

Legislative Oversight Functions And Leadership Credibility And Accountability In Nigeria: A Study Of Edo State House Of Assembly

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in Nigeria, with a focus on the Edo State House of Assembly. The descriptive survey design was used, and questionnaires were administered to staff of the Edo State House of Assembly, civil society organizations with legislative-related mandates, and lawmakers. A simple random sampling technique was adopted, and a sample of 290 respondents was used for the study. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly. Executive interference significantly affects the relationship between oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. Additionally, personal interests and ambition of legislators significantly affect the relationship between oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. The study recommended among others that the legislature should be insulated from executive influence and that lawmakers should be more responsible and responsive to their duties.*

Keywords: Legislative oversight functions, Leadership, Credibility, Accountability

INTRODUCTION

The role of the legislature in governance and enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions and services cannot be overemphasized. Legislatures serve as essential components for any democratic government and a major factor in its sustenance, as their existence predates the advent of modern democracy. It has been noted that the emergence of the legislature dates back to the twelfth century and was a product of medieval European civilization, transformed in the age of democracy to suit the needs of contemporary political systems (Egobueze, 2016). Umeagbalasi (2013) states that before and after the Second World War, after colonialism failed, nations grew in number, and constitutions incorporated national legislatures to replace extant governing institutions throughout the world, while the influence of legislatures continues to rise in 21st century approaches (Egobueze, 2020).

The term oversight is used to define an array of activities applied by legislatures to check executive action (Kraai et al., 2017). Oversight powers are provided for in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as well as in the Rules of the two chambers of the National Assembly. It is also an added responsibility of overseeing the executive arm in the implementation of projects over which the legislature has approved funds. Oversight requires that the legislature conduct investigations into governance issues through its committees and monitor the performance of ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) for the benefit of citizens (Njemanze, 2013).

Legislative oversight is achieved effectively through committees, and the committee system is an effective tool for accountability. Egobueze (2018) states that a committee is a group of people appointed for a specific function by a larger group, typically consisting of members of that group. Consequently, every legislative house has special, standing, and ad-hoc committees established to support its affairs. Through their oversight functions, legislative committees monitor how well agencies are administering the laws passed in order to ascertain their efficacy and impact on citizens.

Leadership credibility refers to the trustworthiness and integrity of leaders, while accountability means the willingness of leaders to take responsibility for their actions and decisions. When the legislature performs its oversight functions effectively, it enhances the credibility of its leadership and strengthens accountability in governance. However, committees are often faced with challenges in carrying out effective oversight for various reasons.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The legislature is perhaps the only arm that sustains democracy through its representation of the people, making laws for good governance, and ensuring accountability through oversight functions. In Nigeria generally, and in Edo State in particular, the legislature is seen as acting as a protector of the will of the people and stakeholders in the state, as ensured by the constitution—the symbol of the social contract between government and citizens (Odinga, 1994). The efficiency of the legislature in carrying out its oversight responsibilities has been sometimes questioned due to interference from the political class, corrupt practices, weak institutional capacity, and dependence on the executive arm of government (Poteet, 2010; Taiwo & Fajingbesi, 2004).

The legislature has been regarded as the hallmark of democracy and the platform on which other institutions of government stand (Benjamin, 2010), yet most legislative assemblies in the country have struggled to carry out their watchman duties. In Edo State, this has been linked to conflicts, poor accountability, and weakening of public trust in the ability of the legislature to represent the interests of citizens. When oversight functions are not properly performed, the credibility of legislative leadership is questioned, and accountability suffers. In light of the foregoing, this study aims to examine legislative oversight functions and how they relate to leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are raised for the study:

1. What is the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility in the Edo State House of Assembly?
2. How does executive interference affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly?
3. How do personal interests and ambition of legislators affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study is to examine legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in Nigeria, with a focus on the Edo State House of Assembly. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.
2. Assess how executive interference affects the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.
3. Determine how personal interests and ambition of legislators affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are formulated for the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.
2. Executive interference does not significantly affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.
3. Personal interests and ambition of legislators do not significantly affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.

LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

Oversight refers to the supervision of government activities and the scrutiny of public expenditure to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of state resources. It involves actions such as reviewing, verifying, questioning, and holding the executive accountable (Oyewo, 2007). This is carried out through various legislative mechanisms, including committee assignments, site inspections, parliamentary inquiries, and correspondence with ministries, departments, and agencies. A legislature that effectively monitors the executive demonstrates a commitment to good governance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Principal-Agent Theory, which was developed by Stephen Ross in 1973 and later expanded by Jensen and Meckling in 1976. This theory explains the relationship between two parties: the principal who gives authority, and the agent who acts on behalf of the principal. In a democratic system, the people are the principals because they vote and give power to the government. The legislature and other arms of government are the agents because they are elected to work for the people. The main challenge in this relationship is that agents may sometimes act in their own interest instead of serving the people who elected them. This is why oversight functions become very important. The legislature, as an agent of the people, is expected to watch over the executive arm to ensure that public resources are used properly and that government policies serve the people's interest. Without proper oversight, the executive may misuse power or act without accountability.

This theory is very relevant to this study on legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly. First, it helps us understand that the legislature is not just a law-making body but also a watchdog that represents the people's interest. The theory explains why oversight functions are necessary—to prevent the executive from acting in ways that go against public interest. Second, the theory helps explain the challenges identified in this study. When legislators put their personal interests and ambitions above the people's interest, they fail in their role as agents, which undermines their credibility and accountability. Also, when the executive interferes with legislative oversight, it means the agent (legislature) is being controlled by another agent (executive), which weakens accountability. By applying this theory, this study is able to examine how well the Edo State House of Assembly performs its oversight duties and how this performance affects leadership credibility and accountability.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Ayodele and Akanmu (2024) examined the role of the National Assembly in Nigeria's socio-economic governance and development. Using a qualitative document analysis approach, the study found that the National Assembly contributed substantially through law-making, oversight, and constituency services. The study concluded that while the National Assembly plays a crucial role in national development, its effectiveness is hampered by executive dominance and lack of political will. However, the study did not investigate state legislatures or how oversight relates to leadership credibility.

Ewuim, Nnamani, and Eberinwa (2014) analysed legislative oversight and good governance in Nigeria's National Assembly during the Obasanjo and Jonathan administrations. Drawing on qualitative analysis of constitutional provisions and secondary sources, the study found that legislative oversight contributed to good governance but was constrained by executive interference and weak institutional capacity. The study focused exclusively on the federal legislature and did not examine oversight and leadership credibility at the state level.

Agbedi, Allen, and Ukachikara (2020) investigated the challenges confronting oversight functions of the National Assembly between 2007 and 2017. Employing content analysis of transcribed interviews and participant observations, the study identified inadequate statutory funding, lack of legislative expertise, and executive interference as major barriers to effective oversight. The study was limited to the National Assembly and did not explore how these challenges affect leadership credibility and accountability at the state level.

Jooji (2019) examined the role of legislative oversight in deepening democracy in Nigeria. Using secondary sources and content analysis within the framework of principal-agent theory, the study found that oversight functions contributed to a more equitable distribution of democratic dividends and rekindled citizens' confidence in democratic governance. Yet, the study remained

theoretical and did not empirically assess how oversight functions relate to leadership credibility and accountability in a specific state legislature.

Ademeso (2025) examined the effect of legislative oversight on the performance of the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC). Using a survey design with 221 respondents, the study found that legislative oversight positively influenced the implementation of national communications policy and helped create an impartial regulatory authority. However, the study focused on a single federal agency and did not address the dynamics of legislative oversight and leadership credibility at the state level.

Existing studies on legislative oversight in Nigeria focus predominantly on the National Assembly, with limited empirical attention to state legislatures. While Ayodele and Akanmu (2024), Agbedi et al. (2020), and Ewuim et al. (2014) examine federal oversight, they do not explore how oversight functions relate to leadership credibility and accountability at the state level. Jooji (2019) offers a theoretical perspective without sub-national empirical application, and Ademeso (2025) focuses on a federal agency. This study addresses this gap by investigating the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability within the Edo State House of Assembly.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which involved the use of questionnaires to gather data from respondents. The population comprised staff of the Edo State House of Assembly, civil society organizations with legislative-related mandates, and lawmakers, totaling 572 individuals. A sample of 290 respondents was selected, representing approximately 50% of the population.

The simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. The Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size. Data were collected through primary sources using a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on legislative oversight functions, leadership credibility, and accountability. The questionnaire was administered to the selected respondents, and additional insights were obtained through interviews. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a Cronbach Alpha test was conducted, yielding a coefficient of 0.85, which indicated a high level of reliability. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the t-test statistical method to test the stated hypotheses.

RESULTS

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.

Table 1: T-test analysis for the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability

Source Variables	X1	SD1	X2	SD2	df	t-cal	Sig	Remarks
Legislative Oversight	3.29	.71	3.36	.72	193	-.55	.58	S
Leadership Credibility and Accountability								

Key: X1= Mean of Legislative Oversight Functions; X2 = Mean of Leadership Credibility and Accountability; SD1= Standard Deviation of Legislative Oversight; SD2= Standard Deviation of Leadership Credibility and Accountability; df= degree of freedom; Sig= probability value (2-tailed); t-cal= calculated values; S= Significant.

Table 1 presents the summary of t-test analysis on the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. The data revealed that the t-cal value of -.55 was less than the significance value of 0.05 at 193 degrees of freedom, indicating that there is a significant relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Executive interference does not significantly affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.

Table 2: T-test analysis for the effect of executive interference on the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability

Source Variables	X1	SD1	X2	SD2	df	t-cal	Sig	Remarks
Executive Interference	3.11	.74	3.14	.83	193	-.04	.98	S
Oversight and Credibility/Accountability								

Key: X1= Mean of Executive Interference; X2 = Mean of Oversight Functions and Leadership Credibility/Accountability; SD1= Standard Deviation of Executive Interference; SD2= Standard Deviation of Oversight and Credibility/Accountability; df= degree of freedom; Sig= probability value (2-tailed); t-cal= calculated values; S= Significant.

Table 2 presents the summary of t-test analysis on the effect of executive interference on the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. The data revealed that the t-cal value of -.04 was less than the significance value of 0.05 at 193 degrees of freedom, indicating that executive interference significantly affects the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: Personal interests and ambition of legislators do not significantly affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly.

Table 3: T-test analysis for the effect of personal interests and ambition of legislators on the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability

Source Variables	X1	SD1	X2	SD2	df	t-cal	Sig	Remarks
Personal Interests and Ambition	3.28	.69	3.27	.81	193	-.07	.98	S
Oversight and Credibility/Accountability								

Key: X1= Mean of Personal Interests and Ambition; X2 = Mean of Oversight Functions and Leadership Credibility/Accountability; SD1= Standard Deviation of Personal Interests and Ambition; SD2= Standard Deviation of Oversight and Credibility/Accountability; df= degree of freedom; Sig= probability value (2-tailed); t-cal= calculated values; S= Significant.

Table 3 presents the summary of t-test analysis on the effect of personal interests and ambition of legislators on the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. The data revealed that the t-cal value of -.07

was less than the significance value of 0.05 at 193 degrees of freedom, indicating that personal interests and ambition of legislators significantly affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a significant relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly. This indicates that when the legislature effectively performs its oversight duties, it enhances the credibility of its leadership and strengthens accountability. A legislature that actively monitors the executive demonstrates transparency and commitment to good governance, which builds public trust. This is supported by Pelizzo (2013), who noted that effective oversight contributes to democratic accountability.

The result also showed that executive interference significantly affects the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. This suggests that when the executive arm interferes with legislative oversight—through political pressure, manipulation of resources, or intimidation—it weakens the legislature's ability to hold the executive accountable. This, in turn, undermines the credibility of legislative leadership. This finding agrees with Oloruntoba and Gbemigun (2019), who observed that excessive executive dominance in Nigeria erodes legislative autonomy and compromises accountability in governance.

Furthermore, the result showed that personal interests and ambition of legislators significantly affect the relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. This indicates that when lawmakers prioritize self-serving motives or political gains over their constitutional responsibilities, the effectiveness of oversight is compromised. Such tendencies undermine the integrity of legislative oversight and weaken public confidence in the legislature, as argued by Njemanze (2013). When citizens perceive that legislators are driven by personal ambition rather than public service, the credibility of legislative leadership suffers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from the study, the researcher concludes that:

There is a significant relationship between legislative oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability in the Edo State House of Assembly. Executive interference significantly affects this relationship, and personal interests and ambition of legislators also significantly affect the relationship between oversight functions and leadership credibility and accountability. These factors have a significant impact on the effectiveness of public institutions in Edo State and in Nigeria in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. The legislature should be insulated from the influence of the executive, as executive interference weakens oversight effectiveness and damages leadership credibility.
2. Lawmakers should be more responsible and responsive to their duties. They should prioritize the public interest over personal ambition to enhance their credibility and accountability.
3. To encourage commitment, salaries and allowances of lawmakers could be linked to their level of participation in legislative proceedings.
4. The leadership of the house should be more financially responsible. Award of contracts should follow due process and be carried out in a transparent manner.
5. Legislative oversight activities should be adequately funded and supported to enable lawmakers to effectively monitor the executive and ensure accountability.

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