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# Legislators' turnout and the perception of constituents about members of the Nigerian national assembly: A case study of the senate of the fourth republic

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### Abstract

This study examined how public perceptions, quality of legislative bills passed, and overall legislative performance are affected by legislative turnout in the Nigerian National Assembly during the Fourth Republic (2015-2023). By employing a mixed-method approach, the study examined attendance records, survey responses of 400 members of the public, and interviews with 20 prominent legislative leaders. The survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the interview data were analysed using content analysis. Findings showed that, higher legislative turnout exhibits appositive relationship with positive public perception. Results further revealed that legislators who participated in debates and attended sessions on a frequent basis performed better. Absenteeism, on the other hand, resulted in less effective legislation, postponed bill passage, and poorer quality bills. The author therefore recommended stricter attendance regulations, mandatory disclosure procedures, and improved interaction between lawmakers and constituents. These measures are hoped to promote a more effective and accountable legislative process. Finally, the study concludes that, improving participation and addressing absenteeism are essential measures for bolstering Nigeria's democratic system and guaranteeing improved governance.

**Keywords:** Legislators' turnout, public perception, national assembly, Nigeria

### Introduction

Public perception reflects voters' attitudes and beliefs towards their representatives and their performance in legislative duties, which influences electoral outcomes, voter behaviour, and lawmakers' political careers (Widerquist, 2003) <sup>[1]</sup>. A positive perception indicates trust and confidence, while negative perceptions suggest dissatisfaction and disenchantment with lawmakers' performance. Low turnout in the National Assembly indicates absenteeism, disengagement, or a lack of interest in legislative duties (Chigbundu *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[2]</sup>. Active participation allows legislators to contribute meaningfully to debates, policy formulation, and decision-making processes (Inglehart, 2018) <sup>[3]</sup>. Turnout rates directly impact governance effectiveness and legislative credibility. Between 2015 and 2023, several challenges emerged in assessing the link between legislators' turnout and public perception. Factors such as media influence, political dynamics, and external events have shaped voter attitudes toward legislators. The low turnout of legislators in the Nigerian National Assembly has raised concerns among constituents, as many lawmakers frequently miss plenary sessions, committee meetings, and other essential legislative activities (Ibrahim, 2019) <sup>[4]</sup>.

In developed democracies, legislators exhibit high attendance and active participation, ensuring that laws reflect citizens' interests. Nigeria's legislative attendance rates are poor, leading to legislative inefficiency, delayed policymaking, and weakened executive oversight (Okon and Udo, 2021) <sup>[5]</sup>. The lack of punitive measures for absentee legislators raises concerns about accountability and representation (Adetoye, 2021) <sup>[6]</sup>. The absence of legislators during critical debates further weakens voter-representative relationships and delays decision-making processes (Firidin, 2022) <sup>[7]</sup>. This study therefore aims to explore the relationship between legislators' turnout and public perception in Nigeria's National Assembly during the Fourth Republic (2015-2023). It reveals how evolving public perceptions influence lawmakers' commitment to parliamentary duties (Omotola, 2016) <sup>[8]</sup>.

### Legislators' Turnout and Public Perception

Public perception in Nigeria's Fourth Republic significantly influences legislative behaviour, particularly in relation to legislators' turnout. The expectations and opinions of constituents directly influence how legislators engage in parliamentary activities. The increasing use of digital media and civic engagement platforms between 2015 and 2023 has amplified public scrutiny of legislative attendance, making it a critical factor in assessing legislative performance. Empirical studies have shown that public opinion significantly impacts legislators' behaviour, with higher attendance rates observed among lawmakers who face strong public scrutiny in their constituencies (Onuigbo and Eme, 2015) <sup>[8]</sup>. Additionally, legislators who actively engage with their constituents feel greater pressure to attend parliamentary sessions, as public perception directly influences their electoral prospects. Social media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, as real-time feedback on legislative performance makes attendance a key indicator of commitment to governance (Olusa and Bolaji, 2020) <sup>[9]</sup>. Furthermore, absenteeism among lawmakers contributes to declining public trust in democratic institutions, leading to reduced voter participation in subsequent elections and weakening democratic accountability.

### Participation and Public Perception

Regular attendance and active participation in legislative processes are crucial for transparency, accountability, and public trust in governance. Engaging citizens on issues relating to policy debates and providing feedback on decisions strengthens institutional credibility and political awareness (Ogiela, 2017) <sup>[10]</sup>. This leads to a more informed electorate, influencing public perceptions and encouraging higher voter turnout. Participation also helps legislators remain responsive to public concerns, ensuring governance remains inclusive and representative (Pataconi *et al.*, 2014) <sup>[11]</sup>. Conversely, low levels of participation can lead to political apathy, declining electoral turnout, and poor legislative performance. Non-participation in democratic processes can lead to public dissatisfaction, reduced trust in governance, and weakening institutional accountability (Bolton *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[12]</sup>. This disconnection between the electorate and their representatives hinders national development and weakens democratic institutions.

### Legislators' Turnout and Quality of Representation

Legislators' turnout is crucial for the quality of representation in democratic institutions. Studies have shown that higher attendance rates lead to enhanced legislative effectiveness, greater accountability, and stronger constituency engagement. In Nigeria, Odeyemi (2023) <sup>[13]</sup> noted that absenteeism undermines the effectiveness of the National Assembly, leading to declining public trust and voter apathy. Conversely, high legislative turnout in Sub-Saharan African countries leads to improved transparency, rigorous policy debates, and greater citizen trust in the democratic process. In the U.S. Congress, legislators who maintain consistent attendance are more successful in passing bills, securing committee positions, and gaining support for their legislative initiatives (Hunt and Miler, 2023) <sup>[14]</sup>. In India, Kumar & Roy (2022) noted that lawmakers with strong attendance records secure development funds for their constituencies and advocate for local projects. High legislative engagement is positively

associated with increased funding for infrastructure, education, and healthcare initiatives, demonstrating the direct impact of turnout on constituents' well-being.

### Public Perception and Democratic Governance

Public perception significantly influences voter behaviour and legislative engagement. Perceived transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in governance encourage citizens to participate in the political process and hold their representatives accountable (Lee, 2023) <sup>[15]</sup>. Conversely, declining public perception of government effectiveness leads to reduced voter turnout, weaker democratic institutions, and lower legislative participation. Low turnout rates often indicate dissatisfaction, political apathy, or systemic governance failures (Bolton *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[16]</sup>. To improve democratic participation, Nigeria must prioritize civic education, promote transparency measures, and create inclusive decision-making platforms. Strengthening public accountability mechanisms ensures governance remains responsive and representative of the people's aspirations. This culture of democratic engagement can build a resilient political system that upholds democratic values and promotes effective governance.

### Empirical evidence

Empirical case studies from Nigeria further illustrate how turnout influences effective representation. For instance, in 2021, debates on the Petroleum Industry Bill saw significantly higher attendance among lawmakers due to its economic implications and public interest (Odeyemi, 2023) <sup>[14]</sup>. The study found that legislators viewed these debates as opportunities to reinforce their commitment to governance and gain political capital ahead of re-election in 2023. Similarly, the 2020 COVID-19 response discussions in Nigeria's National Assembly witnessed increased legislative turnout due to heightened public scrutiny (Abayomi, 2024) <sup>[17]</sup>. The research indicated that lawmakers were more present and active in deliberations when they were aware of intense media coverage and public monitoring of their roles in formulating crisis-response policies. These point to the fact that legislators' turnout is often driven by external pressures, including media attention and electoral considerations, rather than a sustained commitment to governance.

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that legislators' turnout has a profound impact on governance quality and public trust. High attendance correlates with better legislative performance, increased responsiveness to constituents' needs, and improved policy outcomes. In contrast, absenteeism contributes to weak democratic institutions, diminished accountability, and voter dissatisfaction. The review of existing studies highlights the importance of transparency and public engagement in promoting higher legislative turnout. As seen in global and regional comparisons, governance effectiveness is significantly enhanced when lawmakers actively participate in parliamentary processes. This further underscores the need for institutional reforms to improve attendance, ensure accountability, and strengthen democratic governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

### Transparent Management of Attendance Records and Constituents' Perception of Representatives

Transparency in legislative processes, especially in

managing attendance records, is crucial for assessing the participation of legislators in parliamentary businesses (Crepaz and Arikan, 2024) <sup>[18]</sup>. Transparency refers to the openness and accessibility of parliamentary proceedings, legislative decisions, and representatives' activities to the public. Ensuring attendance records are systematically documented and made available for public scrutiny enables citizens to assess their representatives' engagement and hold them accountable for their performance. Public access to legislative transactions and decisions is crucial as it allows citizens to monitor elected officials, understand policy decisions, and participate in governance discussions (Audu, 2021) <sup>[19]</sup>. Transparency in legislative affairs strengthens accountability mechanisms and fosters a more engaged electorate.

International organizations and initiatives, such as the Open Government Partnership and the Group of States against Corruption, advocate for transparency reforms to combat political apathy and enhance public perception of government institutions (Crepaz and Arikan, 2024). Access to legislative attendance records and performance data helps citizens make informed electoral decisions, reinforcing democratic participation. However, full transparency in legislative affairs faces challenges, such as bureaucratic inertia, lack of political will, resistance from lawmakers, and inadequate technological infrastructure (Abdullahi and Mustafa, 2021) <sup>[20]</sup>. Successful strategies from other countries, such as e-parliament systems in Estonia, Finland, and South Korea, offer valuable lessons for Nigeria (Abdullahi and Mustafa (2021) <sup>[20]</sup>. Anti-corruption agencies, civil society organizations, and investigative journalism also play vital roles in advocating for greater transparency in legislative proceedings (Itodo and O'Regan, 2018) <sup>[21]</sup>.

### The Impact of Legislators' Turnout on Legislative Efficiency

Legislative efficiency refers to the capacity of a legislature to deliberate effectively, pass laws, and address national issues in a timely and impactful manner (Bakere, 2020) <sup>[22]</sup>. The efficiency of legislative institutions depends on various factors, including legislators' turnout, active participation, committee work, and policy formulation effectiveness (Akinola and Mosunmola, 2023) <sup>[23]</sup>. High attendance facilitates robust debates, enables quorum formation, and ensures informed decision-making, whereas absenteeism can stall legislative proceedings, delay policy implementation, and erode governance quality (Odewingie, 2014) <sup>[24]</sup>. Empirical studies emphasize the detrimental effects of absenteeism on legislative efficiency. Kumar and Roy (2022) <sup>[25]</sup> examined the Indian Parliament and found that poor attendance often resulted in failure to meet quorum requirements, frequent adjournments, and legislative gridlocks. These disruptions slowed down the passage of critical laws, reduced legislative output, and weakened public confidence in parliamentary institutions.

Similarly, absenteeism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been a persistent issue, leading to legislative inefficiency. For instance, during the 2016 budget debates, widespread absenteeism caused delays in budget approval, exacerbating Nigeria's economic challenges (Odeyemi, 2023). Additionally, legislative committees tasked with oversight

responsibilities have struggled to meet deadlines due to poor attendance, undermining their ability to hold the executive accountable and scrutinize government spending effectively (van Zyl and Nkoana, 2021) <sup>[26]</sup>. Legislative absenteeism does not only affect decision-making but also undermines the credibility of the legislature as an institution. According to Aiyede (2014) <sup>[27]</sup>, persistent absenteeism signals a lack of commitment and responsibility among lawmakers, leading to public dissatisfaction and declining trust in democratic institutions. The Nigerian public has increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with absentee legislators, particularly during debates on crucial policies such as fuel subsidy reforms and electoral amendments (Odeyemi, 2023) <sup>[28]</sup>.

### Materials and Methods

The study investigates legislators' turnout and public perception in Nigeria's Senate, specifically within the Fourth Republic (2015-2023). It employs a descriptive survey research design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data was gathered from journal articles and government reports. The mixed-methods approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, combining numerical data and narrative explanations. The study includes a representative sample of Nigerians, the National Assembly leadership, universities, and government offices to understand regional variations in public perception and legislative behaviour. Taro Yamane's (2019) statistical data was utilized to determine the sample size and administer the questionnaire for primary data generation in this study.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = the sample size

N = the population size

e = the acceptable sampling error

Adopting Taro Yamane's sample size calculation formula for the volume of the questionnaire meant for this study:

Where:

$$N = 200,000,000$$

$$e = 0.05$$

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{200,000,000}{1 + 200,000,000 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{200,000,000}{1 + 200,000,000 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = 399.99$$

$$n = 400$$

**Table 1:** Distribution of Respondents

Category	Population	Sample Size
General Public	200,000,000	400
National Assembly Leadership	28	20
Total	200,000,028	420

The study uses descriptive statistics and content analysis to analyse quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews data, identifying themes, patterns, and sentiments expressed by respondents. This comprehensive evaluation allows for both numerical representation and qualitative interpretation, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research findings. Ethical compliance is crucial to the integrity of this study. All respondents were informed about the purpose of the research, their rights to participate and withdraw at any

time, and data confidentiality. Personal information was anonymized to protect respondents' identities. Finally, ethical clearance was obtained from the Federal University, Lokoja's ethics committee.

**Results and Discussions**

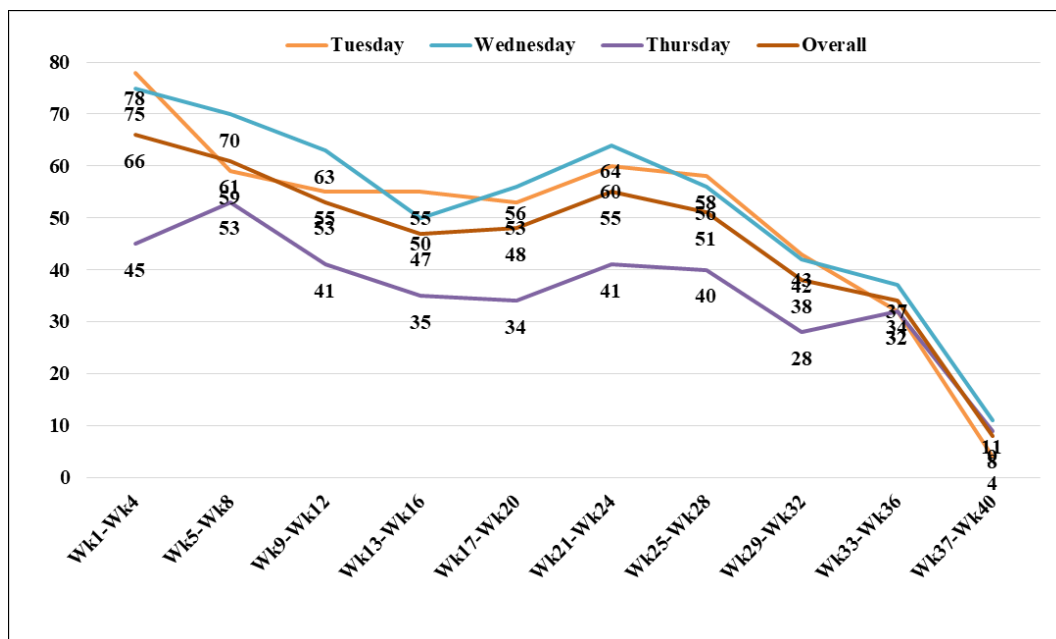
**Results Presentation**

Analysis of Legislators' Turnout in the Nigerian National Assembly

**Table 2:** Analysis of Legislators' Turnout in the Nigerian National Assembly (2015-2023)

Week/Year	Tuesday Average	Wednesday Average	Thursday Average	Overall Average Attendance
<b>Legislators' Turnout on a Week-on-Week Basis</b>				
Wk1-Wk4	78 (71.6%)	75 (68.8%)	45 (41.3%)	66 (60.6%)
Wk5-Wk8	59 (54.1%)	70 (64.2%)	53 (48.6%)	61 (56.0%)
Wk9-Wk12	55 (50.5%)	63 (57.8%)	41 (37.6%)	53 (48.6%)
Wk13-Wk16	55 (50.5%)	50 (45.9%)	35 (32.1%)	47 (43.1%)
Wk17-Wk20	53 (48.6%)	56 (51.4%)	34 (31.2%)	48 (44.0%)
Wk21-Wk24	60 (55.0%)	64 (58.7%)	41 (37.6%)	55 (50.5%)
Wk25-Wk28	58 (53.2%)	56 (51.4%)	40 (36.7%)	51 (46.8%)
Wk29-Wk32	43 (39.4%)	42 (38.5%)	28 (25.7%)	38 (34.9%)
Wk33-Wk36	32 (29.4%)	37 (33.9%)	32 (29.4%)	34 (31.2%)
Wk37-Wk40	4 (3.7%)	11 (10.1%)	9 (8.3%)	8 (7.3%)
<b>Legislators' Turnout on a Yearly Basis</b>				
2015-2016	74 (67.9%)	65 (59.6%)	52 (47.7%)	64 (58.7%)
2016-2017	49 (45.0%)	49 (45.0%)	49 (45.0%)	49 (45.0%)
2017-2018	63 (57.8%)	68 (62.4%)	51 (46.8%)	61 (56.0%)
2018-2019	34 (31.2%)	60 (55.0%)	41 (37.6%)	45 (41.3%)
2019-2020	73 (67.0%)	61 (56.0%)	43 (39.4%)	59 (54.1%)
2020-2021	18 (16.5%)	18 (16.5%)	5 (4.6%)	13 (11.9%)
2022-2023	38 (34.9%)	34 (31.2%)	5 (4.6%)	26 (23.9%)
Overall Average	50 (45.9%)	52 (47.7%)	36 (33.0%)	46 (42.2%)

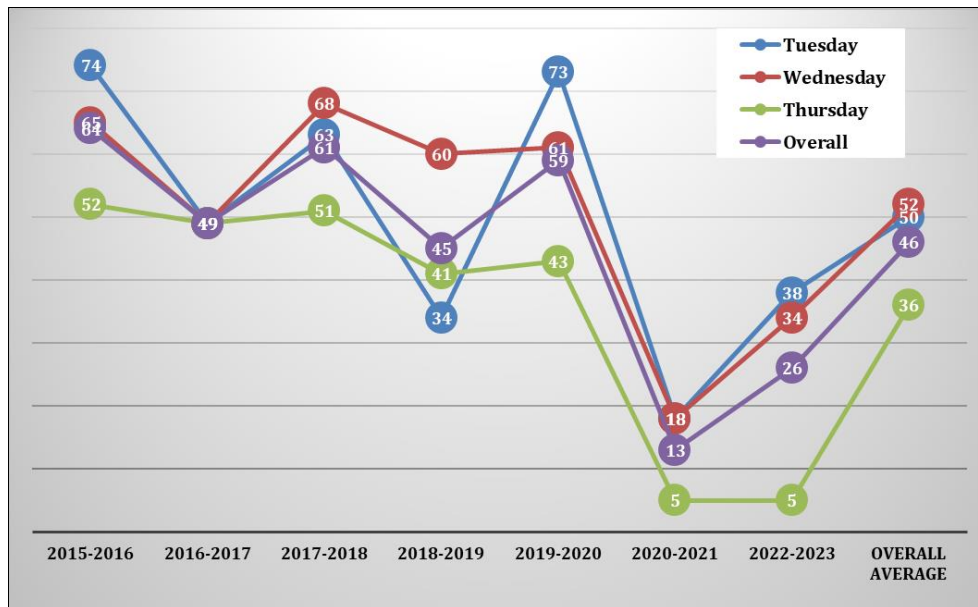
Source: Author's Computation from Nigerian National Assembly attendance records, August 2024



Source: Author's Computation from Field Work, August 2024

**Fig 1:** Average Legislators' Turnout on a Week-on-Week Basis (count)





Source: Author’s Computation from Field Work, August 2024

Fig 2: Average Legislators' Turnout on a Yearly Basis (count)

The Nigerian National Assembly's senator attendance statistics from 2015 to 2023 reveals significant variations in participation over time. Attendance peaked during the first quarter (Wk1-Wk4), with an average of 78 senators (71.6%) present on Tuesdays, 75 (68.8%) on Wednesdays, and 45 (41.3%) on Thursdays, for a weekly average of 66 (60.6%). Given that parliamentary sessions have begun and that important legislative issues must be addressed immediately, this indicates an early and firm commitment to legislative obligations. But attendance started to gradually drop as the legislative sessions went on.

The weekly attendance fell to 53 (48.6%) during Weeks 9-12 and then to 47 (43.1%) in Weeks 13-16. Thursdays had the worst decline, with only 35 (32.1%) senators showing up. The weekly average fell to 38 (34.9%) by Weeks 29-32, and attendance fell to only 8 (7.3%) by Weeks 37-40, with just 4 (3.7%) senators in attendance on Tuesdays and 9 (8.3%) on Thursdays. Legislative exhaustion, election-related responsibilities, or indifference in parliamentary activities are some of the potential causes of this sharp decline in attendance towards the end of the year. The weekly attendance average was 46 (42.2%) for all weeks, with Tuesdays having the greatest attendance at 50 (45.9%), followed by Wednesdays at 52 (47.7%) and Thursdays at 36 (33.0%). This suggests that, on average, fewer than half of the senators attended plenary sessions on a regular basis,

which raises questions regarding politicians' dedication to their legislative duties.

On an annual basis, Tuesday attendance peaked in 2015-2016 at 74 (67.9%), but it fell precipitously to 18 (16.5%) in 2020-2021. In 2022-2023, there was a minor rebound, as attendance increased to 38 (34.9%). Wednesday attendance peaked at 78 (71.6%) in 2016-2017, but it fell to 18 (16.5%) in 2020-2021, with a little rebound in 2022-2023 at 34 (31.2%). Throughout all years, Thursdays had the lowest attendance, peaking at 69 (63.3%) in 2016-2017 and falling to just 5 (4.6%) in 2020-2021 and 2022-2023. This pattern indicates a pronounced lack of interest in plenary sessions, particularly later in the week. According to the data, attendance has been steadily falling, with participation being noticeably lower on Thursdays. External considerations like travel commitments, political duties, or a general decline in legislative activity towards the end of the week might be the cause of this. Additionally, the weekly average attendance of 46 (42.2%) indicates that over half of the parliamentarians were missing on a regular basis, which may have had a negative impact on quorum formation, parliamentary discussions, and bill passage.

**Impact of legislator’s turnout on the quality of representation**

Table 3: Impact of Legislators’ Turnout on the Quality of Representation

Questions	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Total
Q1. I believe that higher attendance rates of Legislators lead to better decision-making and policy formulation	286 (76.5%)	20 (5.3%)	68 (18.2%)	374 (100%)
Q2. Legislators’ presence in the National Assembly affects their ability to advocate policy reforms in favour of their constituents’ needs	321 (85.8%)	12 (3.2%)	41 (11%)	374 (100%)
Q3. There is connection between the frequency of representatives’ attendance and their responsiveness to constituents’ concerns	297 (79.4%)	17 (4.5%)	60 (16.1%)	374 (100%)
Q4. Legislators who attend sessions regularly are more informed about national issues affecting their constituents	300 (80.2%)	24 (6.4%)	50 (13.4%)	374 (100%)
Q5. It is important that the constituency representatives maintain a high level of attendance in the National Assembly	312 (83.4%)	13 (3.5%)	49 (13.1%)	374 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, August 2024

The results show that 76.5% of respondents believe that legislators' high attendance rates improve decision-making and policy formulation. They also advocate for policy reforms. Most respondents agree that legislators who frequently attend legislative sessions are more informed about national issues. The study emphasizes the importance of active participation in governance and the relationship between turnout and representation quality. The leadership of the Nigerian National Assembly also emphasizes high attendance rates as a reflection of legislative duties. Specifically, the result implies that, constant attendance fosters better communication with constituents and enables legislators to be more effective in their roles. The participant remarked that, *“active participation through constant attendance and presence of the National Assembly during debates can lead to more informed decision-making and enhance the legislative process, thereby improving overall governance”* (Extract from the Interview data, 2024). The Nigerian National Assembly's leadership further emphasizes the importance of legislators' presence for effective representation and advocacy. They believe active participation allows legislators to understand constituents' needs and address issues more comprehensively. However, challenges like a conducive working environment and external factors can affect attendance. The majority of respondents (85.8%) support this belief, while some leaders argue that effective advocacy depends on quality of engagement, communication, and technology. The leadership advocates for initiatives that encourage participation and ensure legislators are present to fulfil their roles effectively. The participant commented that *“Legislators can still fulfil their advocacy roles through various means, such as virtual meetings, outreach,*

*programs, and collaboration with local leaders, even if they are not always present in the National Assembly”* (Extract from the Interview data, 2024).

The study reveals a strong public perception that attendance is crucial for effective representation. The majority of respondents believe that being present allows legislators to better understand and address constituents' concerns. However, alternative viewpoints suggest advocacy can be achieved through various means beyond physical presence. The study also found a positive correlation between frequent attendance and responsiveness to constituents' concerns, with 79.4% affirming this. The Nigerian National Assembly leaders emphasize the importance of legislative effectiveness beyond attendance, suggesting that legislative bodies should enhance communication and engagement strategies to ensure constituents are informed about the work being done. According to one of the leaders, *“Some legislators who attend sessions regularly may still lack deep understanding of the complexities of the issues at hand, as they may not engage in thorough research or dialogue with their constituents outside of formal sessions”* (Extract from the Interview data, 2024). The National Assembly leaders emphasize the importance of quality participation in legislative sessions, rather than just attendance. Similarly, 13.1% of the respondents indicated that quality work or active engagement with constituents are more important in promoting the quality of representation. These findings can help analyze how prioritizations around attendance influence legislative behaviour and the perceived effectiveness of representatives during the Fourth Republic.

**Influence of transparency in the legislative process and attendance records on public trust**

**Table 4:** Influence of Transparency in the Legislative Process and Attendance Records on Constituents' Perception of Their Representatives

Statements (N=374)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
Q1. There is a high level of confidence in the legislative process whenever there is access to information about the decisions being taken.	201 (53.7%)	72 (19.3%)	101 (27%)
Q2. Increased transparency in legislative activities and attendance records enhances trust in elected officials.	312 (83.4%)	11 (2.9%)	51 (13.7%)
Q3. Availability of information about legislative business affects perception of legislative sense of responsibility among lawmakers.	308 (82.3%)	11 (3.5%)	53 (14.2%)
Q4. Transparency in legislative governance reduces corruption and promotes ethical behaviour among legislators.	340 (90.9%)	4 (1.1%)	30 (8%)
Q5. It is important that legislative transactions and information be made accessible to the public.	319 (85.3%)	20 (5.3%)	35 (9.4%)

Source: Field Survey, August 2024

In Table 4.3, 201 (53.7%) respondents resonated the importance of transparency in legislative processes in fostering public trust and confidence in elected representatives, with access to legislative information influencing constituents' perception of lawmakers' trustworthiness and accountability. The majority of citizens (N=312; 83.4%) believe that transparency in governance enhances trust. The National Assembly's leadership emphasizes the importance of transparency in promoting responsibility and public engagement. The participant argued that, open sessions, public consultations, and digital platforms are crucial for constituents to have real-time access to legislative decisions and proceedings; *“Fostering transparency builds confidence among the public and strengthens the legitimacy of the legislative body. When citizens are informed about the decisions being made and*

*the rationale behind them, it leads to greater engagement and a more informed electorate.”* (Extract from Interview Data, 2024). This statement underscores the need for continuous efforts to enhance transparency as a means of reinforcing democratic legitimacy.

From the results, 83.4% of respondents affirmed that transparency in legislative activities and attendance records increases trust in elected officials. This implies that there is a strong correlation between transparency and public confidence. This further validates the remark by one of the national Assembly's leaders; *“Increased transparency in legislative activities is crucial for restoring public trust in elected officials. It allows citizens to see the processes behind decision-making and fosters a sense of responsibility.”* (Extract from Interview Data, 2024). These remarks highlight the critical role transparency plays in

shaping public trust.

According to 82.3% of respondents, transparency in legislative business increases lawmakers' sense of responsibility. This position was further echoed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives who stated that; *“A transparent legislature is essential for building trust and ensuring that lawmakers are accountable to the people they represent.”* (Extract from Interview Data, 2024). This perspective aligns with the view that when constituents are well-informed about legislative processes, they are more likely to hold their representatives accountable and demand better governance.

The majority of the respondents (N=340; 90.9%) believe transparency in legislative governance reduces corruption and promotes ethical behaviour among legislators, indicating that public perception of transparency acts as a deterrent. The findings corroborate the assertions made by the President of the Senate, who stated that; *“Transparency*

*in our legislative processes is not just a constitutional requirement; it is a moral obligation to the Nigerian people.”* (Extract from Interview Data, 2024). These insights further validate the hypothesis that openness and accountability measures can significantly enhance ethical conduct within the legislative framework. The National Assembly's leadership also emphasizes the importance of making legislative transactions and information accessible to the public, thus coinciding with the perception of the 85.3% of respondents that this promotes inclusive governance. The involves measures like live streaming of plenary sessions, online legislative records publication, and interactive civic engagement platforms as effective tools to bridge communication gaps.

**Legislators’ Turnout and Its Influence on Efficiency, Quality of Debates, and Bills Passed**

**Table 5:** Legislators’ Turnout and Its Influence on Quality of Debates and Bills Passed in the Fourth Republic

Statements (N=374)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
Q1. The efficiency of legislative governance is usually high during periods of high legislators’ turnout.	320 (85.6%)	30 (8.0%)	24 (6.4%)
Q2. Legislators who attend sessions regularly contribute to the quality of debates and bills passed in the National Assembly.	362 (96.8%)	10 (2.7%)	2 (0.5%)
Q3. The turnout of legislators usually affects the quality of debates and the timeliness of bills passed.	363 (97.1%)	2 (0.5%)	9 (2.4%)
Q4. There is a noticeable difference in the quality of debates and bills passed during times of high versus low turnout by legislators.	220 (58.8%)	64 (17.1%)	90 (24.1%)
Q5. Active participation of legislators in sessions fosters public trust and positive perception.	340 (90.9%)	3 (0.8%)	31 (8.3%)

Source: Field Survey, August 2024

The findings in Table 4.4 highlight a strong relationship between legislators’ turnout and the quality of debates and bills passed in the National Assembly. The responses indicate that public perception strongly favours active participation, with a consensus that higher turnout improves legislative efficiency, fosters accountability, and enhances public trust. A majority (85.6%) of respondents agreed that legislative efficiency is higher when attendance is high. This suggests that public trust in governance is closely linked to lawmakers' visibility and active participation. During an interview session, the Chief Whip of the House of Representatives also emphasized; *“Active participation by legislators is crucial for the effectiveness of our legislative duties.”* (Extract from Interview Data, 2024). This aligns with the belief that high turnout contributes to a more responsive and effective legislative process. The correlation between attendance and efficiency suggests that ensuring a quorum is essential for productive legislative sessions.

In terms of legislators’ attendance and quality of debates and bills passed, the study found that regular attendance of lawmakers significantly influences public confidence in the legislative process, with 96.8% of respondents stating that participation enhances policy knowledge and decision-making. For turnout and timeliness of legislative output, a staggering 97.1% of respondents agreed that high turnout affects the timeliness and quality of debates and bills passed. This underscores the importance of full legislative participation in meeting governance expectations. The Speaker of the House of Representatives also commented during an interview; *“A fully engaged legislature is better positioned to pass quality bills on time, ensuring national*

*policies are formulated effectively.”* (Extract from Interview Data, 2024). This perspective reinforces the survey results, emphasizing that attendance is not just a procedural requirement but a crucial determinant of legislative efficiency.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study aligns with several established theoretical frameworks. First, according to Public Choice Theory (Buchanan and Tullock, 1962) [29], legislators strategically attend sessions based on perceived political benefits, prioritizing high-profile debates to enhance their visibility and electoral prospects. In the context of Elite Theory (Mills, 1956) [30], attendance patterns reflect institutional hierarchies and elite-driven political dynamics, where influential lawmakers shape legislative priorities. In line with the Social Exchange Theory (Molm, 1997) [31], legislators who engage transparently earn public trust and reciprocal political support. In addition, empirical studies reinforce the findings. For instance, the findings align with the results of existing studies such as Adepoju and Olalekan (2020) [32] who found that absenteeism in Nigeria’s National Assembly delayed critical bills, including budgetary allocations and electoral reforms.

Similarly, the findings corroborate earlier discoveries by Gupta and Sharma (2019) [33], that high absenteeism in India’s Parliament undermined legislative efficiency. Studies from Kenya and Ghana further demonstrate that consistent attendance correlates with higher public trust, as engaged legislators are perceived as more accountable (Ochieng and Asamoah, 2021) [34]. The findings of this



study further corroborate the view of (Shardimgaliev, 2022)<sup>[35]</sup> who posits that legislators' turnout symbolizes their commitment to fulfilling the implicit agreement between them and their constituents. In addition, Rousseau (1762)<sup>[36]</sup> and Adetoye (2021)<sup>[37]</sup> argued that failure to attend sessions and to actively participate in legislative business is perceived as a breach of the social contract which may lead to diminished public trust and a legitimacy crisis.

Furthermore, parliamentary representation is a strategic decision, with voters selecting legislators based on their perceived credibility and effectiveness. In contrast, legislators often weigh the costs and benefits of attending particular legislative sessions, prioritising high-profile debates that enhance their political reputation and career prospects this is the arguments of Buchanan and Tullock (1962)<sup>[38]</sup>, and Molm (1997)<sup>[39]</sup>. This tendency underscores the political calculus involved in legislative attendance, where visibility and public perception play a crucial role. The empirical study of Ojo and Olaniyan (2020)<sup>[40]</sup> which reports that in sub-Saharan Africa, higher legislative attendance correlates with increased policymaking efficiency and stronger advocacy for constituency needs further corroborates the findings of the study. Similarly, the research carried out by Alshaiikh (2024)<sup>[41]</sup> and Johnson and Smith (2018)<sup>[42]</sup> in advanced democracies of the United Kingdom and Canada recognised the role of public accountability in fostering legislative transparency and higher turnout. The publication of attendance records, as advocated by Johnson and Smith (2018)<sup>[43]</sup> promotes legislative scrutiny and ensures greater legislative engagement.

The broader implications of legislators' turnout extend beyond parliamentary chambers. High attendance fosters more informed policymaking by incorporating diverse perspectives into legislative debates and decision-making (Inglehart, 2018)<sup>[44]</sup>. Consequently, it improves the quality of representation and placed legislators in a better positioned to advocate for their constituencies' interests. Furthermore, regular attendance bolsters public trust by demonstrating lawmakers' commitment to their responsibilities (Kolpinskaya and Bennett, 2024)<sup>[45]</sup>. However, balancing plenary attendance with other legislative functions of constituency outreach and oversight poses significant challenge. Institutional mechanisms like attendance scorecards and penalties for absenteeism encourage effective participation.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the connection between public perception and legislator's turnout in Nigeria's National Assembly during the Fourth Republic. According to the study, transparent governance fosters responsibility and confidence. The study also highlights how crucial frequent attendance and active parliamentary engagement are to boosting confidence among constituents. It implies that legislators must actively interact with the people, take part in government, and give constituency demands first priority because openness alone is insufficient. The study comes to the conclusion that a combination of the above elements can promote a governance system that is more credible and participatory. These results add to the body of knowledge on Nigerian parliamentary effectiveness, legislative accountability, and democratic governance by providing a road map for raising lawmakers' involvement and boosting

public trust in the legislative process.

Arising from the foregoing, the study recommends implementation of a legislative attendance monitoring system with real-time tracking and weekly attendance reports of legislators. This is hoped to boost legislative attendance, participation and public accountability. In addition to requiring the disclosure of legislators' activities, a web-based platform that offers access to vote trends, attendance records, and bill sponsorship information can improve legislative openness. Periodically conducting legislative audits to evaluate the efficacy of parliamentarians and supporting watchdog groups are recommended as two ways to improve oversight systems. The current practice of paying sitting allowance to absentees should be revised and there should be rules that penalise absenteeism in the National Assembly. Legislators and citizens should communicate directly through digital platforms and frequent town hall meetings to increase civic participation. Finally, transparency scorecards and mobile applications are two examples of technology integration that should be used to monitor legislative performance in the Nigerian National assembly.

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