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INFORMATION SHARING ACTIVITIES AND USE FOR LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES BY LEGISLATORS IN THE STATE HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY IN NORTHWEST ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABASTRACT

The study investigates the information sharing and use by legislators in the states house of assembly in Nigeria. Quantitative research methodology using cross sectional survey design was used to collect data for the study and all the (211) Two Hundred and Eleven members of states house assembly in the Northwest zone serves as the primary population of the study. The objectives of the study were to find out the different types of information shared and use by legislators in Nigeria, the medium use in sharing information by legislators, and the challenges associated by information sharing among legislators. The study found that Socio – economic conditions as their most shared type of information, the medium use in information sharing by legislators is through Consultations with constituents while the major challenges faced by legislators in information sharing is the executive dominance and lack of financial autonomy of the legislative arm. The study recommends that legislators should be encouraged to be using digital database and as well attending training on information and communication Technology/ information literacy training to develop their skills in exploring opportunities attach to ICT. And finally financial autonomy of state legislative arm is sacrosanct for effective legislative services.

Keywords: *legislators, state house of assembly, information sharing*

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INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of governance, the role of information in legislative processes cannot be overstated. Information serves as the backbone for effective decision-making, policy formulation, and oversight functions within legislative bodies. In Nigeria, a federal state with a bicameral legislature at the national level and unicameral legislatures at the state level, the State Houses of Assembly play a pivotal role in shaping governance at the sub-national level through law-making, oversight, and representation of constituents (TheCable, 2025). However, the efficacy of these legislative functions heavily depends on the availability, accessibility, and utilization of relevant information by legislators. This study focuses on the information-sharing activities and their use in legislative processes by legislators in the State Houses of Assembly in the Northwest Zone of Nigeria, a region characterized by unique socio-political and economic challenges.

The Northwest Zone of Nigeria, comprising states such as Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara, is a region marked by diverse cultural, religious, and economic contexts. These states face significant challenges, including security concerns, poverty, and infrastructural deficits, which necessitate robust legislative interventions. The State Houses of Assembly in this region are tasked with enacting laws, approving budgets, and overseeing executive activities to address these issues. However, the effectiveness of these legislative bodies is often hampered by limited access to reliable information, inadequate information-sharing mechanisms, and varying levels of capacity among legislators to utilize available information effectively (Mohammed & Idris, 2023).

Information-sharing activities within legislative settings involve the processes through which legislators access, exchange, and utilize information to perform their constitutional duties. These activities include obtaining data from government agencies, consulting with constituents, engaging with civil society organizations, and leveraging research from academic and policy institutions. In the context of Northwest Nigeria, studies have highlighted that legislators often rely on informal networks, such as personal contacts and traditional communication channels, due to the absence of structured information systems (Mohammed & Idris, 2023). This reliance can lead to inefficiencies, misinformation, or delays in legislative processes, ultimately affecting the quality of governance.

The legislative process in Nigeria, as outlined by the 1999 Constitution, involves multiple stages, including bill introduction, readings, committee reviews, and executive assent (Edeh, 2024). Each stage requires legislators to access and analyze diverse information sources to make informed decisions. For instance, during the law-making process, legislators need data on socio-economic conditions, public opinion, and existing legal frameworks to draft effective bills. Similarly, oversight functions demand access to executive reports, budget performance data, and audit findings to ensure accountability. Recent studies indicate that in the Northwest Zone, the lack of institutionalized information-sharing platforms, such as legislative libraries or digital databases, limits legislators' ability to access timely and accurate information (Mohammed & Idris, 2023).

Furthermore, the political environment in Nigeria, particularly in the Northwest, is often characterized by executive dominance, which can undermine legislative independence (TheCable, 2025). The events in Rivers State, where executive actions led to the demolition of the State House of Assembly complex, highlight the broader challenges of legislative autonomy and the critical role of information in asserting legislative authority (TheCable,

2025). In the Northwest, similar dynamics exist, where executive interference and limited financial autonomy constrain the ability of State Houses of Assembly to function effectively. Access to reliable information can empower legislators to counter such interference and fulfill their constitutional mandates.

Recent developments, such as the push for financial autonomy for State Houses of Assembly under Section 121(3) of the Nigerian Constitution, underscore the need for enhanced information-sharing mechanisms to support legislative independence (TheCable, 2025). Additionally, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) has emphasized capacity-building programs to improve legislators' access to information and enhance their legislative effectiveness (NILDS, 2018). However, the extent to which these initiatives have been adopted in the Northwest Zone remains underexplored, necessitating further research into how information-sharing activities influence legislative outcomes in this region.

This study seeks to address the gap in understanding the specific information-sharing practices and their impact on legislative processes in the Northwest Zone of Nigeria. By examining the types of information legislators seek, the channels through which they access it, and the barriers they face, the study aims to provide insights into how information-sharing can be optimized to enhance legislative performance. The findings are expected to contribute to policy recommendations for strengthening legislative institutions and promoting effective governance in the region.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The legislative process in the State Houses of Assembly in the Northwest Zone of Nigeria is critical for addressing the region's multifaceted challenges, including security issues, poverty, and infrastructural deficits. However, the effectiveness of these legislative bodies is often undermined by inadequate information-sharing mechanisms and limited access to reliable, timely, and relevant information. Legislators in this region frequently rely on informal networks and traditional communication channels due to the absence of structured information systems, which can lead to inefficiencies, misinformation, and delays in legislative processes (Mohammed & Idris, 2023). This reliance raises concerns about the quality and accuracy of information used in law-making, oversight, and representation activities.

Moreover, the lack of institutionalized platforms, such as legislative libraries, digital databases, or formal channels for accessing executive reports and public data, hinders legislators' ability to make informed decisions. The political environment in the Northwest, characterized by executive dominance and limited financial autonomy for State Houses of Assembly, further exacerbates these challenges, as legislators struggle to assert their constitutional roles without adequate information resources (TheCable, 2025). The absence of robust information-sharing frameworks also limits the capacity of legislators to engage effectively with constituents and civil society organizations, thereby weakening representation and public accountability.

While initiatives like those from the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) aim to enhance legislators' access to information, the extent of their implementation and impact in the Northwest Zone remains unclear (NILDS, 2018). Without a clear understanding of the specific information-sharing activities, the types of information sought,

and the barriers faced by legislators, the potential for improving legislative performance and governance outcomes in the region remains limited. This study seeks to investigate these issues to identify strategies for optimizing information-sharing practices and strengthening legislative processes in the State Houses of Assembly in Northwest Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To Identify the Types of Information Sought by Legislators in the Northwest Zone of Nigeria for Their Law-Making, Oversight, and Representation Functions
2. To Examine the Mechanisms and Channels Through Which Legislators in the Northwest Zone Access and Share Information During Legislative Processes
3. To Assess the Barriers and Challenges Faced by Legislators in the Northwest Zone in Accessing and Utilizing Information for Effective Legislative Performance

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significance as it aims to understand how legislators' access, share and utilize information to inform their decision-making process. The study is significant because the findings will help in improving

1. Decision making process by providing insight on how legislators access and use information
2. Enhancing legislative effectiveness, the findings will contribute to improving the overall effectiveness of the legislative body
3. Informing policy development, the findings will inform policy development and implementation, ensuring laws and policies are evidence based and responsive to the needs of the people
4. Contribute to national development the findings will contribute to the broader goal of promotinggood governance and national development in Nigeria

LITERATURE REVIEW

The legislative process in Nigeria's State Houses of Assembly, particularly in the Northwest Zone, relies heavily on effective information-sharing to facilitate law-making, oversight, and representation. This literature review synthesizes recent scholarly work on information-sharing activities and their utilization in legislative processes, focusing on the Northwest Zone of Nigeria, which includes states like Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. The review explores the types of information legislators seek, the mechanisms through which they access and share information, the challenges they face, and the impact of these activities on legislative effectiveness. It draws on recent studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, highlighting gaps and opportunities for further research.

TYPES OF INFORMATION SOUGHT BY LEGISLATORS IN THE NORTHWEST ZONE OF NIGERIA FOR THEIR LAW-MAKING, OVERSIGHT, AND REPRESENTATION FUNCTIONS

Legislators require diverse and reliable information to perform their constitutional roles effectively. Recent studies indicate that in Nigeria's Northwest Zone, legislators need information on socio-economic conditions, public opinion, legal frameworks, and executive performance to draft bills, conduct oversight, and engage with constituents (Mohammed &

Idris, 2023). For instance, Mohammed and Idris (2023) found that legislators in the Northwest often seek data on poverty levels, security issues, and infrastructural needs to address regional challenges. However, the absence of structured information systems forces reliance on informal sources, such as personal contacts and community leaders, which may lack accuracy or comprehensiveness.

Globally, research on legislative information needs emphasizes the importance of access to research reports, policy briefs, and constituent feedback. Pilerot (2012) highlights that information-sharing activities in legislative contexts involve not only accessing data but also collaboratively engaging with stakeholders to co-create knowledge. In Nigeria, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) underscores the need for legislators to access evidence-based research to enhance policy formulation (NILDS, 2018). Yet, in the Northwest, the limited availability of such resources remains a significant barrier (Mohammed & Idris, 2023).

MECHANISMS AND CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH LEGISLATORS IN THE NORTHWEST ZONE ACCESS AND SHARE INFORMATION DURING LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES

Information-sharing mechanisms in legislative settings include formal channels (e.g., legislative libraries, digital databases, and government reports) and informal channels (e.g., consultations with constituents and civil society organizations). In Nigeria's Northwest Zone, the lack of robust formal systems is a recurring theme in the literature. Mohammed and Idris (2023) note that State Houses of Assembly in the region often lack functional legislative libraries or digital platforms, compelling legislators to rely on informal networks, which can lead to inefficiencies and misinformation. Similarly, a study by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) highlights that effective legislative processes depend on structured information systems, such as online legislative archives, which are underutilized in many developing contexts, including Nigeria (NCSL, 2016).

Recent technological advancements have facilitated information sharing in some legislative contexts. For example, Bucchianeri. (2024) discuss how digital legislative archives in U.S. state legislatures have improved access to bill histories and legislative data, enhancing transparency and efficiency. However, in Nigeria's Northwest, the adoption of such technologies is limited due to infrastructural and financial constraints (TheCable, 2025). Posts on X also reflect public sentiment about the lack of data-sharing infrastructure in Nigeria, with users noting the absence of accessible data platforms for public and legislative use.

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE INFORMATION SHARING

Several challenges hinder effective information sharing in Nigeria's Northwest State Houses of Assembly. First, executive dominance often restricts legislators' access to critical government data, such as budget performance reports and audit findings, undermining oversight functions (TheCable, 2025). This aligns with broader findings on legislative transparency, which suggest that executive control can limit legislative autonomy (Open Government Partnership, 2025). Second, financial constraints and lack of autonomy, as highlighted by TheCable (2025), limit investments in information infrastructure, such as legislative libraries or digital tools.

Third, capacity gaps among legislators, including limited training in information literacy and research utilization, further exacerbate the problem (NILDS, 2018). Mohammed and Idris (2023) argue that many legislators in the Northwest lack the skills to navigate complex data sources, relying instead on aides or external consultants, which may introduce biases.

Additionally, socio-cultural factors, such as reliance on traditional communication channels, can limit the adoption of modern information-sharing practices (Mohammed & Idris, 2023).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The literature identifies several theoretical frameworks for understanding information-sharing activities. Pilerot (2012) applies meaning holism and Wittgenstein's concept of language games to argue that information sharing is a collaborative, context-dependent process shaped by the actors involved and their environment. In the Northwest Nigerian context, this framework is relevant, as legislators' information-sharing practices are influenced by regional socio-political dynamics, such as executive-legislative relations and cultural norms (Mohammed & Idris, 2023).

Additionally, the theory of conditional party government, as discussed by Bucchianeri, (2024), suggests that information-sharing dynamics are affected by party cohesion and ideological polarization. In Nigeria, where political parties often dominate legislative agendas, this theory could explain variations in information access between majority and minority party legislators. However, the applicability of such frameworks in Nigeria's Northwest requires further exploration due to the region's unique political landscape.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The studyadopts survey research design using cross sectional survey. It is a design that compares two or more group in terms of attitude, belief, opinion and practices. The study makes a choice of the design because of its relevance and advantages. Survey design help the researcher to have information from a large number of individuals at a particular point in time

Population of the Study

This study secondary population comprise the entire State Houses of Assembly in Northwest zone of Nigeria while the primary population consist of all Members of State House of Assembly in Northwest zone with a total number of (211) which was established by the preliminary investigation conducted by the researcher.

Table 1. Population of the Study

S/N	STATES	No. of Population
1.	Kano State House of Assembly	40
2	Kaduna State House of Assembly	34
3.	Kebbi State House of Assembly	24
4.	Katsina State House of Assembly	32
5.	Jigawa State House of Assembly	27
6	Sokoto State House of Assembly	30
7	Zamfara State House of Assembly	24
	Total	211

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The researcher used the entire members of the state house of assembly in northwest zone of Nigeria.

Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was used as the research instrument in this study given the size of the population.

Method of Data Analysis

The data for this research was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Measure of central tendency was used to obtain an index that guide the researcher in making conclusion about the research findings which include the use of frequency, percentages, means and standard deviation for the research findings

DATA ANALYSIS

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENT

Table 1: Age group distribution of legislators in states' house of assemblies in North west, Nigeria

AGE group	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
30-40 years	43	32
41-50	92	67
51-60	1	1
60 and above	Nil	Nil

As displayed in Table 1 in terms of age distribution 67%. of the respondent are within the age of 41-50 years, while 32% are within 30-40 years of age group and only 1% is in 51-60years category. From these findings, it was discovered that, majority of the respondents (67%) are within 41-50years, therefore it can be concluded that, majority of the legislators in state house of assembly in North west zone are probably matured young people, and by implication as such that maturity will probably greatly enhance their legislative activities and function

WORK EXPERIENCE AS LEGISLATORS

Table 2: L legislative Work experience of legislators in states' House of Assemblies in North west Nigeria

WORK EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
0-4years	48	35
5-8 years	53	39
9-12 years	22	16
13 and above	13	10

As indicated Table 2 in terms of legislative work experience of respondents, 35% have less than 4years experience, 39% Have 5-8years experience, while 16% have 9-12years experience and 10% have 13years and above experience. Analysis from these findings revealed that majority of the respondents (39%) have 5-8years experience, further refinement of data revealed that 65% of the respondents (4-13years experience categories) have served more than two term in the legislature. Hence legislative activities are not new to them. This implies that their performance during legislative processes and policy formulations can be

evaluated. And the in near future Nigerian state house of assemblies can compete with developed democracies of the world in terms meaningful legislative processes.

LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Table 3: Educational qualification

QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
DIPLOMA	50	37
NCE	25	18
HND/BA/BSc	53	39
MSc and Above	8	6
Total	136	100

Table 3 indicates that, less than half of the respondents 53 (38.9%) had HND/BA/BSc, followed by 50 (36.8%) who had diploma, while 25 (18.4%) had NCE and only 8(5.8%) had MSc and above. This mirrors that the entire respondent had attain higher level of educational qualification. This implies that members of state house of assembly in Nigeria could be up to the task in the discharge of their legislative responsibility because majority of them are literate and have attain tertiary education even though not quite a number of them had Master degrees.

TYPES OF INFORMATION SHARED BY LEGISLATORS

Table 4: Types of information shared

TYPES OF INFORMATION SHARED	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
House resolution	23	17
Socio – economic conditions	60	44
Executive performance to draft bills	51	38
Oversight functions	2	1

Table 4 shows that less than half 60 (44.1%) of the respondent indicates Socio – economic conditions as their most shared type of information. Followed by Executive performance to draft bills with 51 (37.5%) while house resolutions 23 (16.9%) and oversight functions 2(1.5%) it can be seen that the most shared type of information by the state house of assembly members in Nigeria is the socio – economic condition .This finding further confirms the findings of the study conducted by Mohammed and Idris (2023) who found that, legislators in the Northwest often seek data on poverty levels, security issues, and infrastructural needs to address regional challenges. However, the absence of structured information systems forces reliance on informal sources, such as personal contacts and community leaders, which may lack accuracy or comprehensiveness

MEDIUM USE IN INFORMATION SHARING

Table 5: Medium of information sharing used by legislators

MEDIUM USE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Consultations with constituents	44	32
Digital data base	22	16
Civil society organization	27	20
Govt reports	19	13
Legislative library services	17	13
Mobile phones	4	3
Internet	3	2
Total	136	100

Table 5 shows the medium use in information sharing by legislators. Less than half 44 (32.4%) indicate Consultations with constituents followed by civil society organizations with 27 (19.9%) while digital database 22 (16.2%) Governments reports with 19 (13.10%) legislative library services with 17 (12.5%) Mobile phones with 4(2.8%) and internet with 3 (2.2%) In Nigeria's Northwest Zone, the lack of robust formal systems is a recurring theme in the literature. Mohammed and Idris (2023) note that State Houses of Assembly in the region often lack functional legislative libraries or digital platforms, compelling legislators to rely on informal networks, which can lead to inefficiencies and misinformation. Similarly, a study by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) highlights that effective legislative processes depend on structured information systems, such as online legislative archives, which are underutilized in many developing contexts, including Nigeria (NCSL, 2016).

CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION SHARING

Table 6: Challenges of information sharing

CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION SHARING	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Executive dominance	90	66
Financial constraints and lack of autonomy	22	16
Lack of access to classified information	12	9
Limited training and Low level of technological and information literacy	12	9
Total	136	100

Table 6 shows the challenges of information sharing by legislators. More than half 90 (66.2%) indicate Executive dominance, followed by financial constraints with 22 (16.2%) while lack of access to classified information 12 (8.8%) with 12 (8.8%) and limited training

and low level of technological/information literacy. This aligns with broader findings on legislative transparency, which suggest that executive control can limit legislative autonomy (Open Government Partnership, 2025).

FINDINGS:

Two hundred and eleven copies of questionnaire were distributed to the state legislators in the seven states houses of assembly in Northwest zone of Nigeria. Out of 136 (64.7%) copies of the questionnaire were returned and found useable, while only 75 (35.3%) were not returned. The high rate of unreturned questionnaire was due to the fact that some of the legislators were on recess while others were busy with their legislative responsibilities.

The findings show that majority of respondents of the study were males this reveals the domination of male in the legislative chamber over the female in terms of representation despite several agitation of gender equality which is been promoted by the local and international stakeholders in democratic project across the globe. The implication of this is that female were still lagging behind in terms of representation at the state house of assembly in Nigeria By implication, which has a serious threat in protecting their interest when it comes to legislation on issues bordering them. This contradict the study conducted by (Ruth, 2012) in which a very significant number of females serve as members of parliament in Uganda.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the finding of this study on the use and types of information sharing by legislators in state house of assembly in Nigeria It was revealed that knowledge and use of information sharing is necessary for an effective decision making and policy formulation in the performance of legislative functions by state house of assemblies' legislators. Importantly, the most type of information shared by the legislators is the socio- economic condition which is found to be the core conduct of legislative processes. The study found out that executive dominance, financial constraints, limited training and lack of information and communication technology (ICT), Information literacy and lack of access to classified information as the major challenges of information sharing.

The study further revealed that the legislators share information through consultations with constituents though legislators across the world are leveraging on the legislative library services in sharing information which the study recommends northern Nigerian legislators to also emulate. The study recommends that legislators should be encouraged to be using digital database and as well attending training on information and communication Technology/ information literacy training to develop their skills in exploring opportunities attach to ICT. And finally financial autonomy of state legislative arm is sacrosanct for effective legislative services.

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