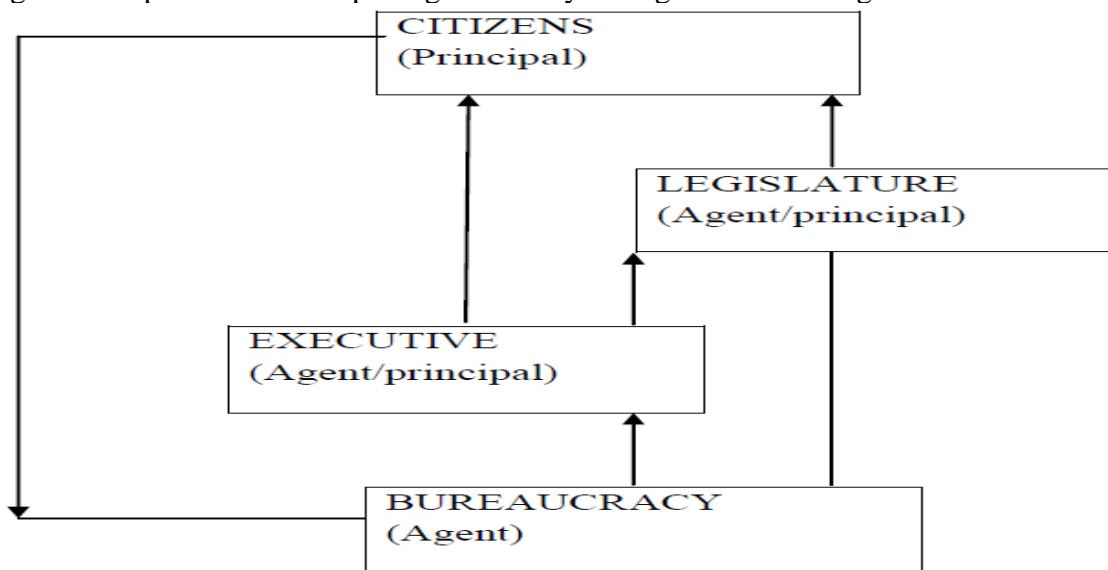
Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the principal – agent theory as its theoretical framework. This theory was developed mainly to explain the issues of information asymmetry, conflicting interest and control in delegated decision making relationship between a principal (in this sense the legislature who is the principals due to the law making function which defines or delegates functions for all other organs including the executive) and an agent (in this sense the executive who acts on behalf of the legislature). The foundation work on this theory is attributed to economists like Stephen A. Ross in 1973 who was credited for first introducing the concept in the context of economic theory, other proponents like Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling in 1976 further developed and formalized the theory. The theory was developed to analyze problems that arise when a principal hires an agent to perform tasks on their behalf but the interest of the agent may not align with those of the principal, where the agent may have more information than the principal

and where the principal must develop monitoring schemes to align the agents behavior with their own.

The Principal-Agent Theory is used to generally describe the interactions between the legislative and the executive branch of government when evaluating the accomplishment of oversight tasks by the National Assembly or the legislature (Rose and Ackerman, 1978; Weingast and Moran, 1983, p. 9; Fukuyama, 2004, p. 214). As Nigeria has a presidential system of government that is based on the bicameral legislative structure of the United States, this concept has been used often in American legislative discourse and is relevant in this particular context. The idea of principal-agent relationships also emphasizes the institutional frameworks that enable principals to monitor and enforce compliance from their agents. This theory is particularly well-suited to explain the accountability relationship between citizens (as principals) and the legislative and executive branches (both acting as agents), as well as between the legislature (acting as principals, on behalf of citizens) and the bureaucracy (acting as agents). The subsequent example makes it clear why this idea is relevant to this investigation. This is due to the fact that the legislative has historically been tasked with monitoring the executive's and its agency's acts on behalf of the people under the constitution.

Fig. 2.1 Adaptation of Principal-Agent Theory to Legislative Oversight



Source: Collated and Adapted from Parliamentary Oversight Tools: A Comparative Analysis, Pelizzo and Stapenhurst, (2011 p.6).

Fukuyama (2004) asserts that, above all other players, the public (citizens) are the ultimate principles in the explanation of public conduct. The first level of agents in a democracy are elected representatives; legislators act as principals for the executive branch agents tasked with carrying out the laws they have approved. Issues occur when public servants put their own financial interests ahead of their moral convictions. To counteract such behavior and better align with the goals of the principal-agent paradigm, agents must behave more openly. A variety of incentives and sanctions must also be used to hold agents responsible for their actions. However, when the principal-agent model is applied to public sector governance, Fukuyama (2004) points out three (3) issues that come up. First of all, public sector entities frequently have ambiguous objectives. Only when the principals are explicit about what they want the agents to do can the agents carry out their will. Second, formal accountability and monitoring methods are either excessively expensive to use or don't capture the specifics of the underlying activity.

Thirdly, the proper amount of discretion that is delegated will change over time.

The executive, acting as agents, is more knowledgeable than the legislature or the citizens, acting as principals; the bureaucracy is more knowledgeable than the legislature and the executive combined (as principals); and the legislature, acting as an agent, is more knowledgeable than the citizens (as principals). Asymmetry in information is the outcome of these challenges. These issues do not, however, lessen the importance of the principal-agent paradigm for voter-legislative-executive relationships. Instead, it has set up a number of mechanisms to help the legislature (as principals, but on behalf of the people) fulfill its function as a "watchdog" over the executive (agents). "Legislative Oversight Tools" is the name given to these sets of mechanisms.

Strength of the Theory

Since the primary focus of this study is the execution of a legislative oversight role, the principal-agent theory is most appropriate for analyzing this function in light of the systemic features of the legislature as a constituent of a tripartite socio-economic and political setup. The



legislature is a crucial component of the three branches of government that comprise the framework of the Nigerian political system. Its operations within this framework help the system deliver democratic benefits to the Nigerian populace. One of these essential legislative roles is supervision, and the outcomes of the political system are influenced by its actions, whether favorable or unfavorable. In an ideal setup, when duties are carried out within the parameters of existing regulations, the principal-agent model provides further insight into the nature and course of governance. Unfortunately, the Nigerian setting has witnessed a reversal of roles, with the executive taking on the role of principle and the people being considered as agents due to a stark disconnect and flagrant contempt for the needs of good governance, justice, equity, and probity. As a result, the legislature finds it difficult to carry out its duties as a representative body. In this sense, the research is expected to be perceptive, inquisitive, and captivating, and modest suggestions will be offered to stop this cultural and ideological bleeding.

Criticism of the theory

In an ideal setup, when duties are carried out within the parameters of existing regulations, the principal-agent model provides further insight into the nature and course of governance. Unfortunately, the Nigerian setting has witnessed a reversal of roles, with the executive taking on the role of principle and the people being considered as agents due to a stark disconnect and flagrant contempt for the needs of good governance, justice, equity, and probity. As a result, the legislature finds it difficult to carry out its duties as a representative body. In this sense, the research is expected to be perceptive, inquisitive, and captivating, and modest suggestions will be offered to stop this cultural and ideological bleeding. We must instill a democratic culture that recognizes

the boundaries of each branch of government and respects the statutory institutions of government in a society like ours (at least under previous regimes), where public officials and government bodies violate the constitutional authority granted to the National Assembly in Section 4 of the CFRN 1999 (as amended), then take laws into their own hands, disregard legislative calls and resolutions, and otherwise violate the law. The voters, who are the "ultimate principals" in this case, are made to shoulder the burden of the inability of the rule of man over the rule of law to provide any advantages to good oversight performance. Nevertheless, this weakness was not enough to dissuade this researcher from underpinning this research on the principal agent theory.

Application of the Theory

The principal-agent theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of legislative oversight over delegated legislation in Nigeria. In this context, the National Assembly acts as the principal, while regulatory agencies such as NERC, NAFDAC, and NDLEA—empowered through delegated legislation—function as agents (Pelizzo and Stapenhurst, 2004). The theory highlights the challenges of agency loss, which occurs when agents pursue their own interests or deviate from the principal's objectives due to information asymmetry, weak monitoring, or lack of enforcement mechanisms (Gailmard, 2012).

Legislative oversight committees are designed to minimize agency loss by instituting mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing, and supervising the activities of these agencies. Through investigative hearings, public reviews, and regular scrutiny, oversight committees seek to ensure that agencies implement delegated legislation in line with legislative intent and public interest (Guide to Legislative Oversight, 2019; Amadi, 2023). For



example, Section 88 of the Nigerian Constitution empowers the National Assembly to investigate the conduct of any person or authority charged with executing laws, thereby exposing inefficiency, corruption, or misuse of delegated powers (Agbaje *et al*, 2019).

Empirical studies show that while the National Assembly possesses constitutional tools for oversight, effectiveness is often undermined by capacity constraints, political will, and lack of binding enforcement (Amadi, 2023). Nevertheless, the committee structure remains central to reducing agency loss, as it enables legislators to identify inefficiency, ensure compliance, and hold agencies accountable for their delegated functions (Eniayejuni and Evcan, 2015).

Principal–agent theory clarifies how oversight committees in Nigeria's National Assembly can minimize agency loss by actively monitoring and guiding agencies entrusted with delegated legislation, thereby promoting accountability, transparency, and alignment with democratic objectives.

3. Methodology

This study uses an ex-post-facto research design, which means it investigates the relationship between two variables—legislative oversight (independent variable) and delegated legislation (dependent variable)—after the events have already occurred. This design is often used in situations where it is impossible, unethical, or impractical to manipulate the variables being studied. It is a type of quasi-experimental research, where the researcher seeks to understand cause-and-effect relationships based on observations and historical data. In this case, the aim is to measure how legislative oversight by the National Assembly affects the way delegated legislation is carried out by federal agencies.

The location of the study is the National Assembly of Nigeria, which is the central legislative body responsible for making laws and overseeing federal regulatory agencies. This location was chosen for several key reasons. First, it is the most appropriate institution for examining how legislative oversight functions, especially since it holds constitutional authority to oversee rulemaking by federal agencies like NERC, NAFDAC, and NDLEA. Second, focusing on the federal level allows the study to remain clear and manageable, without the complexities of including multiple state assemblies. Lastly, because the National Assembly plays a crucial role in democratic governance, the study generates insights relevant to improving transparency, accountability, and regulatory effectiveness nationwide. The population of the study includes members and staff of the National Assembly, particularly those serving on committees responsible for oversight of the three selected agencies. These individuals were chosen because they are directly involved in reviewing and monitoring how agencies implement delegated legislation. The study also includes key personnel from the agencies themselves, providing perspectives from both sides of the oversight process. While input from the general public and civil society groups is valuable, this research focuses specifically on those with in-depth, practical experience of legislative oversight.

To collect data, the study selected a sample size of 384 respondents, calculated using Cochran's formula for determining appropriate sample sizes based on statistical confidence. Participants were selected from five main groups: 64 members of National Assembly committees, 100 federal bureaucrats, 100 staff from the selected agencies, 60 representatives from interest groups or think tanks, and 60 academic observers. This diverse mix ensures a wide range of



informed views on how legislative oversight is currently conducted and what challenges it faces.

Lastly, the research used a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods for a well-rounded analysis. Qualitative methods included case studies of the three agencies, document reviews, and semi-structured interviews, which helped identify common themes and real-world challenges in oversight practices. Quantitative data were collected through surveys distributed to legislative staff and agency employees, providing measurable insights into perceptions, practices, and reform needs.

Both primary sources (like interviews and surveys) and secondary sources (such as committee reports, academic literature, news articles, and agency documents from 2015 to 2023) were used to ensure a comprehensive and validated understanding of the topic. Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using statistical models, while qualitative data from interviews and documents were coded thematically. The findings from both approaches were then integrated to draw informed conclusions about the strengths, weaknesses, and reform opportunities in the National Assembly's oversight of delegated legislation.

4 Results and Discussion

The table is organized thematically into sections: Response Rate, Demographics, Oversight Mechanisms, Effectiveness of Oversight, Challenges, Strategies/Capacity Enhancement, and Regression Analyses. Each section retains the original data's integrity, including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, coefficients, and significance values. The table uses consistent formatting: frequency/percentage data includes

Category/Item, Options, Frequency, and Percentage; Likert-scale data includes response distributions (SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, UD = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree), Mean, and St. Dev.; regression data includes Model Components, Unstandardized Coefficients (B, Std. Error), Standardized Beta, t-value, Sig., and model fit statistics (R, R², F, Sig.).

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Item	Responses
Valid Responses	306
Non-response	78
Total	384

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics

Gender	Frequency
Male	184
Female	122

Age Group	Frequency
20–30 years	65
30–40 years	93



40–50 years	115
50–60 years	23
Above 60 years	10

Level of Education

Level	Frequency
Bachelor's / HND	129
Postgraduate	51

Marital Status

Status	Frequency
Single	101
Married	192
Widow/Widower	4
Divorced	3

Designation	Frequency
National Assembly Committee Members	48
Federal Bureaucrats	66
Relevant Agencies (Heads & Staff)	84
Interest Groups / Think Tanks	55
Academics	53

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	UD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Adequate oversight mechanisms established	0.8	16.5	20.3	23.3	42.9
Committee hearings effective	0.0	18.0	12.8	41.4	27.8
Sufficient legal provisions for scrutiny	0.0	16.5	18.0	49.6	15.8
Oversight processes transparent	0.8	9.8	24.8	44.4	20.3

Table 4.4: Effectiveness of Oversight (n = 154)

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	UD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Controls rulemaking	3.0	12.8	21.8	48.9	13.5
Ensures agency accountability	12.0	20.3	23.3	44.4	0.0
Curbs agency overreach	0.0	15.8	10.5	52.6	21.1

Table 4.5: Challenges to Oversight (n = 154)

Challenge	SD (%)	D (%)	UD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Institutional inconsistency	1.5	15.8	13.5	53.4	15.8
Political interference	0.0	16.5	10.5	57.1	15.8
Lack of expertise	0.0	17.3	12.0	58.7	12.0

Table 4.6: Strategies for Capacity Enhancement (n = 154)

Strategy	SD (%)	D (%)	UD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Training programmes	1.5	18.0	6.8	53.4	20.3
Improved access to experts	0.0	15.8	14.3	54.1	15.8
Additional funding	0.8	14.3	9.8	56.4	18.8



Tables 4.7–4.10: Regression Results (Summary)

Variable	B	Std. Error
Reporting	0.261	0.049
Hearing	0.370	0.041
Investigation	-0.001	0.046
Bill Review	0.118	0.040
Public Support	0.444	0.068
Specialist Committees	0.611	0.067

Compiled by the Author, August, 2025

This Table 1 above presents the empirical findings from a study examining the National Assembly's legislative oversight of delegated rulemaking powers in Nigerian agencies, such as the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). The analysis draws on quantitative data from 306 questionnaires (out of 384 distributed, yielding a 79.7% response rate) and qualitative insights from key informant interviews with stakeholders including National Assembly members, bureaucrats, agency heads, interest groups, and academics. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (multiple regression) are used to address research objectives on oversight mechanisms, effectiveness, challenges, and enhancement strategies. A criterion mean of 3.00 is applied to Likert-scale items, where scores above indicate agreement. The summary compares and contrasts quantitative results with qualitative data, literature, and internal variations in findings.

Response Rate and Demographics

The response rate of 79.7% (306 responses) is deemed excellent, exceeding benchmarks for robust population inferences, with a 20.3% non-response rate attributed to potential logistical issues. Demographically, respondents were

predominantly male (60.1% vs. 39.9% female), middle-aged (37.6% aged 40-50 years), well-educated (42.2% with Bachelor's/HND, 40.2% with Certificate/Diploma), married (62.7%), and from diverse designations (27.5% agency heads/staff, 21.6% bureaucrats). This composition reflects fair gender and generational diversity but highlights underrepresentation of youth and women, aligning with Nigerian political trends (Pyeatt & Yanus, 2017). In contrast, the high education levels suggest informed perspectives, potentially enhancing oversight discussions, though qualitative data notes gaps in specialized expertise.

Descriptive Statistics: Oversight Mechanisms

Respondents agreed (mean=3.69 > 3.00, SD=1.00) that mechanisms like committee hearings, legislative reviews, and legal provisions are adequately established and effective for monitoring agency rulemaking. High agreement on transparency (mean=3.74) and timeliness (mean=3.76) contrasts with moderate views on consistency (mean=3.59) and resources (mean=3.66). Quantitative data aligns with literature (Aliyu and Adebayo, 2021; Uche and Edeh, 2020) affirming mechanisms' presence but contrasts with critiques of underutilization due to delays (Ogunlana and Babalola, 2019; Ibe and Nwosu, 2022). Qualitatively, informants praised hearings and audits for accountability (e.g., NERC tariff adjustments) but highlighted challenges



like resource limits, echoing quantitative clusters (low SD) but revealing practical inconsistencies not fully captured in means.

Effectiveness of Oversight Mechanisms
Effectiveness in monitoring, controlling, and checking delegated authority was affirmed (mean=3.62 > 3.00, SD=0.97), with strong agreement on curbing overreach (mean=3.79), scrutiny (mean=3.66), and transparency (mean=3.80). However, accountability showed neutrality (mean=3.00), indicating uncertainty. This compares favorably with supportive studies (Okonkwo and Ibe, 2021; Nwosu and Adesina, 2022) but contrasts with criticisms of interference (Oladipo and Musa, 2020). Qualitative data corroborates effectiveness (e.g., public hearings leading to rate adjustments) but contrasts by emphasizing limitations like delays, differing from quantitative optimism. Literature varies similarly: supportive of tools like audits (Ekeocha & Ugwu, 2020) versus critiques of underutilization (Okon and Olumide, 2018).

Institutional and Operational Challenges

Challenges were acknowledged (mean=3.65 > 3.00, SD=0.94), including political interference (mean=3.72), lack of expertise (mean=3.65), funding shortages (mean=3.80), regulatory complexity (mean=3.66), agency resistance (mean=3.86), and volume overload (mean=3.83). Coordination issues showed disagreement (mean=2.95 < 3.00), suggesting perceived adequacy here. Quantitative agreement clusters (low SD) contrast with qualitative emphasis on staffing shortages and delays, aligning with literature on capacity gaps (Eze and Okoro, 2022; Akinyemi & Bello, 2020) but differing from views prioritizing procedural fixes (Omole and Adekunle, 2021). Informants stressed communication and inclusivity needs, comparing to studies

advocating stakeholder engagement (Adetola and Ibrahim, 2021).

Strategies to Enhance Oversight

Strategies were strongly endorsed (mean=3.71 > 3.00, SD=0.94), including training (mean=3.73), expert access (mean=3.70), specialized units (mean=3.71), funding (mean=3.78), civil society collaboration (mean=3.65), technology (mean=3.70), periodic reviews (mean=3.62), best practices adoption (mean=3.77), structural reforms (mean=3.75), and coordination (mean=3.71). Low variation (SD=0.94) indicates consensus, aligning with literature on capacity-building (Ajayi and Bello, 2020) and audits (Nwachukwu and Adeyemi, 2021). Qualitatively, informants echoed stakeholder engagement and technology, contrasting quantitative breadth with specific calls for real-time data sharing.

Inferential Statistics: Regression Analyses

Four regressions (all significant at $p<0.000$) explain variances in oversight aspects:

- **Nature of Mechanisms** ($R^2=0.604$): Reporting ($\beta=0.260$, $p=0.000$), hearings ($\beta=0.447$, $p=0.000$), and bill reviews ($\beta=0.151$, $p=0.003$) positively predict, contrasting non-significant investigation ($\beta=-0.001$, $p=0.982$) and correspondence ($\beta=0.086$, $p=0.072$).
- **Oversight Impact** ($R^2=0.229$): Agency autonomy ($\beta=0.216$, $p=0.006$) and legislative expertise ($\beta=0.353$, $p=0.000$) drive impact, contrasting insignificant reporting role ($p=0.785$), public input ($p=0.710$), and follow-up powers ($p=0.745$).
- **Oversight Rigor** ($R^2=0.332$): Clear procedures ($\beta=0.161$, $p=0.004$) and public support ($\beta=0.407$, $p=0.000$) enhance rigor, versus non-significant technical capacity ($p=0.835$), funding ($p=0.825$), and political will ($p=0.059$).



- **Control over Delegation** ($R^2=0.552$): Specialist committees ($\beta=0.507$, $p=0.000$), access to analysis ($\beta=0.217$, $p=0.000$), and performance targets ($\beta=0.145$, $p=0.004$) strengthen control, contrasting insignificant legislator training ($p=0.942$) and public engagement ($p=0.853$).

Comparisons reveal structural/institutional factors (e.g., committees, procedures) consistently predict outcomes more than operational ones (e.g., training, funding), aligning with qualitative calls for reforms but contrasting literature's emphasis on resources (Olatunji and Okeke, 2021). High R^2 in mechanisms and control models indicate robust explanatory power, versus lower in impact and rigor, suggesting unmeasured variables like political dynamics.

In conclusion, the analysis affirms adequate but challenged oversight mechanisms in Nigeria, with quantitative agreement on effectiveness and strategies contrasting qualitative and literary critiques of practical limitations. Recommendations emphasize capacity-building and collaboration to bridge gaps, providing a foundation for policy enhancements in legislative accountability.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examines the National Assembly's oversight of delegated legislation in Nigeria, detailing its mechanisms, successes, and challenges. Effective tools like committee hearings, budget scrutiny, performance audits, and stakeholder consultations align agency actions with legislative intent and public interest, with public hearings and audits showing notable success. However, challenges such as bureaucratic delays, limited technical expertise, resource constraints, and political interference hinder effectiveness. Institutional weaknesses, including insufficient funding and procedural inefficiencies, further limit

oversight. Proposed reforms include increased funding, hiring technical experts, mandatory audits, digital tools for efficiency, broader stakeholder engagement, and ethical guidelines to reduce political interference and enhance transparency and accountability.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following to improve the National Assembly's oversight of delegated legislation in Nigeria:

1. **Enhance Oversight Mechanisms:** Streamline committee hearings, budget reviews, and performance audits using technology-driven tools for real-time monitoring and broader stakeholder consultations, including marginalized voices, to ensure agencies like NERC, NAFDAC, and NDLEA align with legislative intent and public interest.
2. **Improve Effectiveness:** Invest in capacity-building programs to address technical knowledge gaps in sectors like energy and healthcare, provide regular training for legislators and staff, adopt digital platforms for data-driven evaluations, and increase funding for rigorous committee reviews.
3. **Address Institutional Challenges:** Establish a centralized oversight coordination unit to streamline communication, reduce bureaucratic delays, and improve response times. Prioritize adequate staffing and funding to enhance efficiency and thoroughness in regulatory reviews.
4. **Strengthen Procedures and Capacity:** Create a robust legal framework for agency compliance, enforce mandatory performance audits, schedule public reviews, and implement advanced digital monitoring systems. Institutionalize transparent and inclusive stakeholder engagement to boost trust and accountability.



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