

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

Blessing Onyinyechi Eke, PhD¹, Atiku Ibrahim, PhD²

¹Senior Legislative Aide to the Deputy Speaker House of Representative National Assembly, Abuja.

²Secretary of Finance and Accounts National Assembly, Abuja.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between leadership style and institutional performance in Nigeria's federal legislature, using the 8th (2015-2019), 9th (2019-2023), and 10th (2023-present) National Assemblies as comparative case studies. Anchored on trait, behavioural, situational, and transformational-transactional leadership theories, the paper adopts a qualitative, documentary research design to interrogate how the personal dispositions and political strategies of principal officers, Senate Presidents Bukola Saraki, Ahmad Lawan, and Godswill Akpabio, and Speakers Yakubu Dogara, Femi Gbajabiamila, and Tajudeen Abbas, shaped legislative independence, executive-legislative relations, lawmaking output, oversight vigour, and public perception of the National Assembly. The paper argues that the 8th Assembly under Saraki and Dogara exemplifies a confrontational, autonomy-seeking leadership style that produced institutional assertiveness but also friction and delay; the 9th Assembly under Lawan and Gbajabiamila reflects an accommodating, executive-aligned leadership style often described pejoratively as a "rubber stamp" posture, which produced legislative efficiency at the perceived cost of oversight rigour. The 10th Assembly under Akpabio and Abbas exhibits a hybrid, transactional style that blends cooperative engagement with the executive and selective assertions of its institutional relevance, particularly regarding budget-padding controversies and constituency-project allocations. Drawing on secondary data from legislative records, scholarly literature, and journalistic accounts, the study finds that leadership style is a significant, though not exclusive, determinant of legislative performance, and that the quality of executive-legislative relations, internal cohesion, and public trust in the Assembly fluctuate systematically with the leadership orientation of principal officers. The paper concludes with recommendations to strengthen leadership recruitment processes, institutionalise internal democracy within the Assembly, and insulate legislative leadership selection from undue executive interference.

KEYWORDS: leadership style, legislative performance, National Assembly, transformational leadership, executive-legislative relations.

ARTICLE DETAILS

Published On:
31 August 2026

Available on:
<https://ijrsr.org/>

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a central concern in the social and administrative sciences. In legislatures, it is particularly important because legislative leaders must manage internal cohesion, negotiate with the executive, represent constituents, and protect the institution's constitutional authority. In presidential systems such as Nigeria, legislative leadership can therefore significantly influence the balance of power and democratic governance.

Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the National Assembly has experienced changing leadership patterns. While the early Fourth Republic was characterised by leadership instability, subsequent Assemblies became more stable. The 8th (2015 to 2019), 9th (2019 to 2023), and 10th (2023 to present) Assemblies provide useful grounds for comparison, particularly because they operated largely under the All Progressives Congress (APC), with the 8th and 9th Assemblies also serving under President Muhammadu Buhari.

The 8th Assembly, led by Senate President Bukola Saraki and Speaker Yakubu Dogara, adopted a relatively confrontational relationship with the executive. In contrast, the 9th Assembly, led by Ahmad Lawan and Femi Gbajabiamila, was widely viewed as

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

more cooperative with the executive. The 10th Assembly, led by Godswill Akpabio and Tajudeen Abbas, has largely maintained this cooperative orientation while facing challenges relating to budget management, constituency projects, and legislative accountability.

This study examines whether leadership style, reflected in leaders' behaviour, decision making, and relationships with internal and external actors, affects legislative performance. Legislative performance is assessed through lawmaking, oversight, representation, institutional assertiveness, and public legitimacy.

The study is significant because the effectiveness of Nigeria's National Assembly has important implications for democratic consolidation. Its ability to make effective laws, oversee the executive, represent citizens, and protect legislative independence contributes to the quality of governance. Understanding the relationship between leadership style and legislative performance can therefore provide useful lessons for political parties, civil society organisations, policymakers, and citizens seeking stronger and more accountable legislative institutions

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Leadership Style

Leadership has been defined variously as the process of influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal, the exercise of authority to direct collective action, and the capacity to mobilise followers around a shared vision.

The seminal work of Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) classified leadership into three broad styles, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, based on experimental observation of group climates under different leadership conditions. Autocratic leaders centralise decision-making and demand compliance; democratic leaders involve followers in deliberation and decision-making; and laissez-faire leaders delegate extensively and exercise minimal direct control. This tripartite typology, though originally developed outside the context of formal political institutions, has proven remarkably durable as a heuristic for analysing legislative leadership, since presiding officers in a parliament must constantly choose between directive and consultative modes of managing their chambers.

Contingency and situational theories, associated with Fiedler's (1967) work on leader-member relations, task structure, and positional power, and with Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership model, argue that no single leadership style is universally effective; rather, effectiveness depends on the fit between the leader's style and the demands of the situation, including the maturity and readiness of followers. House's (1971) path-goal theory extended this contingency logic by proposing that effective leaders adapt their behaviour, directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented, to clarify the paths by which followers can attain valued goals.

The most influential contemporary framework, however, is the distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership rests on an exchange relationship between leader and follower, in which compliance, effort, or loyalty is rewarded through material or political incentives, while deviation is met with sanction (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership, by contrast, involves leaders who articulate an inspiring vision, model exemplary conduct, stimulate followers intellectually, and attend to followers' individual developmental needs, thereby elevating both leader and follower to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).

Leadership Style and Legislative Performance

Applying general leadership theory to parliamentary institutions requires some adaptation, because legislative leaders operate within a peculiar authority structure. Unlike a corporate chief executive, a Senate President or Speaker does not command subordinates through a formal hierarchy of employment; rather, legislative leaders preside over nominal equals, fellow elected legislators, whose cooperation must typically be negotiated, cultivated, or incentivised rather than commanded outright. This structural feature makes transactional bargaining, coalition management, and the strategic distribution of institutional resources such as committee chairmanships, constituency project allocations, and oversight assignments especially central to legislative leadership, a dynamic long recognised in studies of Nigeria's National Assembly showing that access to lucrative committee positions and other legislative resources is a key currency through which Assembly leadership secures the loyalty and productivity of members (Demarest & Langer, 2023).

Comparative literature on Nigeria's National Assembly underscores that leadership style, party discipline, and executive-legislative relations are deeply intertwined. Scholars examining the relationship between the executive and the legislature during the Buhari administration have observed that leadership style was consistently identified by respondents as a decisive factor shaping how the same constitutional and institutional framework produced markedly different outcomes under different legislative leaders, with a substantial share of surveyed respondents ranking leadership orientation above party structure or institutional design as the primary driver of executive-legislative dynamics (Olorunmola, 2017; Okeke, 2022). This finding is instructive because it illustrates that even where the formal powers of the National Assembly remain constant across Assemblies, the exercise of those powers varies according to the disposition of the individuals occupying the presiding offices.

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

Other studies have highlighted the ethical dimension of legislative leadership, documenting how allegations of bribery, budget padding, and compromised independence have periodically undermined public confidence in the Assembly's principal officers, regardless of which party or administration was in power (Ajayi, 2020; Aborisade, 2021; Sahara Reporters, 2021). Still other scholarship situates leadership emergence within a broader institutional analysis of executive interference in legislative leadership recruitment, tracing a pattern in which the ruling party and the presidency have, with varying degrees of success, sought to install preferred candidates as Senate President and Speaker, and showing that the degree of executive success in this endeavour has tended to predict the subsequent posture of the legislative leadership toward the executive (Mbah & Egobueze, 2016; Chilaka et al., 2021).

Institutional Context: The Nigerian National Assembly as a Site of Leadership Contestation

Understanding leadership style within Nigeria's National Assembly also requires appreciation of the institution's distinctive constitutional and historical position. Section 4 of the 1999 Constitution vests legislative powers of the federation in a bicameral National Assembly comprising a 109-member Senate and a 360-member House of Representatives, while Section 64 empowers the President to proclaim the first session of each Assembly after a general election, at which point members choose their own presiding officers from among themselves, without formal presidential nomination. This constitutional design was intended to guarantee legislative self-governance and, by extension, institutional independence from the executive. In practice, however, the informal politics of party zoning, gubernatorial and presidential lobbying, and factional bargaining have repeatedly intruded upon what the Constitution frames as a purely internal legislative choice, producing a persistent tension between the formal rules of leadership selection and the informal practices that actually govern it.

This tension has particular significance for the present study because it is precisely at the point of leadership emergence that the seeds of subsequent leadership style appear to be sown. Where executive and party leaders succeed in installing their preferred candidates, as occurred in both the 9th and 10th Assemblies, the resulting Senate President or Speaker typically owes a discernible debt of political gratitude to the president and party hierarchy, a debt that tends to manifest in a more accommodating leadership orientation during the life of the Assembly. Where executive and party preferences are instead defeated by an internal legislative coalition, as occurred dramatically in the 8th Assembly, the resulting leadership is comparatively unconstrained by such obligations and is correspondingly freer, though not necessarily more effective, to pursue an independent institutional agenda. Nigeria's National Assembly has also, since the sixth Assembly (2007-2011) for the Senate and the seventh Assembly (2011-2015) for the House, enjoyed a period of leadership stability in which principal officers have generally completed full four-year terms, financial autonomy secured through constitutional amendment, and an increasingly professionalised legislative bureaucracy through bodies such as the National Assembly Service Commission and the National Assembly Budget and Research Office (Chilaka et al., 2021). This institutional maturation provides an important scope condition for the present study: because leadership tenures have been stable across the 8th, 9th, and 10th Assemblies, the observed variation in leadership style and performance across these three cases can be attributed with greater confidence to the dispositions and strategies of the leaders themselves, rather than to the confounding effects of frequent leadership turnover that characterised earlier, less stable cohorts of the Fourth Republic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ADOPTED

This study adopts an eclectic theoretical framework combining three complementary perspectives. First, the Lewinian typology of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership provides a baseline vocabulary for characterising the internal management style of each Assembly's leadership. Second, the transformational-transactional-laissez-faire framework provides a lens for assessing the strategic orientation of legislative leaders toward followers (fellow legislators) and external actors (the executive), distinguishing leaders who sought to inspire institutional assertiveness and reform from those who relied primarily on transactional exchange to secure compliance and cooperation. Third, rational choice institutionalism, which treats legislative leaders as strategic actors pursuing career and institutional interests within a defined structure of incentives and constraints, helps explain why leaders who might otherwise be expected to behave similarly under the same constitutional rules have, in practice, adopted markedly different postures depending on their calculation of the costs and benefits of confrontation versus accommodation with the executive.

GAPS IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE

Notwithstanding the substantial body of scholarship on Nigeria's National Assembly, three gaps justify the present comparative undertaking. First, much of the existing literature treats individual Assemblies in isolation, producing rich single-case accounts of, for example, the 8th Assembly's confrontation with the Buhari executive, or the 9th Assembly's ethical controversies, without systematically comparing leadership style and performance across successive Assemblies using a common analytical framework. Second, where comparative work does exist, it has tended to foreground institutional and structural variables, party composition, federal character, executive strategy, while treating leadership style as a background factor rather than as the central explanatory variable, notwithstanding survey evidence suggesting that practitioners and close observers of the National Assembly themselves regard leadership orientation as a, if not the, decisive factor shaping executive-legislative dynamics. Third, the inclusion of the 10th Assembly in comparative analysis remains limited in the scholarly literature, given the relative recency of its inauguration; most

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

existing comparative treatments extend only through the 8th or 9th Assembly. This study addresses these gaps by applying a single, explicit leadership-style framework consistently across all three Assemblies, including the still-unfolding 10th Assembly, and by treating leadership style as the primary independent variable of interest while acknowledging the mediating influence of party structure and executive strategy.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative comparative case study design to examine leadership styles across the 8th, 9th and 10th National Assemblies, focusing on processes, context and causal mechanisms. The cases share structural similarities, including operation within the Fourth Republic and dominance by the ruling party, while the 8th and 9th Assemblies operated under President Muhammadu Buhari. Data were obtained entirely from secondary sources, including peer reviewed journals, scholarly books, official National Assembly records and credible media reports. Data were analysed using thematic content analysis, focusing on leadership emergence, budget processes, legislative output, oversight activities, executive nominations, internal disputes and perceptions of legislative independence. Leadership style was examined alongside party structure, executive strategy and broader political and economic conditions.

CASE STUDIES

The 8th National Assembly (2015-2019): Confrontational Autonomy under Saraki and Dogara

The 8th National Assembly, inaugurated on 9 June 2015 following the emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari and the All Progressives Congress (APC), was characterised by an unusually independent and confrontational leadership. Although the APC leadership reportedly preferred Ahmad Lawan and Femi Gbajabiamila as presiding officers, Bukola Saraki and Yakubu Dogara emerged as Senate President and Speaker respectively through alliances that cut across party lines. Saraki secured the Senate presidency with support from sympathetic APC legislators and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), while PDP senator Ike Ekweremadu became Deputy Senate President. This unexpected emergence significantly shaped the Assembly's subsequent relationship with the executive and the ruling party (Mbah & Egobueze, 2016).

Saraki's leadership can be described as predominantly democratic and coalition based, with elements of transformational and transactional leadership. Because his emergence occurred against the preference of the APC hierarchy, he relied heavily on negotiation, coalition building and cross party alliances rather than strict party discipline. He also promoted the idea of an independent legislature capable of exercising its constitutional powers without excessive executive interference. Under his leadership, the Senate resisted attempts to influence legislative outcomes, scrutinised executive nominees, pursued independent legislative priorities and intensified oversight of government agencies (Olorunmola, 2017).

However, the assertive leadership style produced both institutional gains and significant challenges. The confrontational relationship with the Buhari administration contributed to delays in policy implementation, particularly the prolonged consideration of the 2016 budget (Eme & Ogbochie, 2020). Saraki also faced sustained political and legal challenges, including proceedings before the Code of Conduct Tribunal, which he and his supporters regarded as politically motivated. His eventual defection from the APC to the PDP in 2018 reflected the deepening conflict between legislative leadership and the ruling party.

Dogara's leadership in the House similarly emphasised legislative independence, oversight and autonomous agenda setting. Nevertheless, the Assembly's assertiveness did not necessarily produce greater legislative output, as studies indicate that only a modest proportion of bills introduced during the Fourth Republic were eventually enacted (Chilaka et al., 2021). Internal disputes over committee appointments and allegations of favouritism also demonstrated the continued influence of transactional practices within the Assembly.

Overall, the 8th Assembly illustrates how a leader's mode of emergence can shape legislative leadership behaviour. It's cross party and party defying emergence encouraged coalition building, institutional assertiveness and executive scrutiny, but also generated confrontation, delays and political instability. The Assembly therefore demonstrates the tradeoff between legislative independence and legislative efficiency while highlighting the importance of leadership emergence in determining subsequent executive legislative relations.

The 9th National Assembly (2019-2023): Executive-Aligned Cooperation under Lawan and Gbajabiamila

The 9th National Assembly, inaugurated on 11 June 2019, represented a significant departure from the more confrontational leadership of the 8th Assembly. The APC leadership and Buhari administration closely coordinated the emergence of Ahmad Lawan as Senate President and Femi Gbajabiamila as Speaker, despite opposition from aspirants such as Ali Ndume. This executive and party backed emergence shaped a leadership orientation that was predominantly transactional, centralised and accommodating toward the executive. Under Lawan and Gbajabiamila, legislative leadership relied substantially on control of the legislative agenda, committee assignments and party discipline to facilitate cooperation with the executive. Rather than adopting the cross party bargaining and institutional assertiveness associated with the 8th Assembly, the leadership prioritised stability, party cohesion and alignment with presidential priorities (Okeke, 2022). This approach contributed to improved legislative efficiency, particularly in

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

budgetary processes. The Senate facilitated faster budget approvals and supported efforts to restore the January to December budget cycle, demonstrating how executive legislative cooperation could improve the predictability and speed of fiscal policymaking (Eme & Ogbochie, 2020).

However, the cooperative posture generated substantial criticism concerning legislative independence and oversight. Critics described the Assembly as excessively supportive of the presidency, with concerns that its willingness to advance executive priorities weakened its capacity to provide effective checks and balances (Aborisade, 2021). Allegations surrounding inducements for the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill further affected public perceptions of legislative integrity, although such allegations were not conclusively established. The rejection of several gender equality constitutional amendments, including a proposal for increased representation of women, also attracted criticism concerning the Assembly's inclusivity and representational performance (Ajayi, 2020).

Gbajabiamila's leadership in the House nevertheless demonstrated a more programmatic dimension through legislative retreats and structured agenda-setting initiatives. This suggests that executive accommodation did not entirely eliminate institutional planning or legislative initiative. The 9th Assembly also achieved notable legislative outcomes, particularly the passage of the long delayed Petroleum Industry Act, while maintaining institutional stability as both principal officers completed their terms.

Overall, the 9th Assembly demonstrates the trade-off inherent in legislative leadership. Executive aligned and transactional leadership enhanced legislative efficiency, stability and policy implementation, but potentially weakened independent oversight, accountability and public confidence. Its experience therefore supports the argument that the manner in which legislative leaders emerge significantly influences their subsequent relationship with the executive and their approach to legislative performance.

The 10th National Assembly (2023-present): Hybrid Transactional Leadership under Akpabio and Abbas

The 10th National Assembly was inaugurated on 13 June 2023 under a more fragmented political configuration than its predecessors. Although the APC retained the presidency under Bola Ahmed Tinubu and a working majority in both chambers, the presence of the PDP, Labour Party, New Nigeria Peoples Party and smaller parties created a more competitive and multi-party legislative environment. Godswill Akpabio emerged as Senate President after defeating Abdulaziz Yari by 63 to 46 votes, while Tajudeen Abbas became Speaker of the House of Representatives with 353 of 359 votes. Benjamin Kalu was elected Deputy Speaker unopposed.

The leadership of Akpabio and Abbas can be characterised as a hybrid transactional and cooperative style. Similar to the 9th Assembly, both chambers have maintained generally cordial relations with the Tinubu administration and supported its economic reform agenda. However, the fragmented composition of the Assembly has required greater coalition management and accommodation of minority parties. The distribution of committee positions, constituency projects and other legislative resources has remained an important mechanism for securing cooperation, while minority leadership positions have been allocated to opposition parties to preserve a formal structure of legislative checks and balances (Demarest & Langer, 2023).

In legislative performance, the 10th Assembly has demonstrated relatively strong cooperation with the executive, particularly in relation to tax reforms, economic stabilisation measures and annual appropriation bills. This has enabled comparatively swift consideration of government policies but has also generated criticism that the legislature has not subjected controversial policies, including subsidy removal and currency reforms, to sufficiently rigorous scrutiny.

The Assembly has further faced recurring allegations of budget padding and the insertion of constituency projects without adequate alignment with broader development priorities. These controversies highlight continuing concerns about particularistic use of legislative resources and accountability (Ajayi, 2020; Aborisade, 2021).

Overall, the emergence of Akpabio and Abbas through APC backed zoning and executive influenced negotiations demonstrates the continuing influence of executive preferences on legislative leadership selection. Their subsequent cooperative and transactional orientation supports the broader argument that the manner in which legislative leaders emerge significantly shapes their relationship with the executive and, consequently, their leadership style and legislative performance.

COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

A comparative examination of the 8th, 9th and 10th National Assemblies provides important insights into the relationship between legislative leadership style and institutional performance in Nigeria. Although each Assembly operated within the same constitutional framework, significant differences existed in the manner in which presiding officers emerged, interacted with the executive, managed internal legislative coalitions, exercised oversight, approached fiscal policymaking, and responded to competing political interests. These differences suggest that leadership style is an important, observable factor in explaining variations in legislative performance, although its effects are mediated by party politics, institutional constraints, organisational interests and the broader political environment. Existing studies similarly demonstrate that organisational politics and executive-legislative relations have significant implications for the performance of the Nigerian National Assembly (Animashaun, 2021; Peter et al., 2025; Stewart, 2021).

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

The first important mechanism through which leadership style affects legislative performance is the manner in which legislative leaders emerge. The circumstances surrounding the emergence of presiding officers can influence their subsequent relationship with the executive, ruling party hierarchy and other legislative actors.

The 8th Assembly (2015–2019) provides the clearest illustration of this dynamic. Bukola Saraki and Yakubu Dogara emerged as Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives respectively despite preferences and arrangements within the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). Their emergence therefore represented a significant degree of independence from the party hierarchy and contributed to a legislative leadership that was more willing to assert institutional autonomy. The resulting relationship with the executive under President Muhammadu Buhari was characterised by recurrent disagreements and institutional tension. The literature associates the period with leadership crisis, organisational politics and executive-legislative conflict, all of which affected institutional stability and legislative performance (Animashaun, 2021; Jombo, 2022; Peter et al., 2025).

The 9th Assembly (2019–2023), by comparison, reflected a more party-aligned leadership configuration. Ahmad Lawan and Femi Gbajabiamila emerged as Senate President and Speaker respectively with stronger support from the ruling APC and the executive. This contributed to a more accommodating relationship between the legislature and executive. Stewart (2021) observes important differences between the executive-legislative relations of the 8th and 9th Assemblies, while Peter et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of organisational politics in shaping the performance of both Assemblies. The closer relationship between the 9th Assembly and the executive improved institutional cooperation but simultaneously generated concerns about legislative independence and the robustness of checks and balances.

The 10th Assembly, inaugurated in 2023 under the leadership of Godswill Akpabio in the Senate and Tajudeen Abbas in the House of Representatives, presents a somewhat different configuration. Its leadership emerged within a more fragmented political environment and therefore has had to manage a broader range of party and individual interests. Consequently, the leadership style of the 10th Assembly can reasonably be understood as more hybrid, combining cooperation with the executive and internal coalition management. However, because empirical evidence on the 10th Assembly remains comparatively limited, conclusions concerning its long-term leadership and performance should be treated cautiously.

The comparison therefore suggests that leadership emergence matters because it establishes the initial incentive structure within which presiding officers operate. Leaders who emerge independently of the executive or ruling party may possess greater incentives to defend legislative autonomy, whereas leaders whose emergence is closely coordinated with the ruling party and executive may have stronger incentives to pursue cooperation. Nevertheless, leadership behaviour cannot be attributed exclusively to personal disposition because leaders also respond strategically to institutional incentives and political constraints.

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND FISCAL POLICYMAKING

The second mechanism through which leadership style affects legislative performance is fiscal policymaking. The budget provides a particularly useful indicator because it requires sustained interaction between the legislature and executive and depends heavily on negotiation, coordination and institutional cooperation.

The 8th Assembly experienced considerable difficulties in the budgetary process. The 2018 budget, for instance, reportedly took six months and ten days to pass, reflecting both problems associated with executive presentation and disagreements between the two branches of government (Jombo, 2022). The prolonged budgetary cycle illustrates one potential cost of an adversarial executive-legislative relationship: although legislative assertiveness may strengthen institutional autonomy, excessive confrontation can produce delays in policymaking and implementation.

By contrast, the 9th Assembly achieved a comparatively faster budgetary process and restored the January–December budget cycle. The more cooperative relationship between the legislature and executive facilitated greater coordination in this area. This supports the argument that accommodating or cooperative leadership styles may produce efficiency gains in policy areas that require extensive inter-branch negotiation. Nevertheless, procedural efficiency should not be equated automatically with superior legislative performance because faster decision-making may occur at the expense of effective scrutiny when institutional independence is weakened (Stewart, 2021; Okpe & Othman, 2020).

The fiscal experience of the Assemblies therefore demonstrates an important trade-off. Assertive leadership may strengthen legislative bargaining power and institutional independence but increase the possibility of delay and confrontation. Conversely, cooperative leadership may facilitate faster policymaking but create the risk that legislative scrutiny becomes less vigorous. Effective legislative leadership consequently requires a balance between cooperation and institutional autonomy.

Leadership Style, Oversight and Institutional Autonomy

A third mechanism concerns legislative oversight. Oversight is one of the central constitutional responsibilities of the legislature and provides a mechanism for holding the executive accountable. However, the effectiveness of oversight depends significantly on the willingness and capacity of legislative leaders to assert institutional authority.

The 8th Assembly adopted a relatively assertive approach to oversight and frequently engaged the executive over issues of accountability and institutional responsibility. Aluko (2015) emphasises the importance of parliamentary oversight for effective

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

security sector reform, while Ayodeji (2021) conceptualises the National Assembly as an arena of accountability bargaining. The assertiveness of the 8th Assembly therefore demonstrates that legislative independence can provide the political space necessary for stronger scrutiny of executive conduct.

However, assertiveness also generated greater executive-legislative conflict. The experience of the 8th Assembly therefore demonstrates that vigorous oversight can coexist with institutional friction. The challenge for legislative leadership is to ensure that oversight remains focused on accountability and policy improvement rather than becoming an instrument of political confrontation. The 9th Assembly presented the opposite tendency. Its closer relationship with the executive created a more cordial institutional environment but generated concerns about the vigour of legislative oversight. Critics consequently perceived the Assembly as insufficiently assertive in checking executive authority (Stewart, 2021; Okpe & Othman, 2020). The comparison between the two Assemblies thus suggests that the orientation of leadership toward the executive can influence not only the quantity of conflict between the branches but also the perceived strength of legislative oversight.

The 10th Assembly presents a continuing test of this relationship. Its leadership has had to balance executive cooperation with the demands of internal political management. Given the fragmented political environment, its oversight performance cannot be understood solely in terms of whether its leadership is confrontational or accommodating. Rather, the ability to build coalitions across party and regional interests may become increasingly important to the effectiveness of oversight.

Leadership Style and Legislative Effectiveness

The broader concept of legislative effectiveness extends beyond the speed with which legislation is passed. It includes lawmaking, representation, oversight, policy influence, institutional organisation and the ability to translate legislative authority into meaningful public outcomes. Bakare (2023) demonstrates the importance of measuring legislative effectiveness systematically, while Peter et al. (2025) highlight the influence of organisational politics on the performance of the 8th and 9th Assemblies.

The comparative evidence suggests that different leadership styles produce different dimensions of performance. The 8th Assembly's assertive orientation enhanced the visibility of legislative independence and strengthened its willingness to challenge executive decisions. However, this was accompanied by institutional conflict and delays in some policy processes. The 9th Assembly's accommodating orientation facilitated executive-legislative cooperation and greater procedural efficiency, but concerns arose regarding the independence of oversight and the legislature's capacity to provide effective checks and balances. The 10th Assembly, operating within a more fragmented political environment, appears to require a combination of cooperation, negotiation and coalition management.

Consequently, no single leadership style can be considered universally superior. Rather, the effectiveness of legislative leadership depends on the specific institutional task being performed. Assertiveness may be advantageous when defending legislative prerogatives or scrutinising executive conduct, whereas cooperation may be advantageous when negotiating budgets or facilitating policy implementation. The most effective legislative leadership may therefore be one capable of adapting its style to the institutional demands of particular situations.

Ethical Performance, Corruption and Public Trust

The fourth dimension of comparison concerns ethics. The evidence suggests that ethical performance cannot be explained entirely by whether legislative leadership adopts a confrontational or accommodating relationship with the executive. Ethical challenges have persisted across successive Assemblies, suggesting that broader institutional weaknesses are also important.

Concerns about corruption, patronage, transparency and the use of legislative functions for private or sectional interests have been documented in the literature on the Nigerian legislature. Suberu (2018) identifies broader concerns surrounding legislative development and institutional decadence, while Umaru (2017) specifically links corruption to the performance of legislative functions. Osunkoya and Basiru (2019) further demonstrate how prebendal practices can undermine legislative oversight and governance.

This evidence is important because it demonstrates that a confrontational relationship with the executive does not necessarily guarantee ethical legislative behaviour. Similarly, executive-legislative cooperation does not automatically produce stronger ethical standards. Ethical performance is instead influenced by the institutional environment within which legislators operate, including transparency mechanisms, accountability systems, committee practices, budgetary processes and the enforcement of legislative standards.

The implication is that leadership style should be treated as one explanatory variable among several rather than as a complete explanation of legislative ethics. The persistence of ethical controversies across different leadership regimes indicates the importance of strengthening institutional safeguards in addition to improving the personal and organisational qualities of legislative leaders.

Transactional Leadership, Patronage and Constituency Representation

A fifth dimension emerging from the comparative analysis is the persistent influence of transactional politics. Nigerian legislative leadership operates within an environment in which political support, committee positions, constituency projects and other resources can become instruments for securing cooperation and loyalty. Nwozor and Olanrewaju (2019) demonstrate the importance of

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

organisational politics and the committee system, while Peter et al. (2025) further show that organisational political dynamics affect legislative performance.

Constituency projects are particularly significant because they provide a direct link between legislative representation and material benefits. Constituency representation is a legitimate component of legislative democracy because legislators are expected to communicate constituency interests and promote development. However, the process can become problematic where the distribution of constituency projects is primarily driven by patronage rather than transparent developmental priorities (Oni, 2013).

This transactional orientation appears to represent a structural feature of Nigerian legislative politics rather than a characteristic of a single Assembly. It therefore operates beneath the more visible differences between assertive and accommodating leadership. The 8th, 9th and 10th Assemblies may differ in their relationships with the executive, but they operate within broadly similar political incentives surrounding constituency representation, patronage and resource allocation.

This distinction is analytically important. It means that leadership style should not be reduced to the simple confrontational-versus-accommodating dichotomy. A leader may be assertive toward the executive while simultaneously relying on transactional mechanisms to maintain internal legislative support. Similarly, an accommodating leader may pursue executive cooperation while using patronage-based mechanisms to manage legislative coalitions. Thus, the transactional dimension cuts across different leadership orientations.

Transactional Versus Transformational Legislative Leadership

The evidence further reveals a persistent tension between transactional and transformational conceptions of legislative leadership. Transactional leadership is based substantially on exchange, bargaining, political loyalty and the distribution of benefits, whereas transformational leadership emphasises institutional reform, shared goals, public service and long-term organisational improvement. The Nigerian legislative environment contains strong incentives for transactional behaviour. Committee positions, constituency projects and political alliances can become mechanisms for securing cooperation and maintaining leadership stability (Nwozor & Olanrewaju, 2019; Osunkoya & Basiru, 2019). This does not mean that all legislative activity is transactional, but it indicates that leaders operate within a political environment that can reward short-term bargaining and patronage.

The 8th Assembly, despite its relatively assertive defence of legislative autonomy, cannot therefore be characterised as fully transformational. Its leadership demonstrated institutional independence but also operated through coalition-building and political bargaining. Similarly, the more accommodating approach of the 9th Assembly facilitated cooperation but did not fundamentally eliminate transactional political practices. The 10th Assembly faces the additional challenge of managing a more fragmented political environment while attempting to maintain institutional stability and legislative effectiveness.

The evidence therefore suggests that Nigeria's legislative leadership has not yet fully transitioned from transactional to transformational leadership. A transformational approach would require greater emphasis on institutional reform, ethical accountability, evidence-based policymaking, transparent representation and long-term national development rather than predominantly short-term political exchange.

Leadership Style and Changing Party-Political Architecture

Leadership style must also be understood within the changing party structure of the National Assembly. The 8th and 9th Assemblies operated within political environments in which the APC maintained a strong numerical position, although both Assemblies experienced significant internal political dynamics. The 8th Assembly was characterised by disputes between the leadership of the legislature and elements of the ruling party, while the 9th Assembly reflected greater party alignment and executive cooperation (Animashaun, 2021; Stewart, 2021).

The 10th Assembly operates within a comparatively more fragmented multiparty environment. This creates different incentives for legislative leaders because maintaining institutional stability requires managing a broader range of party and individual interests. The leadership of Akpabio and Abbas must therefore engage not only with the executive and the ruling party but also with opposition parties and diverse internal blocs.

This supports a rational choice institutionalist interpretation of legislative leadership. Presiding officers are strategic actors whose behaviour is influenced by the incentives and constraints generated by their institutional environment. Leadership style should therefore not be interpreted solely as a product of personality. It is also an adaptive response to party competition, coalition requirements, executive relations, committee politics and the distribution of legislative power.

The changing political architecture of the three Assemblies therefore helps explain why similar leadership strategies may produce different outcomes at different points in time. The same level of executive cooperation may produce different results depending on the strength of the ruling party, the cohesion of the legislature and the ability of the leadership to construct viable coalitions.

Representation, Responsiveness and Constituency Engagement

A further dimension of legislative performance is representation and responsiveness to constituents. The literature indicates that constituency representation in Nigeria is frequently channelled through material and developmental projects rather than through systematic mechanisms of consultation and policy responsiveness. Oni (2013) identifies constituency representation as an important

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

component of democratic governance, while subsequent studies have drawn attention to the political and institutional dimensions surrounding constituency projects.

Across the three Assemblies, constituency projects have remained an important mechanism through which legislators demonstrate responsiveness to their constituencies. However, an excessive reliance on material projects may narrow the meaning of representation. Effective representation should also include consultation, articulation of citizen interests, policy advocacy, legislative responsiveness and accountability.

The persistence of constituency projects across different leadership regimes therefore suggests that transactional representation constitutes a structural feature of Nigerian legislative politics. This dimension operates somewhat independently of the more visible differences in executive-legislative relations. It should consequently be treated as a separate but interacting dimension of legislative leadership and performance.

SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

The comparative analysis provides a basis for understanding legislative leadership as a strategic process shaped by both individual leadership choices and institutional constraints. The evidence supports the proposition that leaders do not operate in a political vacuum. Their choices are conditioned by how they emerge, the relationship between their political party and the executive, the distribution of legislative power, the strength of opposition parties, internal coalition requirements, and the broader institutional environment.

The central lesson from the 8th, 9th and 10th Assemblies is therefore not that one leadership style is inherently superior to another. Rather, legislative effectiveness appears to depend on the capacity of leadership to achieve an appropriate balance between institutional independence and executive cooperation, assertiveness and negotiation, oversight and collaboration, political coalition-building and ethical accountability.

The 8th Assembly demonstrates that independence without sufficient cooperation may produce conflict and fiscal delays; the 9th Assembly demonstrates that cooperation without sufficient independence may weaken oversight and public confidence; while the 10th Assembly highlights the additional challenge of managing a more complex and fragmented political environment. These experiences suggest that effective legislative leadership should combine the strengths of different approaches rather than depend exclusively on a single leadership orientation.

Ultimately, the Nigerian National Assembly requires a leadership model capable of moving beyond predominantly transactional political exchanges towards a more transformational and institutionally grounded form of leadership. Such a model would retain the strategic capacity for negotiation and coalition-building while strengthening transparency, legislative oversight, evidence-based policymaking, constituency responsiveness and institutional accountability. The comparative evidence therefore reinforces the study's central proposition that leadership style matters for legislative performance, but that its effect is mediated by the political, institutional and organisational environment within which legislative leaders operate.

Table 1 below synthesises the comparative leadership style and performance profile of the three Assemblies examined in this study.

Table 1. Comparative Summary of Leadership Style and Performance across the 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies

Dimension	8th Assembly (Saraki/Dogara)	9th Assembly (Lawan/Gbajabiamila)	10th Assembly (Akpabio/Abbas)
Mode of emergence	Cross-party coalition against party preference	Coordinated executive/party endorsement	Negotiated zoning arrangement with executive involvement
Dominant leadership style	Democratic/assertive, coalition-based	Centralised, executive-accommodating, transactional	Hybrid transactional, multi-party coalition management
Executive relations	Frequently confrontational	Largely cooperative, criticised as deferential	Broadly cooperative, with episodic assertiveness
Budget cycle performance	Protracted, delayed passage	Markedly faster passage	Broadly efficient, continued alignment
Oversight vigour	Comparatively assertive	Widely criticised as diminished	Moderate, contested
Ethical controversies	Corruption trial of Senate President	Bribery allegations over Petroleum Industry Bill	Persistent budget padding allegations
Institutional stability	Full term served amid friction Source: composed by author, 2026	Full term served with high cohesion	Full term in progress; broader multi-party composition

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to examine the relationship between leadership style and institutional performance in Nigeria's National Assembly through a comparative case study of the 8th, 9th, and 10th Assemblies. The evidence assembled here indicates that leadership style is a meaningful and observable determinant of how the National Assembly performs across multiple dimensions, including the pace

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

of fiscal policymaking, the vigour of executive oversight, the assertion of institutional independence, and, to a more limited extent, the ethical conduct of the legislature's leadership. The confrontational, coalition-based leadership of Saraki and Dogara in the 8th Assembly produced a more institutionally assertive but also more conflict-prone legislature; the accommodating, executive-aligned leadership of Lawan and Gbajabiamila in the 9th Assembly produced a more efficient but, in the judgment of many observers, a less independently vigilant legislature; and the hybrid transactional leadership of Akpabio and Abbas in the 10th Assembly has thus far combined elements of both preceding patterns while confronting the distinct challenge of managing a more genuinely multi-party chamber.

These findings carry several implications for legislative reform in Nigeria. First, because the mode of a legislative leader's emergence appears strongly predictive of subsequent leadership style, reforms that reduce undue executive and party-hierarchy interference in the selection of Senate Presidents and Speakers, for instance, through more transparent internal party primaries specifically for legislative leadership positions, or through formal internal caucus procedures that limit last-minute executive intervention, could help ensure that legislative leaders emerge with a stronger, more autonomous institutional mandate, regardless of whether the resulting leadership style leans toward assertiveness or cooperation. Second, since ethical controversies recur across all three Assemblies irrespective of leadership orientation toward the executive, reform efforts should place particular emphasis on strengthening internal mechanisms of transparency and accountability, including public disclosure of constituency project criteria and beneficiaries, more rigorous ethics committee enforcement, and closer civil society monitoring of budget padding practices, rather than assuming that a more confrontational or a more cooperative leadership posture will, on its own, resolve underlying integrity concerns. Third, given the apparent trade-off between executive-aligned efficiency and independent oversight vigour observed across the three cases, the National Assembly's rules and procedures might usefully be reformed to institutionalise minimum oversight obligations, such as mandatory periodic public hearings on major executive policies and expenditures, that persist regardless of the personal disposition of the sitting Senate President or Speaker, thereby reducing the extent to which the quality of legislative oversight is left to the discretion of individual leadership style. Finally, future research would benefit from complementing the qualitative, documentary approach adopted in this study with systematic quantitative analysis of legislative output, bill passage rates, oversight hearing frequency, and voting cohesion data, across a longer span of Nigerian Assemblies, in order to test more rigorously the associations proposed here and to extend the comparative leadership framework to earlier, more turbulent cohorts of the Fourth Republic's National Assembly.

Beyond the specific recommendations already outlined, the comparative findings of this study also suggest the value of formalised leadership development and orientation programmes for incoming principal officers of the National Assembly, potentially delivered in partnership with parliamentary strengthening organisations, universities, and comparative legislatures with established traditions of both executive cooperation and independent oversight. Such programmes could help incoming Senate Presidents and Speakers consciously reflect upon the trade-offs identified in this study, between assertiveness and efficiency, between accommodation and independence, between transactional coalition management and transformational institution-building, rather than defaulting, often by default of circumstance rather than deliberate choice, into whichever leadership style happens to follow most naturally from the political conditions of their emergence. A legislature that approaches leadership style as a deliberate strategic choice, informed by an understanding of its trade-offs and consequences, is more likely to achieve a sustainable balance between cooperative efficiency and independent institutional vigilance than one in which leadership style is simply an emergent by-product of factional political bargaining.

while leadership style is far from the only variable shaping the performance of Nigeria's National Assembly, party structure, executive strategy, electoral incentives, and the broader political economy of governance all exert significant influence, the comparative evidence from the 8th, 9th, and 10th Assemblies demonstrates that the personal dispositions, strategic orientations, and relational styles of principal legislative officers leave a discernible and analytically tractable imprint on how effectively, independently, and accountably Nigeria's federal legislature performs its constitutional functions.

REFERENCES

- 1) Ajayi, M. A. (2020). Leadership ethics and legislative effectiveness in Nigeria. *Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs*.
- 2) Aluko, B. A. (2015). Enhancing parliamentary oversight for effective security sector reform in democratic Nigeria. *Ghana Journal of Development Studies*, 12, 177–194. <https://doi.org/10.4314/GJDS.V12I1-2.11>
- 3) Animashaun, A. M. (2021). Leadership crisis in Nigeria's 8th Assembly: Implications for institutional efficiency and intra-organ stability (pp. 219–234). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4455-6_9
- 4) Ayodeji, G. I. (2021). National Assembly as an arena of accountability bargain: Issues, challenges and prospects (pp. 161–188). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4455-6_7
- 5) Bakare, A. R. (2023a). Interpreting the lawmaking performance and determinants of legislative effectiveness of the National Assembly (pp. 115–135). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0780-9_9
- 6) Bakare, A. R. (2023b). Measuring legislative effectiveness in the Nigerian National Assembly: The birth of ILES model (pp. 77–86). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0780-9_6

Leadership Style and Performance: A Comparative Case Study of The 8th, 9th, and 10th National Assemblies of Nigeria.

- 7) Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. Free Press.
- 8) Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Sage Publications.
- 9) Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- 10) Chilaka, C. F., Obianua, O. U., et al. (2021). The legislature in Nigeria: Origin, significance and relationship with other arms of government. In *The Nigerian National Assembly: Two decades of legislative politics and governance*. Springer Nature.
- 11) Celestine Jombo, O. (2022). Executive-legislative conflicts and the quest for accountability in Nigeria's presidential democracy: A case of the 8th National Assembly. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 6(11), 665–674. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2022.61130>
- 12) Demarest, L., & Langer, A. (2023). Managing diversity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic National Assembly: Integrated parties versus ethno-regional balancing. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 53(4), 593–618.
- 13) Eme, O. I., & Ogochie, A. (2020). Executive-legislative budgetary relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*.
- 14) Fiedler, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill.
- 15) Gongu, A., & Dung, M. (n.d.). Desensitising legislative inflation: Rethinking Senate Bill 347 in the context of quest for good governance. *PLASU Law Journal*. <https://journals.plasu.edu.ng/index.php/plasulj/article/view/206>
- 16) Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1969). *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources*. Prentice-Hall.
- 17) House, R. J. (1971). A path-goal theory of leader effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16(3), 321–339.
- 18) Lewin, K., Lippitt, R., & White, R. K. (1939). Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created "social climates." *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 10(2), 271–301.
- 19) Mbah, P., & Egobueze, A. (2016). Leadership emergence and the crisis of party discipline in Nigeria's 8th National Assembly. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*.
- 20) Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). Sage Publications.
- 21) Nwagwu, E. J. (2014). Legislative oversight in Nigeria: A watchdog or a hunting dog? *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 22, 16–24.
- 22) Nwozor, A., & Olanrewaju, J. S. (2019). Oiling the legislature: An appraisal of the committee system in Nigeria's National Assembly (pp. 165–187). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11905-8_10
- 23) Okeke, C. (2022). Dynamic equilibrium: Rational choice and institutional theory in Nigerian federal governance. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*.
- 24) Okoroafor-Fredrick, U. I. (2023). The role of the National Assembly in gender mainstreaming for national development.
- 25) Okpe, V. V., & Othman, M. F. (2020). Assessment of legislature-executive pattern of relations in Nigeria's democratic governance of the Fourth Republic: Prospects and challenges. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 28(4). <https://doi.org/10.47836/PJSSH.28.4.19>
- 26) Olorunmola, A. (2017). Legislative autonomy and executive dominance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*.
- 27) Onosetale, O., & Benin, C. (n.d.). Gender bias and legislative representation in Nigeria: An assessment of the Tenth Senate. [Manuscript]. University of Benin Repository.
- 28) Osunkoya, O. A., & Basiru, A. S. (2019). The legislatures, legislative oversight and crisis of governance in democratizing Nigeria: A prebendalist perspective. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(1), 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.4314/IJHSS.V11I1>
- 29) Peter, Q. D., Ayogu, G. I., & Egbara, E. A. (2025). Organisational politics and performance of the Nigeria Eighth and Ninth National Assemblies. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 12(2), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.51244/ijrsi.2025.12020001>
- 30) Springer Nature. (2023). *National Assembly and legislative effectiveness in Nigeria's Fourth Republic*. Springer Nature.
- 31) Stewart, A. O. (2021). Legislative-executive relations in Nigeria: A comparative study of the 8th and 9th National Assembly, 4(2).
- 32) Suberu, R. (2018). Legislative development and decadence in the Fourth Republic National Assembly. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198804307.013.12>
- 33) Umaru, U. D. (2017). Corruption and legislative functions in Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Economics and Finance*, 8(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.9790/5933-0801010108>
- 34) Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- 35) Ethical leadership issues and the legislative process: A study of Nigeria's National Assembly. (n.d.). *ABUAD Journal of Social and Management Sciences*. <https://journals.abuad.edu.ng/ajsms/article/view/2752>