

Challenges faced by state House of Assembly on Oversighting Public Sectors in Nigeria: Study of Bauchi State House of Assembly Bauchi State

Adamu, N., Magaji, M., Gadau, Y. I., & Malami, A. M.

^{1,2} Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Sa'adu Zungur University, Bauchi State.

^{3,4} Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Science, Sa'adu Zungur University, Bauchi State.

¹ nuraadamugiade@sazu.edu.ng

Abstract

Globally nations strive to achieve good governance, and this effort requires institutional function and in a democratic set up, legislature serves as an institution that ensures smooth policies implementation, overseeing executives to ensure compliance with acts and laws of the country. Nigeria as a country is not exceptional and its legislature serves as an instrument of good governance through representation, oversight and law making and yet they face the challenges that affect their oversighting function especially at state house of assemblies. This paper is set to examine the challenges affecting state house of assemblies on oversighting public sectors a study of Bauchi State House of Assembly. The paper employed face to face interview as a means of data collection and thematic analysis was used in discussing the findings. saturation principle was used in interviewing 8 informants. The findings reveal that lack of financial autonomy hinders legislature to oversight the ministries, departments and agencies because of lack of logistic support. Party affiliation is also a detriment to members of the ruling party side with executives. Similarly, lack of cooperation by the MDAs hinders legislative members in obtaining relevant information especially finance records. The paper recommended that legislature as an institution should be given full financial autonomy to discharge its duties effectively, secondly Executives branch should see legislators as friends of progress and work hand in hand with them to enable them to carry out their constitutional responsibility. Training and re-training should be given on legislative activities such as oversight to legislators to improve their expertise and skills that would yield positive outcomes.

Keywords: Challenges, Oversight, Public Sector, Bauchi State House of Assembly, Nigeria

I. Introduction

Legislative oversight is widely recognized as one of the most important pillars of democratic governance because it promotes accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and responsible management of public resources. In democratic systems, legislatures are constitutionally empowered to monitor the activities of the executive arm of government in order to prevent abuse of power, corruption, financial mismanagement, and arbitrary use of state authorities. Oversight functions enable legislatures to examine government policies, scrutinize public expenditures, evaluate implementation of development projects, and ensure that public institutions operate in accordance with constitutional provisions and established laws. Through committee hearings, investigations, public accounts reviews, budget scrutiny, and monitoring of ministries, departments, and agencies, legislative institutions serve as mechanisms for protecting public interest and strengthening democratic governance (Akindele, 2019).

In Nigeria, the State Houses of Assembly occupy strategic positions within the country's federal democratic structure. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria grants State Houses of Assembly the authority to make laws for peace, order, and good governance within their respective states while also empowering them to oversee the activities of the executive branch and public institutions. Section 128 and Section 129 of the Constitution specifically authorize legislative investigations into the conduct of government officials, management of public funds, and implementation of state policies and projects. The essence of this constitutional responsibility is to

ensure accountability in governance and guarantee that public resources are utilized effectively for societal development.

The oversight responsibilities of State Houses of Assembly are particularly important in developing democracies such as Nigeria where institutional weaknesses, corruption, abuse of office, and executive dominance continue to undermine governance processes. Effective oversight contributes significantly to transparency and democratic consolidation because it compels public institutions to justify their actions and account for the management of public funds. According to Ogundiya and Baba (2020), legislative oversight enhances good governance by reducing corruption and ensuring compliance with financial regulations and public accountability standards. Similarly, Momoh (2018) argues that oversight activities help to improve public sector performance because government agencies become more cautious and responsible when subjected to legislative scrutiny.

Despite the constitutional significance of legislative oversight, many State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria have struggled to effectively perform their oversight responsibilities. Evidence from different states suggests that legislative oversight has often been weak, politicized, inconsistent, and ineffective. In many cases, public institutions continue to experience financial irregularities, abandoned projects, inflated contracts, poor service delivery, and abuse of office despite the existence of legislative monitoring structures. Reports from anti-corruption agencies, civil society organizations, and audit institutions have repeatedly shown persistent cases of corruption and financial mismanagement across several state governments in Nigeria (Transparency International, 2022).

One of the major challenges affecting oversight functions in Nigeria is executive interference in legislative affairs. In many states, governors exert significant influence over State Houses of Assembly through political patronage, party structures, financial control, and appointment processes. This situation weakens legislative independence and undermines the ability of lawmakers to critically scrutinize executive actions. According to Saliu and Muhammad (2021), the dominance of the executive over state legislatures has transformed many Houses of Assembly into institutions that merely endorse executive decisions rather than independently exercising oversight powers. Executive-legislative conflict or excessive cooperation can therefore affect the quality and effectiveness of oversight activities.

Another major challenge confronting State Houses of Assembly is inadequate institutional capacity. Effective oversight requires technical expertise, legislative research support, financial resources, trained personnel, and access to reliable information. However, many state legislatures in Nigeria operate with insufficient funding, poor research facilities, inadequate staffing, and limited technological support. This limits their ability to analyze complex financial documents, monitor public projects, or investigate government agencies effectively. As noted by Yusha'u and Aliyu (2020), weak institutional structures and inadequate professional support significantly reduce the effectiveness of legislative committees in carrying out oversight responsibilities.

Corruption and political patronage also constitute serious obstacles to effective legislative oversight in Nigeria. Some lawmakers allegedly compromise oversight activities for personal or political gain, thereby weakening accountability mechanisms within the public sector. Oversight visits and committee investigations are sometimes manipulated to settle political scores or negotiate personal benefits rather than promote transparency and good governance. Political godfatherism, party loyalty, and fear of political retaliation often discourage legislators from exposing corruption or confronting powerful executive officials. Consequently, oversight activities may become symbolic rather than genuinely corrective.

Furthermore, public participation in legislative oversight remains limited in many Nigerian states. Citizens, civil society organizations, media institutions, and community groups are important stakeholders in democratic accountability because they provide information, monitor government performance, and demand transparency. However, weak civic engagement, poor access to legislative information, and lack of public trust in political institutions often reduce societal involvement in oversight processes. According to Eme and Onyishi (2019), weak collaboration between legislatures

and civil society organizations contributes to ineffective public accountability and limited transparency in governance.

The challenges confronting State Houses of Assembly have broader implications for governance and national development. Weak oversight allows corruption, financial mismanagement, abuse of office, and policy failures to persist within public institutions (Adamu & Magaji, 2026). This undermines public confidence in democratic governance and affects the delivery of essential services such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social welfare. In many Nigerian states, poor oversight has contributed to the abandonment of projects, diversion of public funds, and inefficient implementation of government programs. As a result, strengthening legislative oversight has become increasingly important for improving accountability and promoting sustainable development.

Although several studies have examined legislative oversight in Nigeria, many of them have relied heavily on quantitative approaches and descriptive analyses. Limited qualitative studies have explored the lived experiences, institutional realities, and personal perceptions of lawmakers and stakeholders directly involved in oversight activities. Existing literature often focuses on constitutional provisions and institutional frameworks without adequately examining the practical challenges encountered by legislators in carrying out oversight functions. Consequently, there is insufficient understanding of how political dynamics, executive interference, institutional weaknesses, corruption, and resource limitations interact to shape oversight practices within State Houses of Assembly.

This study therefore seeks to provide an in-depth qualitative understanding of the challenges faced by State Houses of Assembly in oversighting public sectors in Nigeria with focus on Bauchi State House of Assembly. Through a qualitative case study approach, the study will explore the experiences, perceptions, and institutional realities of lawmakers, committee officials, legislative staff, and other stakeholders involved in oversight processes.

II. Literature Review

This section reviewed some related concepts understudy such as Legislature, State house of assembly, Funding.

A. Legislature

The legislature, being one of the arms of government in a democratic system, plays a vital role in ensuring fair governance. Parliaments have always had significant constitutional obligation as democratically elected representatives of citizens to ensure that government is for the people (Sayuti, 2016).

Around the world, the term "legislature" is known by various names (Okpe & Taya, 2018; Oni, 2013). In Nigeria, for example, it is addressed as "the National Assembly." 'The Parliament' in the United Kingdom, 'The Congress' in the United States (Heywood, 2007; Lafenwa, 2009; Okpe & Taya, 2018; Oni, 2013). The legislature in Nigeria is a state legal body established by an act of the 1999 constitution to make, change, or amend laws as well as perform constituency representation in the National Assembly. It also exercises control over the government through an oversight role (Okpe & Taya, 2018). The legislature, according to Okoosi-Simbine (2010), is a policy-influencing organ. It is a legislative and deliberative body established to strengthen a democratic political system. The legislature represents the Site of Sovereignty, the First Estate of the Realm, Public Expression, and the area of Public Will Representation. Okoosi Simbine's submissions above portray the legislature as a legal instrument of the state and the voice of the people. These also endorse Chukwudi and Ojakorotu (2021) description of the legislature. According to the above perspectives on the legislature, the institution derives its power from the people. It simply states that the legislature's existence and authority should be used to represent the will of the citizens.

B. Legislative Oversight

Cosmeus (2016) opined that the key purpose of the legislature in the process of public policy is to hold governments accountable for their decision-making making as well as to analyse the

government's actions. In recent years, legislators became a scrutinizing institution of the executive to provide answerable and accountable government. In a similar study, Shafritz, Russell, and Borick (2016), believe that oversight function can be seen in many forms, the most widespread being annual (in a place like the US) congressional hearings on agency budget requests, where agencies must defend or justify their activities to the satisfaction of the Congress. Subpoena power may be used to convene reluctant agencies or public officials at times.

In most cases, constitution provides legal support to legislatures oversight functions which allows it to monitor the actions of executive arm and its agencies to decide whether public projects are being effectively executed. Defty (2020) also assert that the legislature's oversight function entails the ensuring and the implementation of policies to ensure that laws and governmental programs are implemented effectively. As mentioned earlier, Monitoring, examining as well as the reviewing government programs and activities to ensure that the actions taken are well transparent, accountable, and coherent with original as enshrined in the constitution.

Legislators, according to Frolick (2016), opined that the legal backing, authority, as well as responsibility to embrace governments accountable for their actions. Legislators, according to Ojo and Omotola (2014), that the Ministries, Departments, and other Agencies of government accountable to the public for their activities. They do not hold executive accountable for their functions but also have the authority to confirm executive's appointments. Ministers, heads of agencies, ambassadors, and the Chief Justice of the Federation are examples of such appointments. Legislators use their oversight function to ensure that the finances allocated for government institutions are used for the said purpose and to ensure that the citizens enjoy the good value of their money.

According to Chohan, (2017), the power of legislators to check mate public funds has served as the instrument for public transparency in budgeting process. The legislature's essential power of appropriation gave it formal influence in disbursing funds between competing priorities. Similarly different political systems reflect varying influence of legislators in the process of budgeting. For example, in the United Kingdom, Prime Minister can be checked once in a week, and legislators can equally subject ministers to similar inspection once in a week if the federations account is mismanaged by them (Heywood, 2007).

Yusuf, (2020) believed that the legislative oversight role in presidential systems is typically a regular of checks and balances. However, the oversight function is difficult in a parliamentary system because the legislative committee's query. A frequently scheduled question and answer phase will serve the purpose in such case by allowing the opponent members to question the ministers and challenge government decisions on policies and programs. According to Femi, and Olayide (2019) the oversight role of legislators is indeed a gigantic component of contemporary day legislature regardless of the system of government. In a similar vein, Saliu, and Muhammad (2010), cited by Ewuim, Nnamani, and Eberinwa, this means that the legislative arm actively participates in regular monitoring of activities of the executive arm and its agencies.

The principle underlying legislative role in ensuring that public policies are implemented in line with legislative targets. Oversight functions also include monitoring and controlling government activities through general debates and questioning of ministers, agencies, and other public officials. They can investigate the committees and, if required, impeach the officers who oppose representative democracy efficiency throughout their tasks. Section (1) (a-b) of the Nigerian constitution, stated that each House of the National Assembly shall have the power to direct and examine any issue or thing with regards that to the authority that make laws, as well as the undertake of affairs of any person, authority, ministry, or government department charged or intended to be charged with the duty of or responsibility for administering laws enacted by the National Assembly. This is done to picture corruption, inefficiency, or waste in the execution of government programs (Nwogwugwu, & Ishola 2019).

C. State House of Assembly

The state house is made up of elected representatives from all the voting districts in the state. The number of representatives is determined by the population of the state and is typically based on a formula that considers a variety of factors (Adamu, Yusuf & Mohammed, 2023). The representatives usually have a mix of education, experience, and backgrounds that best serve the people of the state.

Bauchi state is located at northeastern state and was cover Gombe state its creation in 1996, and the state covers 20 LG and Hausa Fulani are the most predominant ethnic group with other tribes like Gerawa, Jarawa, Sayawa, Ningawa etc. Islam is the major religion in the state with some few Christians in Bogoro, Tafawa Balewa and some part of the state. As a major agriculture-based state, the Bauchi State economy partially relies on livestock and crops, cotton, groundnuts, millet, tomatoes, and yams with advanced irrigation schemes increasing agricultural production since statehood. The state has other food processing industries and canning facilities. It has tourism site in Yankari National Park and its Wikki Warm Springs.

D. The History of Bauchi State House of Assembly

Mission is to always strive by way of motions, resolutions, legislations, and true representation to enhance the quality of life of the people in all the constituencies of Bauchi State and to cooperate with every arm and level of governance to engender sustainable development of our dear state. (BAHA Archive, 2023). The Business of Legislature has been a recurring decimal in the art of governance, especially in a democratic set up. It is the turning point of democracy and of course, the first casualty when the elixir is brought to naught. In Bauchi State, the process of Legislation by a team of elected politicians began in 1979 when the State's first democratic Governor, Alhaji Tatari Ali, of blessed memory was elected. The first Speaker that headed what was in legislative parlance called the first session of the Assembly was Hon. Maigari Yerima Papa and since then, the assembly had witnessed successive leadership up to 2011-2015 era of Hon. Yahaya Muhammad Miya. History is replete with torrents of sorrow and joy in the business of legislation in Bauchi, but perhaps what makes the reign of Honorable Hon. Yahaya Muhammad Miya is the unity of purpose, sense of human belonging, open-door policy, human approach to issues, dedicated leadership, clarity of vision and sincerity of purpose. Indeed, it is gratifying to note that the result of all these virtues were translated into the modest achievements recorded by the State Governor in all facets of human endeavour, name it, electricity, rural roads, health care services, education, agriculture, information dissemination, water supply, urban roads, sports, and tourism development (BAHA, 2023). Bauchi State House of Assembly is among the first three houses described in the whole federation as one of peaceful, well focused, and certainly the most incorruptible. Bauchi in what appears to be the principle of separation of power at play, the Speaker, Bauchi House of Assembly, Hon. Halliru Dauda Jika, believed to be government anointed, has lost his seat to a new speaker. Honourable Jika was accused of breaching a House motion by visiting the governor at the Petition and Human Rights, Cabinet Services, Budget and Appropriation, Public Accounts Committee, Education, Agriculture, Housing and Environment, Security Sports, Commerce and Industry, Information, House Services, Works and Transport, Water Resources, Health, Women Affairs, and the Committee on Judiciary (BAHA, 2023). Government House, and general incompetence (Shehu 2007). That is the more reason why executive-cum-legislative cordially is at its apex in the state. The cordial relations between executive and legislative is hygienic to democratic system especially in developing states in Africa. In which the legislative body can easily be manipulated by the executive and make them ineffective or relegate their functions thereof. The executive and legislative arms of the government see each other as different institutions but with a common goal, which is dedicated service to the people of the State. The 31 members represent districts in the state; some local governments have more than one representing because they have more than one district head. This is to allow proper representation in parliament. Bauchi State House of Assembly have 32 standing Committees, they are: Public Each member is heading a specialized committee based on his professional calling, while the current leadership of the House-comprising Honorable Speaker, Hon. Abubakar Yakubu Suleiman Hon. Deputy Speaker, Jamilu Umar Dahiru, Leader (Majority) Hodi

Sale Jibir, Minority Leader Abdu Bala Rishi, Chief Whip, Wakili Musa Nakwada, Deputy Chief Whip, Sarki Jadori Bello and Minority Whip Saleh Zakariyya were made to become part of decision making in most of the Committees. This makes information management easier and communication services more effective. Each of these Committees has the power and capacity to investigate any matter brought before it or initiates actions that will make life adorable for the entire people of the state.

III. Methodology

The study utilizes qualitative approach, employed case study research design. Similarly, the study used purposive sampling in determining the informants. Face to face interview was utilized for generating information primarily and articles, reports and other secondary sources are employed to support the findings.

Organization	Code	No of informants
Bauchi State Legislators	MH	4
Academic fellow	AF	2
Bauchi State Ministry of Education	PS	1
Members of Legislative commission	MLS	1
Total		8

The justification for the number of informants was guided by saturation principle. Braun and Clarke (2021) recommend a sample size between 8 and 16 interviews or three and five focus groups.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section discusses the findings on challenges affecting state house of assemblies on overlooking public sectors in Nigeria focus was on Bauchi State House of Assembly.

It is evident from the literature that legislatures do face challenges in conducting their oversight function. This can be seen through internal or external challenges faced by committees and exploring possible solutions on how to overcome challenges faced by committees in conducting their oversight function on public sectors of Bauchi state. This can be seen below in the subsection 4.1.

A. Internal challenges facing legislative committee on conduct of oversight function.

This sub-heading discussed the challenges faced by legislative committees of BAHA in conducting their oversight function. This includes internal challenges faced by the members during their constitutional assignments. Scholars have longed pointed out that legislators are facing challenges in conducting their responsibilities. For instance, Hossain (2020) posited that “the parliament of Bangladesh has been facing several problems and challenges to ensure its viability and effectiveness”. Therefore, the study dwells on the responses gathered from various informants on the challenges faced by BAHA legislative committees in their oversight function.

One of the informants who is a member and a principal officer- Deputy Majority of BAHA posits that:

Off course, we do have problems internally in performing our task of oversight function. Internal problems are the most frustrating because I have been in the house for three terms and the challenges remained the same. For instance, there was a time I chaired a committee on education, and we took a round trip to the institutions and schools under the Ministry of Education, and we faced lots of challenges in terms of security and logistics. (MH3, 2023).

This response is agreed by MH2 and PS that there is lack of cooperation by committee members and from MDAs. This corroborates with Arowolo (2019) Nigeria, being a developing country, the legislature’s capacity to carry out its oversight functions remains weak because legislative role and culture is at its infancy and therefore often confronted by many challenges.

Similarly, another response was given by a member of BAHA who is the chairman of Education committee and posits that:

We truly have challenges both internal and external ones. Some of the internal challenges include lack of technical expertise by the members of the House because some of them are going there for the first time and do not know anything on legislative matters. Political interference by the executive because of party politics. also, members fail to cooperate because of party differences. (MH1, 2023).

This response is agreed by MSLC, AF2, MH4 that there is lack of cooperation from committee members and MDAs. Another response is given by an academic fellow, who is a lecturer in Bauchi State University Gadau and asserts that:

Committees do have internal challenges which includes corruption through lobbying on some issues, internal politicking, ignorance by legislators (AF1, 2023).

All the above responses corroborate with various findings, Yusuf (2020) asserts that “the legislature lacks the institutional framework of imposing some of their resolutions and recommendations arising from oversight activities”. Similarly, Chukwudi and Ojakorotu (2021) posits Nigerian legislative committee system, unlike that of Singapore, is laden with corruption and consists of more corrupt legislators than honest ones. This unfortunate downturn has robbed the Nigerian Parliament of its pride and earned it disgraceful shame and distrust, when considering the number of corrupt practices perpetrated by members of legislative committees.

Similarly, Martin and Whitaker (2019) hold that Legislatures are considered weak due to the lack of strong committees in coalition with the parliamentary system of government in England and this has played an important oversight role through other parliamentary devices, including helping to police the implementation of coalition agreements.

B. External challenges of legislative committee and conduct of oversight function.

Therefore, the study dwells on the responses gathered from various informants on the external challenges faced by BAHA legislative committees in their oversight function.

One of the informants who is a member and principal officer as well as the Deputy Majority of BAHA posits that:

Externally, we face some challenges but the main one lacks cooperation and compliance from MDAs in term of providing information and teamwork because sometimes they see us as a threat not as those willing to work with them (MH3, 2023).

This response is agreed by MH2 and PS that there is lack of cooperation by committee members and from MDAs. This corroborates with Arowolo (2019) Nigeria, being a developing country, the legislature’s capacity to carry out its oversight functions remains weak because legislative role and culture is at its infancy and therefore often confronted by many challenges.

Similarly, another response was given by a member of BAHA who is also the chairman of Education committee and posits that:

We truly have challenges both internal and external ones. But the external challenges are the most disturbing, we are facing issues like underfunding and lack of security underrates as an institution and demotivate us as officers saddled with public responsibilities in discharging our primary assignments (MH1, 2023).

This response is agreed by MSLC, AF2, MH4 that there is lack of cooperation by committee members and from MDAs. Another response is given by an academic fellow who is also a lecturer in Bauchi State University Gadau asserts that:

Committees do have external challenges which include lack of cooperation between the committees and MDAs and lack of framework for oversight purpose by legislators (AFI, 2023).

All the above responses corroborate with various findings, Yusuf (2020) asserts that “the legislature lacks the institutional framework of imposing some of their resolutions and recommendations arising from oversight activities”. Similarly, Chukwudi and Ojakorotu (2021) posits Nigerian legislative committee system, unlike that of Singapore, is laden with corruption and consists of more corrupt legislators than honest ones. This unfortunate downturn has robbed the Nigerian Parliament of its pride and earned it disgraceful shame and distrust, when considering the number of corrupt practices perpetrated by members of legislative committees.

Similarly, Martin and Whitaker (2019) hold that Legislatures are considered weak due to lack of strong committees in coalition of government in parliamentary system in England and this has played an important oversight role through other parliamentary devices, including helping to police the implementation of coalition agreements.

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

It is evident from the responses from informants and literature that legislative committees of BAHA face challenges both internal and external ones. Some these challenges include lack of logistics, security, fund, lack of cooperation from MDAs, internal politicking, corruption, lack of technical expertise by legislators. Despite these challenges the committees are still trying their best to oversight the public sectors even though it is not effective but that does not hinder them from discharging their primary assignment.

Some possible solution to these challenges which if addressed will help the legislators work in committee levels to discharge their responsibilities effectively. These solutions include provision of funds, training and retraining of legislators, provision of cash reward system to committed legislators who are honest to encouraged them to be corrupt free, declaring asset by the legislators, harmonious relationship between the two arms of the government that is executive-legislative relations.

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