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Power, politics, and appropriation in African presidential democracies: A comparative analysis of executive-legislative dynamics in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa

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Abstract
In presidential systems, the budget is an essential area in which the executive and legislature discuss and resolve matters of power. Although there is a lot of literature on budgeting in several African nations, there is a clear gap in research on the trends and theories affecting the budget-related debate between executives and legislators across different countries. Drawing on a systematic analysis of 42 peer-reviewed and grey literature sources, the study looked into how executive-legislative relations affect the way appropriations are handled in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Thematic synthesis of executive-legislative interactions in budg*et al*location in South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria exposes political bargains, institutional flaws, and persistent power conflicts. Although party domination is still an issue, South Africa has a more balanced structure than Nigeria and Kenya, where the government controls the budgeting process and frequently marginalises the legislative branch. Ghana's budgetary reforms have produced modest gains. The executive's discretionary authority to change budgets, which compromises legislative oversight, is a significant discovery. In order to strengthen patronage networks, lawmakers frequently utilise budgeting as a political instrument, exchanging support for projects that benefit their constituents. Due to its strong budget regulations, South Africa is a remarkable exception to the rule that institutional and legal weaknesses, such as inadequate parliamentary power and unclear legal mandates, impede smooth oversight. While cross-national studies reveal differences in civic involvement, timeliness, and committee empowerment, executive dominance and informal political influence are common to all. Practical recommendations to consider are strengthening legislative budget offices, enhancing civic oversight, and promoting fiscal transparency.

Keywords: Executive-legislative relations, appropriation, fiscal governance, African democracies, political patronage

1. Introduction
1.1. Context and Rationale
In presidential systems, the budget is an essential area in which the executive and legislature discuss and resolve matters of power (Ekpu & Iweoha, 2017) [28]. Albert (2010) [4] points out that under parliamentary systems, the executive usually has control of the legislature, but presidential systems ensure that the executive and legislative branches are not united. As a result, members of each branch are likely to clash or cooperate formally in the process of passing the appropriations bill (Cheibub *et al.*, 2011; Lijphart, 2012) [20, 43]. In the African presidential framework, making the budget is a political battle reflecting the country's power struggles, patterns of patronage, and the main agenda (Rakner, 2017) [73].
One of the easiest ways to see how the government works in African nations like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa is through the appropriation of funds. As part of their job, legislatures scrutinize plans from the executive to make sure the government answers to them (Barkan, 2009) [7]. But the degree of effectiveness in oversight changes a lot depending on the type of institutions, who controls the parties, informal settlements, and the interests of elites in each place. As an example, the Nigerian legislature sometimes delays or edits the budget because they are concerned with transparency and equity, while the South African committee system ensures detailed ways of monitoring but is limited by political parties

(Olayiwola, 2021; Wehner, 2010) [63, 85]. As emphasized by Ojo (2022) [62], democracies need to demonstrate proper and timely distribution of funds for good service provision, fiscal management, and public trust. Lengthy, partisan, or unclear processes for appropriating funds may cause the economy to suffer, undermine its rules, and create more social inequality (Ndulo & Gazibo, 2016) [53]. This is why it is crucial to realize the role of executive and legislative powers during the budget process in order to influence reforms and the overall strengthening of democracy in African countries. Although there is a lot of literature on budgeting in several African nations, there is a clear gap in reviews that study the trends and theories affecting the budget-related debate between executives and legislators across different countries. The studies done so far are spread out, with the main emphasis on single-country studies that almost never analyze comparative data. This study tries to close this gap by examining how power, institutional choices, and political appropriation interact in four major African presidential democracies.

1.2. Justification of the Review
It is important to gather and analyze different theories used to study budget politics in African presidential systems, so this review is well-justified. While institutional theory is mainly concerned with the regulations and checks between leaders and legislators (North, 1990) [56], other theories prefer to focus on how influence and networks guide the results (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Lindberg, 2010) [12, 44]. The relationship between formal and informal ways of doing things makes it harder to study how appropriation happens and so requires more study. By examining African countries' experiences, this review aims to find out which explanations are most discussed in the literature, how elements such as institutions and informal players affect a president's ability to spend, and which points still require more study and research in the future. By following this process, this review will offer more insight on budgeting in Africa and contribute to knowledge on Africa's governance, state ability, and democracy development.

1.3. Research Questions
1. **How do executive-legislative relations influence the appropriation process in African presidential democracies such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa?**
   This question looks into the overall way the executive and legislature relate and interact when forming and approving the budget. It studies the effects of how institutions are related on how efficiently and legitimately the budget process proceeds and when each phase occurs.
2. **What power dynamics and political strategies are employed by presidents and legislatures in shaping national budgets across the selected countries?**
   This question explores the ways the legislative and executive branches influence and control budget decisions. Factors considered are the use of veto, lobbying for the budget, sticking to one political party, and the creation of coalitions during bill discussions.
3. **To what extent do institutional frameworks and political party configurations affect budget negotiations between the executive and legislative arms?**
   This question examines the impact of a country's constitution, its legislation, and the power of political parties on the budget talks. It looks at whether legislators making decisions together provide better results than having the legislative body separate its powers.
4. **What similarities and differences exist in the patterns of executive-legislative interaction over appropriation among Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa?**
   This question seeks to spot patterns between different countries, look at their most successful methods, or uncover particular issues they experience. It looks at African countries individually while keeping their democratic development in the context of the continent as a whole and may highlight useful insights.

1.4. Significance and structure of the study
The significance of this review lies in the fact that it offers the chance to tackle the gaps that exist due to differences in research approaches and origins in the study of budget politics in Africa. By discussing presidential democracies, the paper reveals how dispute and organizations affect one of the main tasks of democracy, which is the assignment of resources. The study is useful to policymakers, donors, and those in civil society who want to maximize openness in budgeting, accountability for spending, and how the legislature works.
Following this introductory section, the paper is further structured into four more sections. Section 2 covers a review of the theoretical foundations of the study. Section 2 compiles information from research, grouped by important themes that include institutional design, informal politics, and legislative abilities. In the next section, the methodology for the systematic review is discussed, highlighting the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, screening and selection process, data extraction, quality assessment, and analytical approach. Section 4 presents the findings and a critical discussion of the findings. Section 5 concludes the study with a synthesis of the key findings of the review. Lastly, section 6 proposes recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

2. Theoretical Foundations
2.1. Conceptual Clarifications
The clarification of the key concepts of appropriation is very important to make sure these concepts are understood in the context of presidential democracies. In a presidential democracy, the constitution makes sure the executive and legislature do not depend on one another, and the president takes on the roles of both leaders of the country and leader of the government. Contrary to parliamentary systems in many parts of the world, this system is built with the executive's authority coming from the constitution rather than legislative backing, as seen in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa (Cheibub, 2007) [19]. Here, budget formulation means that the executive branch develops a budget with approved plans for government earnings and outgoings, usually organized by the Ministry of Finance. Meanwhile, the process of appropriation covers the parliamentary review, amendment, and legal acceptance of the budget proposal, eventually deciding on how public funds will be used in different places (Wehner, 2010) [85].
When it comes to making and contesting budget decisions, how the executive and legislature interact, known as executive-legislative relations, is very important. These

bureaucratic systems are set up by giving the president a role in advising and blocking budgets and also allowing the legislature to go over, edit, and sign off on them. Nevertheless, this connection is affected by less-formal actions, including choices party members make, private agreements among politicians, lobbying strategies, and the abilities of the institutions (Posner & Young, 2007) [71]. Hence, comprehending who the important people are in the process points out the key reasons for making fiscal decisions.

Most of the work in starting the budget process comes from the president and cabinet, especially the finance and planning ministries. The oversight responsibility of the parliament is vital and is mainly carried out through both debates in the plenary and work in different committees. Among their other duties, appropriations committees, budget committees, and public accounts committees (PACs) look at all expenses and check that they follow set financial rules and standards (Stapenhurst *et al*., 2008) [77]. Members of civil society and journalists also help by encouraging transparency, pushing for more public spending, and checking the actions of both government branches. Together, these elements are known as oversight structures and consist of committees, checkers, and law reviews that oversee how the budget is applied and spent (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2014) [69, 77].

2.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory provides useful insights into the process of appropriation in presidential regimes. Essentially, the theory holds that following rules like a constitution, standards in parliament, and interactions between government bodies changes politicians' behaviours and influences their freedom of action (March & Olsen, 1984; North, 1990) [46, 56]. Within budgetary politics, the structure of institutions determines who starts, changes, and votes for the budget and under which circumstances. Hence, how institutions are structured, especially those that control the relationship between the executive and legislative branches, can impact the decisions on budget spending.

Depending on agreements, structures, and parties in each country, African presidential systems can either strongly or slightly affect budget decisions. For example, in Nigeria, because the National Assembly can change important parts of the budget, leaders at all levels face delays, face tough bargaining, and sometimes get accused of budget padding (Omotoso & Oladeji, 2019) [64]. Ghana, however, has a special type of system with a parliament made up of members from one party that usually lets the president take charge in creating budgets (Prempeh, 2008) [72]. Even though constitutional changes in 2010 increased the power of the parliament over funds and established the Budget and Appropriations Committee, the decision-making power of the ruling party still affects parliament's freedom (Bosire, 2020) [10]. In South Africa, committees including the Appropriations Committee and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) are given the responsibility to examine and change the executive's proposals. Even so, the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) holds most of the power may lessen the independence of watchdogs (Wehner, 2010) [85].

Scientific research agrees that how legislatures work and budgets shape up are connected to the way institutions are made. Wehner (2007) [84] concludes that the legislative body's budget power depends on how much it can change the budget, its skills in financial matters, and the information about state money. In their research, Abdulai and Crawford (2010) [1] point out that the legislative committees in Ghana are not free in their ability to interact constructively with the executive's budget. Yet, because South Africa has better institutions, it can oversee things better but nonetheless remains exposed to political influence (Folscher, 2010) [30]. What these findings show is that institutional theory helps shed light on why presidents' legislative budget performance differs across nations.

2.3 Elite Capture and Patron-Client Models

Although institutional theory points out the importance of formal organizations, it is necessary to acknowledge the effects of unofficial political processes on how budgets are decided. Elite capture and the patron-client models similarly look at how personal relationships, political patronage, and unofficial ways of influencing decisions are important. Elite capture occurs when people in power use their influence over public institutions to gain benefits for themselves, usually to the detriment of most individuals. In patron-client systems, exchanges of public resources, including budget, take place through groups who show loyalty and gratitude instead of focusing on set procedures or the actual needs of the population (van de Walle, 2001).

In various African nations, budget votes tend to show what elite bargains dictate rather than the actual needs of the country's future. In Nigeria, lawmakers have gained much support from their communities by allocating money for constituency projects that may not have many developmental benefits (Ogechukwu, 2018) [61]. Kenya, as well, has experienced unequal and ineffective use of public funds because the distribution depends mostly on ethnicity and political groups (Bosire, 2020) [10]. Even with solid institutions, South Africa was affected by irregularities in the budget because of how powerful groups and party conflict have affected the ANC in provincial and local government (de Visser & Steytler, 2012) [23].

Studies have established that informal networks can play a bigger role than formal rules in budget planning. It is argued by Bratton and van de Walle (1997) [12] that the use of neo-patrimonial tactics in African democracies prevents proper reforms and results in less accountability. Based on the findings of Keefer (2007) [38], when citizens do not trust the institutions, governments tend to depend on clientelism to win their vote, which weakens the overall quality and results of fiscal policies. It is clear from debates in Nigeria that the process of padding and off-budg*et al*locations in parliament shows that public concerns are outweighed by private negotiations among lawmakers (Olayiwola, 2021) [63]. Also, how development money in Kenya is spent to favour politicians has led people to question if the budgeting process is just and clear (Cheeseman *et al*., 2016) [18]. All in all, these studies prove that informal factors can halt democratic budget processes when elite views dominate over others in making policy decisions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Overall Approach

This study used a systematic approach to review and analyze current literature on ties between executives and legislators as well as the process of budget approval in Africa's presidential democracies. A systematic review is especially suitable for grouping, examining, and explaining study results in several contexts and ensuring the research methods are reliable and can be repeated (Lame, 2019; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006) [41, 70]. As a result of the complex budget politics and institutions in Africa, this method gives a clear view of the literature's strengths and weaknesses. PRISMA ("Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses") guidelines are followed to ensure that processes such as study identification and selection are rigorous and standard (Page *et al*., 2021) [68]. Adherence to the PRISMA guidelines ensures that the findings are reliable, the report is transparent, and other researchers are able to repeat the research.

3.2. Search Strategy

The review included many important studies by searching various academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and African Journals Online. The choice of these databases was based on their ability to include numerous areas of study and their representation of the African region, so literature on politics and development in Africa was available. To increase the scope of the search, the study integrated various search terms with Boolean operators: "executive-legislative relations" AND "appropriation" AND "presidential democracy"; "Nigeria" OR "Ghana" OR "Kenya" OR "South Africa" AND "budget process"; "principal-agent theory" AND "budget politics" AND "Africa"; "institutional theory" AND "appropriations committee"; and "elite capture" AND "legislative bargaining". Using this strategy follows the best practices for systematic literature review design (Booth, Papaioannou and Sutton, 2012) [9].

3.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were set to keep the study on track and relevant. Studies that looked at appropriations in African presidential democracies, especially Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, or South Africa; included at least one theoretical model (such as institutional, principal-agent, or elite capture); and empirical (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches) were included in the review. Also, only empirical studies that appeared in peer-reviewed journals, good working papers, books, or doctoral dissertations were included in the review. Only studies written in English and published from the period of 2000 to 2025 were included in the review since that period showed reforms to post-structural economies and steady growth of democracy in many African nations (Van de Walle, 2003; Cheeseman, 2015) [17]. These criteria match with the arguments made by Gough *et al*. (2017) [31] on inclusion in evidence synthesis. On the other hand, research focused only on parliamentary or semi-presidential systems, works written in languages other than English, studies published before 2000, and pieces that are not based on research were excluded. This guarantees the relevance and reliability of the study results.

3.4. Screening and Selection Process

For the screening and selection, the study used the four-stage PRISMA flow model: "identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion" (Page *et al*., 2021) [68]. In the identification phase, results from the databases were transferred to a reference management software (Zotero), and duplicate ones were removed. At the screening phase, titles and abstracts were looked at to determine their relevance. At the eligibility phase, all the papers were examined based on the inclusion criteria, and eligible papers were then included for synthesis. To minimize bias, both screening of abstracts and titles and full-text screening were done by two independent researchers, in accordance with the guidelines for systematic reviews (Higgins *et al*., 2022) [32].

3.5. Data Extraction

The procedure for extracting data from the reviewed studies entails gathering information that can support the objectives of the study (Büchter *et al*., 2020; Schmidt *et al*., 2021) [14, 75]. A specific data extraction form was made to guarantee the collection of necessary data from every chosen study. All the entries contained "the author's name and year of publication, country context, theoretical model used, methodology and data sources, executive-legislative variables (e.g., veto powers, committee systems, budget timelines), and major findings related to appropriation outcomes." Following this approach heeds the recommendations of the Cochrane Collaboration and makes sure the results from different studies are similar and easy to compare (Higgins *et al*., 2022) [32].

3.6. Quality Assessment

The review relied on different appraisal tools to assess the quality of the studies that were included. To appraise the quality of the qualitative studies, the CASP ("Critical Appraisal Skills Programme") Qualitative Checklist was used to check if the aims were clear, the approach used was suitable, data analysis was thorough, and ethics were handled correctly (CASP, 2018) [15]. The way sample size, validity of data, rigour of statistics, and the possibility to generalize data were evaluated in quantitative studies was done via the STROBE ("Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology") guidelines (von Elm *et al*., 2007) [82]. As for mixed methods research, the MMAT ("Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool") was used to review how well the research used both quantitative and qualitative methods (Hong *et al*., 2018) [33]. The quality of every study was assessed as high, medium, or low, depending on its transparency, sound methods, and the reliability of results, following the submission of Dixon-Woods *et al*. (2006) [24].

3.7 Analytical Approach

Data analysis was done using thematic synthesis, a way that is acceptable for combining outcomes from a variety of studies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Thomas & Harden, 2008) [78]. This approach was chosen because this way, common patterns can be seen, countries can be assessed against each other, and the original study context is kept. It also enables the researcher to derive fresh theoretical conclusions from already collected data. Data was first taken from textual findings, discussions, and conclusions of every study and placed into an Excel sheet or NVivo. After that, line-by-line coding was done, in which parts of the text were coded with descriptions. In the next phase, the various codes were assembled into groups and then developed into themes by studying why they occurred and what they show about the relations of power among organizations in Africa. The report was presented as a narrative, allowing readers to understand executive-legislative connections and budgeting methods in the presidents' systems in Africa. This approach aligns with common thematic synthesis practices in public policy and governance research (Braun & Clarke, 2006;

Thomas & Harden, 2008) [13, 78].

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Overview of Included Studies

A total of 42 empirical studies that fit the inclusion criteria were included in the review. These studies offer a broad and multi-dimensional picture of how budgets are approved in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Of the 42 studies, 16 studies were focused on Nigeria, 11 studies were focused on South Africa, 8 studies were focused on Kenya, and 7 studies were focused on Ghana. Most of the studies (21) followed qualitative methods; for example, they employed case studies and process tracing and conducted elite interviews. 11 studies were quantitative, focused on budget outcome analysis and legislative voting patterns. Furthermore, 10 studies employed mixed-method approaches, integrating the study of institutions and direct analysis of field data.

With regard to theories, institutional theory was used the most, with 24 studies. In 12 of the reviewed studies, a principal-agent perspective was used to check delegation, supervision, and responsibility. In addition, elite theory and political settlement analysis were used less often than the other theories (only 6 studies and 4 studies). They were mostly considered to explain ways in which informal bargaining and elite capture affect budget decisions. A synthesis of the included studies is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Summary Table

Category	Nigeria	Ghana	Kenya	South Africa	Total
Number of Studies	16	7	8	11	42
Qualitative Studies	8	3	5	5	21
Quantitative Studies	4	2	2	3	11
Mixed-Methods Studies	4	2	1	3	10
Institutional Theory	✓	✓	✓	✓	24
Principal-Agent Theory	✓	✓	✓	✓	12
Elite Theory/Political Settlement	✓	✗	✓	✓	10

4.2. Synthesis by Theoretical Model

4.2.1. Institutional Theory Findings

Institutional theory looks at how organizations, legal regulations, and official rules help determine political actions. The way budgets were shaped in the four countries depended a lot on formal regulations. In the Nigerian context, it is the president's role under the 1999 Constitution to have veto power over budget bills. Often, the executive has tried to use this provision to push the legislature to accept the budget the president wants. But because the powers of the executive and the legislature are unclear in the constitution, this has regularly resulted in both conflicts and problems with passing the budget (Rapu, 2003; Ekpu & Iweoha, 2017) [74, 28].

In Ghana, if opposition MPs head the Ghanaian Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), they make sure the government does not abuse its powers after setting the budget. According to Abdulai and Crawford (2010) [1], scrutiny from PAC appears to be related to fewer mid-year changes to the budget. The stable role of executive and legislative powers in Ghana stems from the clear separation shown in the constitution. Conversely, the 2010 Constitution in Kenya caused major changes in the way fiscal powers were handled by giving them to county governments. It is the job of the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Budget and Appropriations Committee to oversee the budget. Bosire (2020) [10] explains that while the law calls for more public involvement in budget hearings, the executive authority is still very visible in practice.

In South Africa, the Constitutional Court, among others, has made sure that the legislative branch has the right to adjust the budget. Folscher (2010) [30] and Jacobs (2022) [36] pointed out that courts have increased the role of parliament by requiring "meaningful" involvement in preparing budgets, and now it is clearer who is accountable to the population. From the foregoing, it is evident that where PACs, courts, and legal laws are strong and obeyed, countries' budgetary plans are usually clearer and more dependable. Hence, when the rules for handling public resources are not clear, tension and party fights are likely to arise (as in Nigeria).

4.2.2. Principal-Agent Theory Findings

According to the principal-agent theory, when decision makers (principals) are not well informed because the decision is made by other authorities on their behalf (agents), launching control measures becomes difficult. In Nigeria, Awor (2020) [6] and Afeez *et al*. (2021) [2] report that between the ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and the legislature, there are problems related to information sharing. Thus, it is often hard for lawmakers to examine government operations because MDAs give only basic or technical guidelines for use. Because the process is so complex, it delays the approval of appropriation bills and leads to many debates and suggested changes to the bill.

Devolution in Kenya made the main influence of agencies come from the county. It is officially the role of county assemblies to review the county executive's budget, but according to Otieno (2024) [67] and Kamau (2019) [37], most of these assemblies do not have the correct technical understanding, which enables governors to override the role. Some local executives in different counties take advantage of patronage to influence oversight groups. In Ghana, the executive branch has most of the powers, yet regular reports and Parliament appearances by ministers make the system more balanced. Nevertheless, Nyarko (2020) [57] noticed that MPs encounter time shortages and lack clear analysis; hence, the executive is still better informed.

There are institutions in South Africa called the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC) and well-equipped legislative committees, which help reduce imbalances. Nevertheless, research (Dlamini, 2020; van der Merwe, 2021) [25, 81] indicated that occasionally executive agencies postpone reporting or give less than full accounts for fiscal inconsistencies, which causes problems for parliamentary control, mainly in the provinces. Although better-equipped institutions help close principal-agent gaps, these differences are still very clear when legislative bodies are poorly staffed or lack means of enforcement, most notably in regions such as Nigeria's MDAs and Kenya's counties.

4.2.3. Elite Capture & Patron-Client Findings
This model shows how leaders use surplus public funding to help their associates, breaking the usual guidelines. Clientelism is mainly promoted by the distribution of constituency projects in Nigeria. Chukwuemeka and Solomon (2019) [22] found that, during debates on the budget, MPs will ask for additional funds in exchange for agreeing to accept the executive's main budget initiative. Such projects are seldom monitored carefully and are most likely to be misappropriated. In Ghana, strong negotiation between the elite members of Parliament is less overt but carries on. According to the study by Mensah and Asante (2022) [48], the rulers' MPs may ask for particular allocations for their regions from the Ministry of Finance before elections. The limits placed by civil society and donors limit the scope of official patronage mainly found in third world countries.

In Kenya, the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is seen as a good example of local political leaders dominating funds. Mwangi (2021) [52] and Wanjohi (2022) [83] highlighted that MPs are in charge of CDF boards and direct funds to individuals, instead of targeting matters set by county officials. Because of this method, patronage networks are formed at the national and county levels. Budg*et al*locations in South Africa have occasionally been linked to the policy of the African National Congress (ANC) party's placing officials in different positions. According to Smith (2019) [76] and Nkosi (2023) [55], those who are close to the party's leadership appear to be rewarded in local budgets with infrastructure work or top positions. Thus, patron-client dynamics play a big role in all the countries and are visible as project selection in Nigeria, interference with CDF by political figures in Kenya, favoured treatment of cadres within political parties in South Africa, and negotiations within each party's constituency in Ghana. Strong civil society and reliable audits seem to influence how much power elites are able to take from the public.

4.2.4. Thematic Findings
The findings from the study on the relations between executive and legislative bodies during budget deliberations are explained in this section for Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Specifically, the studies were examined to find out how countries go through power struggles, negotiate in politics, set up institutional frames, and achieve different budget outcomes.

Power Struggles in Appropriation

The literature points out that there is a lasting struggle between the executive and the legislature to direct the budget. Many studies have shown that in Nigeria, the National Assembly mainly responds to how the executive proposes and forms the budget (Eguavoen *et al*., 2022; Onyema & Nduba, 2021) [27, 66]. There are controversies that add to this problem, for example, augmenting budgets and missing the deadline for submitting the budget (Afeez *et al*., 2021; Ogbole, 2020) [2,]. Also in Kenya, the executive branch, mainly via the National Treasury, greatly influences how resources are distributed by often overlooking the role of legislative committees (Bosire, 2020; Kamau, 2019) [10, 37].

In contrast, the institutional setup in South Africa stands out as being balanced. Legislative bodies like the SCOPA and the Standing Committee on Appropriations have a strong duty and dedicated help to evaluate the use of public funds (Folscher, 2010; van der Merwe, 2021) [30, 81]. Nevertheless, criticism is raised about the strong position of the ANC, which thwarts independence in parliament (Nkosi, 2023) [55]. The study reveals that even though the law lays out official positions, it is not enough by itself. The way the budget is made reflects the character of the political system and people's political preferences, as well as the state of democratic institutions.

Executive Discretion Vs Legislative Oversight

In the Ghanaian context, a common theme is that the executive can choose to amend, delay, or change approved funds after they are passed by the parliament. The president and finance ministry of Ghana have the practice of going against the wishes of parliament, especially in spending matters (Abdulai & Crawford, 2010; Nyarko, 2020) [1, 57]. Also in Nigeria, the president occasionally postpones the implementation of budgets or refuses assent to help them put pressure on the legislature (Ekpu & Iweoha, 2017) [28]. Though the Constitution in 2010 grants legislative authority over public finances, weak legislation and strong executive power make the counties mainly rely on the government for budget determination (Otieno, 2024) [67]. Nevertheless, South Africa's Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) have a clear legal structure, but scholars observe that executive agencies are still able to escape certain requirements in the law (Dlamini, 2020; Jacobs, 2022) [25, 36]. Dealing with the power of the president and the legislature in creating and managing the budget is a major problem for checks and balances in presidential systems.

Budget as a Political Tool

Politics has a significant role in determining how budgeting is carried out in the approved countries. For instance, during budget approval, lawmakers in Nigeria and Kenya can get additional funds for their own areas by agreeing to support the president's plan (Chukwuemeka & Solomon, 2019; Mwangi, 2021) [22, 52]. Consequently, there is little coherence in policy, and the country's budget no longer follows important national development plans. Though they are quite similar, Ghana's practices are bound by laws and regulations. Often, MPs of the ruling party try to arrange funds for their regions, mainly when there are elections (Mensah & Asante, 2022) [48]. In South Africa, the way budgets are formed depends on ANC members and their roles, as well as usual technical factors (Smith, 2019; Nkosi, 2023) [76, 55]. The findings show that the budget is used in each of these nations to develop and sustain alliances, show gratitude, and appoint one's associates. This form of funding actually narrows the distribution of resources to those who have the most power.

Institutional and Legal Gaps

The review further uncovers faults in the system and problems with laws that keep lawmakers from overseeing the institutions well. The findings revealed that a lot of progress towards transparency in the budget process has been achieved with the Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007), but its implementation is poor due to the lack of resources and expertise among the budget committees (Awor, 2020; Afeez *et al*., 2021) [6, 2]. Also, most parliamentary staff do not get proper training or quick access to budget details. Although Kenya's devolved system shifted cost and revenue matters to counties, many of the county assemblies do not have the abilities or freedom to examine these matters correctly (Wanjohi, 2022; Kamau, 2019) [83, 37]. The Parliament in Ghana is better equipped with resources, but still, many issues arise because of tight schedules and depending on information shared by the government (Nyarko, 2020) [57]. As for South Africa, the PFMA and Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) help the community stay informed and actively engaged in how government departments and institutions operate (Folscher, 2010; Dlamini, 2020) [30, 25]. This shows that, when legal rules are enforced, supportive elements are important. These include working on budget offices and legislative experts and offering public finance education to make supervising public finances effective.

4.3. Cross-Country Comparisons
This section offers a comparative analysis of how budgets are approved by government in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, noting where the processes are different and where they are the same.

4.3.1. Nigeria vs. Ghana
Legislative Committee Empowerment
The findings show that Ghanaian legislators have more independence than Nigerian MPs when oversighting the budget. Because the Public Accounts Committee and Finance Committee in Ghana understand their roles well and use accessible budget information, they conduct more effective checks on the spending of government resources (Abdulai & Crawford, 2010; Nyarko, 2020) [1, 57]. Meanwhile, the Appropriations Committee and Public Accounts Committee in Nigeria are regularly affected by decisions made by government officials and lack the necessary technical resources (Afeez *et al*., 2021; Ogbole, 2020) [2].

Outcome Differences
Due to changes and guidelines set by the Parliament, Ghana has managed to pass its budget bills on schedule (Mensah & Asante, 2022) [48]. On the other hand, delays in the Nigeria budget usually arise when the executive and legislature argue, when the executive posts its budget late, and when bargaining over spending takes too long (Ekpu & Iweoha, 2017) [28]. Such delays in following the legal procedures harm public service and make it harder to stick to a budget.

4.3.2. Kenya vs. South Africa
Devolution and Subnational Budgeting
Since 2010, the devolved governance system set by the Kenya Constitution means that County Assemblies watch over local budgets. Nevertheless, while people can keep leaders in check better, county assemblies still do not have the tools or strength to challenge county executives (Wanjohi, 2022; Kamau, 2019) [83, 37]. However, the budget in South Africa is still centralized, but strong legislative oversight has been achieved by means of SCOPA and the Standing Committee on Appropriations (Folscher, 2010; Dlamini, 2020) [30, 25]. Budgeting for the South African provinces and districts is mostly carried out for municipal needs under the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) at present.

Role of Civic Organizations
In South Africa, civil society organizations (CSOs) support and monitor the transparency of the government's financial plans. Open hearings attended by SECTION27 and The Budget Justice Coalition, as well as their technical contributions to Parliament, increase the responsibility of the executive (Jacobs, 2022; Nkosi, 2023) [36, 55]. In comparison, at the county level in Kenya, CSOs play a role, though their abilities are usually reduced by politics and unreliable funding (Otieno, 2024) [67]. Even so, the use of participatory budgeting in some Kenyan counties is considered a good development.

4.3.3. Shared Patterns Across All Four Countries
Executive Dominance
Even though the law sets out legislative authority in the budget process, executive dominance is still seen in the four countries. Presidents sometimes use the line-item veto or reject certain parts of laws to exercise more control over things such as budgets (Chukwuemeka & Solomon, 2019; Dlamini, 2020) [22, 25]. Such dominance continues in cases where lawmakers from the ruling party are hesitant to go against the executive, usually for reasons related to the party's regulations or ties.

Informal Networks
From the case reviews, it appears that the top informal leaders in a party regularly replace the importance of the formal legislative committees. In Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana, members of the caucus that rules the government tend to agree on the budget before formal debates, which reduces the ability of the parliament to discuss freely (Awor, 2020; Nkosi, 2023) [6, 55]. This aligns with the results of patron-client theory, as it is the leader's loyalty and elite bartering that help them maintain power.

Transparency Initiatives
Tax policies' transparency is not the same in all four countries. Because the South African public budget hearings are set by law and reports are made public, citizens are allowed to take part more fully (Folscher, 2010; Budget Justice Coalition, 2021) [30]. However, Nigeria and Kenya have improved somewhat, yet their people can only access a limited amount of budget information and committee transcripts in most cases (Bosire, 2020; Afeez *et al*., 2021) [10, 2]. Despite trying to make budget information public, Ghana's attempts are interrupted by weaknesses in carrying them out.
Generally, the cross-country comparison reveals that economic and political backgrounds influence budget oversight in different ways; however, strong executive power, party influence over the system, and limited abilities by legislatures make budget oversight less effective in these democracies. Addressing these challenges needs reforms in the law, along with the willingness of politicians, active involvement of citizens, and additional skills.

4.4. Discussion and Theoretical Implications
4.4.1. Integrative Discussion
Developments in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa tend to illustrate one leader's strong influence, weak legislative supervision, and policies and funds for party purposes in the budget. Even though some of these trends relate to existing theories, exploring their findings alongside those of other studies brings out more details in their interpretation. According to the institutional theory, strings such as committee rules, rules for budgeting, and oversight laws are intended to support clear actions, transparency,

accountability, and equality in the government. Both practical examples and studies in South Africa prove this, where law enforcement and actions of key bodies, such as the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, ensure Parliament reviews the government's actions and cuts down on unjustified action by the executive (Mchunu, 2020; Wehner, 2003).

Even though budget rules exist in Nigeria and Kenya, proper oversight has not taken place yet. According to Omitoogun and Oduntan (2006) and Mbaku (2004), whenever the president sidesteps the rules or when obedience is merely symbolic, entities within organizations find it hard to operate properly. Despite the Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007) calling for open consultations and budget estimates to be given on time, authorities in Nigeria have not followed these rules with serious results. This difference is explained by Andrews (2013), who points out that, in many developing countries, institutions seem to change for the better on paper, but in reality, these changes fail because traditional informal practices are strong and not much enforced. The review undermines the belief from institutional theory that people follow rules when making decisions. This agrees with Bratton and van de Walle (1997) [12], who state that strong institutions in Africa cannot happen without political support, action, and realignment of customary rules, in addition to good written laws.

According to the study, there is still a major challenge for legislative influence due to how much control executives have over budget information in Nigeria and Kenya. According to the principal-agent theory, this happens because privileged information can make legislators more likely to be influenced by the executives. Nevertheless, Barkan *et al*. (2010) [7] noted in Ghana that giving the parliamentary budget office adequate resources made it easier for MPs to analyze budgets and still strengthens oversight, although it remains limited by political parties. Likewise, Posner and Young (2007) [71] claim that making budgets subject to process, providing research for legislators, and granting civil society access to budget drafts can lessen information gaps.

However, the review points out that the devolved system in Kenya gave county assemblies a role in the budget, but they are usually not ready for it and tend to approve the budgets provided by governors. In line with this, D'Arcy & Cornell (2016) suggest that if devolution is not accompanied by sufficient capability, it causes local groups to gain control, and the same failing in accountability at subnational levels happens. The model of principal-agent theory is explanatory yet needs to be looked at in the right setting. It imagines a principal that acts alone; nevertheless, there are many times when MPs act based on party rules, their technical shortcomings, and pressure from the executive, which makes them less effective principals.

It is clear that across all four nations, the process of budgeting varies greatly from the idea of technocratic planning and is more rooted in political goals and distributing resources. The passage of government budgets in Nigeria and Kenya is often made in exchange for constituency projects, as indicated by van de Walle (2007) and Cheeseman (2015) [17], who posit that African systems generally rely on customary ways and personal networks between leaders and followers. Wang and Rakner (2005) [73] point out that electoral and individual interests usually determine the way African parliamentary budgets are put together. It was clear in the case of Kenya's CDF, which was intended to decentralize spending but instead ended up being used by MPs to help their supporters and insult their opposing politicians (Mitullah & Owiti, 2007).

How budgets are formed and approved in South Africa is influenced by the ANC's strategy from within the organization. Even though institutions are strong, it is hard to tell if laws are followed for oversight or loyalty when one party is in control (Calland, 2013). This matches with Lindberg's (2003) [44] point that in dominant-party systems, political parties are so strong that representatives answer to them more than to parliament or the nation. Among other things, elite capture theory helps us understand budget politics in Africa, but it is also useful to tell apart centralized control (such as in Nigeria) and decentralized control (such as in Kenya). A better breakdown is required to understand the differences between them.

Even though this study agrees with most studies about the high power of leaders and weak oversight, it also highlights that traditional Western political models do not work everywhere. Schick (1998) pointed out that medium-term expenditure planning and budgets based on achievements should be important. Still, changes like these can only take root in African presidential democracies when they have support within the country. It was also noted that open budget hearings in South Africa are effective only when people from civil society work together to use them (IBP, 2022). This agrees with Gaventa and McGee's (2013) claim about the role of social accountability in boosting formal institutions' performance.

4.4.2. Theoretical Implications

The findings add valuable changes to the current theoretical lenses on how presidents and legislatures work and on the budget process in presidential democracies. It can be explained by institutional theory that rules and simple guidelines guide politics. This is clear in the case of South Africa and Ghana, due to the presence of committees with legal and statutory credentials. Still, where informal power exists, there is not much oversight since weak control and powerful parties challenge the system. This underscores the need for a "hybrid model" that will consider the structure provided by the constitution as well as the role of patronage, political negotiations among leaders, and the culture involved in making politics.

It is partly correct to say that principal-agent theory accounts for the fact that executives often guide the lawmakers' decisions in the budgeting process. However, it relies on smart and cooperative principals, which is not always the case as African presidential states show that legislators are commonly bound by their political parties and their need for resources. Furthermore, elite capture and patron-client theories also clarify why budgets are used more for political purposes than as plans for advancing policies. As a result, the study contributes to research showing that the process of setting a budget is viewed as a political contest in Africa. Consequently, it contributes to the theory of democratic institutionalism by proving how official democratic structures are not separate from informal patronage ones and why theories need to admit that such systems operate together to create results.

4.4.3. Practical Implications

The findings have significant implications for policymakers, development partners, and those advocating reforms in public financial management (PFM) in Africa. Firstly, the findings point out that it is necessary to enhance parliamentary oversight by fixing laws as well as training parliamentary leaders, preparing their staff, and opening up accessible financial data. Given that laws created by legislatures are sometimes ignored in Nigeria and Kenya, it is best to put emphasis on following the rules for fiscal responsibility and making the budget drafting stage more transparent. Besides, dealing with elite capture needs political changes to help legislators put country development above any other personal incentives. Institutional changes must also be accompanied by helping people by boosting freedom of the press, setting up watchdog groups, and improving the way citizens read over budgets to encourage greater transparency and accountability.

In addition, bringing in social accountability, for example, in "open budget hearings" in South Africa, can be a good way to make sure citizens are better involved. Generally, international partners should pay attention to the ties between formal institutions and informal norms and avoid using the same solutions everywhere. Generally, the analysis highlights that if budget reform is effective, political norms and behaviour and incentives must be changed; not only are new policies needed.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Recap of Research Objectives and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which executive and legislative powers shape setting the budget in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. The main goal was to explore how different policies, political approaches, and unofficial practices affect fiscal governance and democracy. In this study, four research questions were developed. These questions were focused on how executive-legislative relationships shape budgets, the ways political games are played in budget talks, the role of institutions and parties, and what patterns emerged in the different countries.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The findings showed that some important themes appeared in almost all case studies. Firstly, the dominance of executives was a major characteristic in the way budgets were decided in the four countries. Although parliaments are allowed to oversee the budget by law, presidents still use certain powers and amendments to influence the budget for their benefit. Also, there were obstacles related to laws and institutions. Although most of the countries have regulations in place, how well they are followed differs. South Africa can rely on the Public Finance Management Act, but Nigeria's Fiscal Responsibility Act is not maintained properly, and the legislative committees tend to have limited capacity for looking into issues.

In addition, both political negotiations and the use of patronage have a significant effect on the process of preparing the budget. It is common in Nigeria and Kenya for politicians to get support from the government in return for supporting projects in their district or allowing for political change. It demonstrates how some people hold too much power and affects the main intentions of fiscal policy. It was also found that different financial institutions exhibited large differences in how robust they were. It is notable that South Africa has successful oversight agencies and an active community that helps control the executive. Lawmaking in Ghana increased, assuming its own powers, whereas within Kenya, sharing budget-making duties brought confusion to areas outside Nairobi. On the other hand, Nigeria struggled frequently with informal ways of settling political issues and excessive use of authority by the executive.

Hence, legislative control over budgetary decisions is quite different in each of the four democracies, since the powers are separated in each system. The success of formal institutions depends on political leaders' support, how parties act, and other factors in the wider government system. These patterns are significant for improving the stability and financial processes of countries in Africa.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Strengthening Legislative Oversight

In addressing the challenges identified in executive-legislative budgetary relations across African presidential democracies, strengthening legislative oversight is a priority. National parliaments should be supported by establishing separate parliamentary budget offices for providing analysis and impartial help. Also, efforts should be made to make certain that members of legislative technical committees are competent to analyze proposed budgets. Furthermore, there should be effective audits, and follow up to guarantee that recommended actions are carried out. These reforms would lead to a better legislature that critically examines executive proposals and makes the government accountable in implementing the budget.

6.2 Legal and Institutional Reforms

It is also crucial to implement legal and institutional reforms. National parliaments should implement laws that help limit the government's freedom to change its budget randomly. Also, it should be required that legislative approval be given before any post-approval changes are allowed in the budget. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that all changes and revisions to the budget are made public right away. This will foster public trust and mitigate against misuse.

6.3 Fostering Political Accountability

Another key recommendation is to foster political accountability. This can be achieved by putting in place public budget hearings and websites that help citizens participate more. It is also important to help civil society organizations and the media to watch over how the government handles its budget and mention any misdeeds. Also, the system should be reformed to ensure that citizens can report when they find any budget irregularities. Civil society organizations and the media are vital in closing the gap between the state institutions and the people.

6.4 Capacity Building for Lawmakers

It is important to have capacity building of lawmakers to maintain reforms. Offering training in issues related to financial analysis, examining financial records, and drafting new laws will help to build lawmakers' capabilities. Arrangements for an exchange of ideas should also be set up through peer programs with parliamentarians in other African countries. More so, lawmakers should work together with the African Parliamentary Network on Illicit Financial Flows and Taxation (APNIFFT) to gain knowledge and support.

6.5 Country-Specific Recommendations

In Nigeria, changes ought to focus on containing executive-driven budgetary delays as well as strengthening the independence of the National assembly. Ghana needs to reconsider some of the constitutional limitations like Article 108 that restricts the ability of the Parliament in presenting financial proposals. In Kenya, the Treasury role in budgeting needs to be reconsidered in order to maintain the separation of power and strengthen the involvement of the legislative in the budget process. The institutional independence of the National Treasury is essential in South Africa, and so is the ongoing support of the judicial mechanisms that serve as a restraint of the excesses of the executive as well as the legislative.

6.6 Future Research

Researchers need to conduct in-depth studies to explore how political patronage changes budget results. Research carried out at the country level can help identify the situations that lead to elite capture. Also, using data, quantitative research may be useful in understanding the impact of executive-legislative relations on markers such as how budgets are carried out, investments, and how the public trusts financial management. These areas offer significant contributions to the research and provide actionable evidence for reform.

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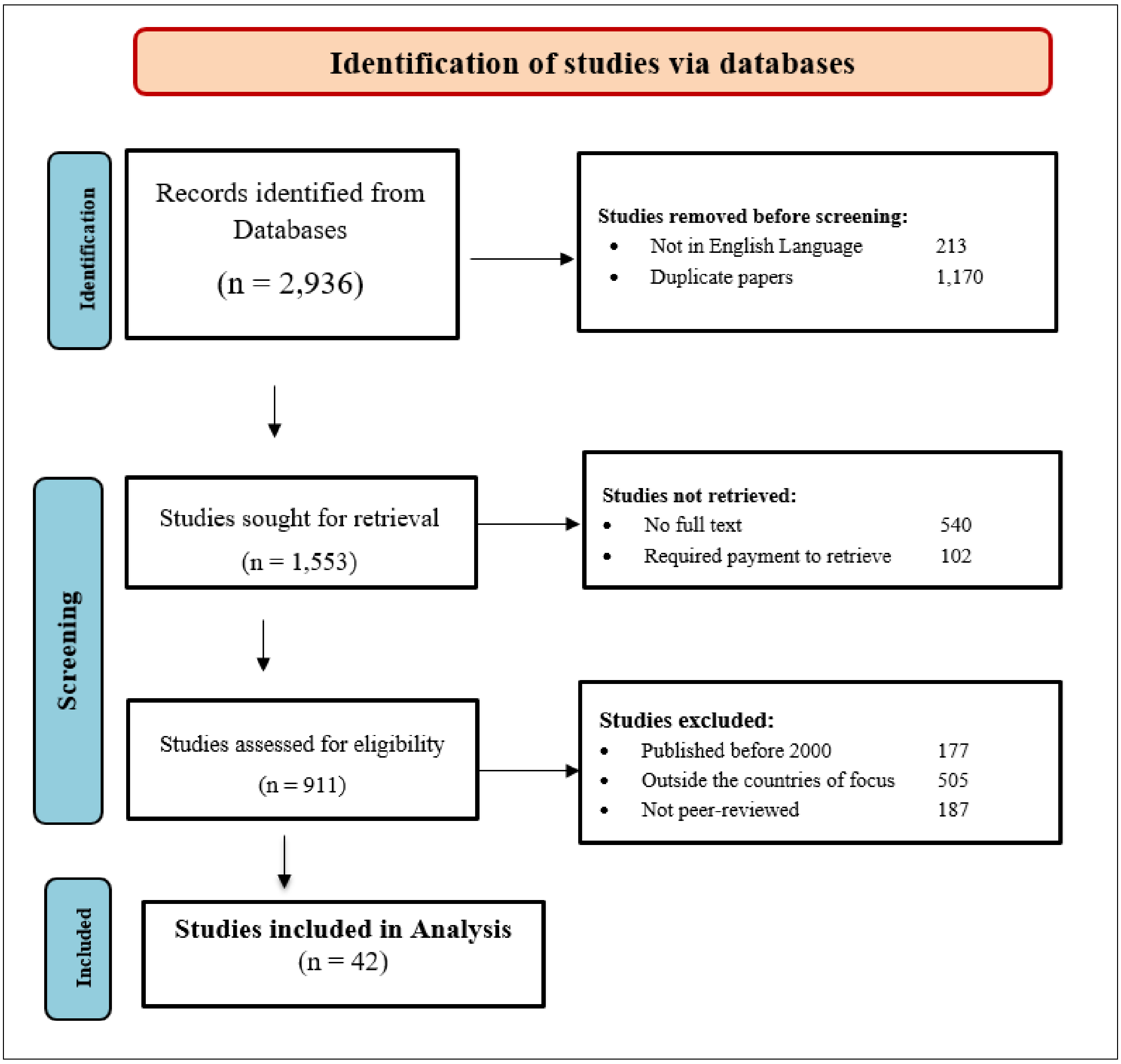
Appendices

Appendix 1: PRISMA Flowchart



Appendix 2: Data Extraction Table

S/N	Author (Year)	Country Context	Theoretical Model Used	Methodology & Data Sources	Executive-Legislative Variables	Major Findings (Appropriation Outcomes)
1.	Rapu (2003)	Nigeria	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; archival & constitutional review	Veto powers; committee roles	Constitutional ambiguity fosters executive-legislative conflict and delays
2.	Onyema and Nduba (2021)	Nigeria	Elite Theory	Qualitative; interviews with MPs and MDAs	Budget timeline; executive discretion	Executive control over timing limits legislative amendments
3.	Ngara and Dasat (2020) [54]	Nigeria	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; parliamentary proceedings analysis	Committee strength; data access	Weak committee capacity leads to reactive legislative behavior
4.	Eguavoen *et al.* (2022)	Nigeria	Principal-Agent Model	Qualitative; interviews, budget documents	Information asymmetry; delay tactics	MDAs withhold information, prolonging appropriation debates
5.	Awor (2020) [6]	Nigeria	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; case study of 7th & 8th Assemblies	Committee mandates; audit follow-up	Oversight hindered by limited investigative powers
6.	Onireti (2022) [65]	Nigeria	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; legal framework assessment	Legal authority; budget cycle	Ambiguous budget laws reduce legislature's rule-setting ability
7.	Ekpu and Iweoha (2017) [28]	Nigeria	Elite Theory	Qualitative; review of budget policy	Executive dominance; party influence	Party unity supports executive budget strategy, limiting amendments
8.	Oderemi (2024) [58]	Nigeria	Elite Theory	Grey lit.; expert commentary analysis	MDAs-legislature relations	Chronic delays traced to discretionary allocations by MDAs
9.	Centre for Social Justice (2018) [16]	Nigeria	Elite Theory	Grey lit.; civil society report	Budget padding; committee oversight	Identifies systematic "padding" during legislative review
10.	Afeez *et al.* (2021)	Nigeria	Principal-Agent Model	Qualitative; MP interviews	Transparency mechanisms; veto usage	Narrow disclosure limits parliamentary budget scrutiny
11.	Olayiwola (2021)	Nigeria	Institutional Theory	Quantitative; legislative vote & timeline data	Vote outcomes; amendment frequency	High rate of fragmenting amendments indicates executive-legislative tension
12.	Ogechukwu (2018) [61]	Nigeria	Elite Theory	Quantitative; expenditure tracking	Constituency spending; discretionary funds	Substantial constituency spending skewed towards politically powerful legislators
13.	Chukwuemeka and Solomon (2019)	Nigeria	Institutional Theory	Legal and constitutional analysis	Constitutional gaps; bicameral gridlock	Legal ambiguities over appropriation stages lead to recurring legislative delays
14.	Ajayi (2020) [3]	Nigeria	Political Economy Theory	Documentary review of 2016-2019 budgets	Oil price shocks; political cycles	Executive manipulates timing and structure of budgets for political gain
15.	Ibrahim (2023) [34]	Nigeria	Principal-Agent Model	Case study of presidential vetoes	Veto usage; amendment override rate	Presidential veto is a potent executive tool to discipline legislative alterations
16.	Musa (2019) [51]	Nigeria	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; legislative interviews, transparency index	Budget openness; amendment participation	Transparency increased in 8th Assembly but did not translate to greater legislative influence
17.	Abdulai and Crawford (2010) [1]	Ghana	Institutional & Democratic Consolidation Theory	Longitudinal democratic assessment (1992-2008)	Democratic transition; legislative development	Legislative appropriation improved with institutional maturation, but executive remains dominant
18.	Lindberg (2010) [44]	Ghana	Accountability Theory	Survey of MPs; constituency-level data	MP incentives; upward/downward accountability	MPs more responsive to voters than to executive or party, but resource constraints persist
19.	Boateng (2018) [8]	Ghana	Institutional Theory	Case study of Parliament; committee document review	Committee staffing; technical capacity	Low institutional capacity limits budget scrutiny; reliance on executive submissions
20.	Ofori-Atta (2021) [60]	Ghana	Principal-Agent Model	Evaluation of committee strength indices	Committee autonomy; enforcement mechanisms	Strong committees correlate with better implementation monitoring, but outcomes vary
21.	Nyarko (2020)	Ghana	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; legislative audit analysis	Committee authority; executive moves	Committee engagement reduces mid-year reallocations
22.	Mensah and Asante (2022)	Ghana	Elite Theory	Mixed methods; interviews, budget tracking	Party negotiation; budget amendments	Ruling party MPs influence budget towards politically strategic allocations
23.	Arhin (2023) [5]	Ghana	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; civil society perspectives	Budget scrutiny, public participation	CSO participation enhances audit capacity but lacks legal enforcement
24.	Bosire (2020) [10]	Kenya	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; interviews & county budgets	Devolution oversight; commission role	County assemblies formally oversee but lack technical power
25.	Cheeseman *et al.* (2016)	Kenya	Elite Theory	Qualitative; decentralized governance case study	Party structure; budget autonomy	Central party control influences county executive dominance

26.	Bosire and Gitonga (2023) [11]	Kenya	Institutional Theory	Mixed methods; interviews & budget data on counties	Committee procedures; executive pressure	Parliamentary support linked to constricted scrutiny due to party alliances
27.	Kamau (2019)	Kenya	Institutional Theory	Documentary review; treasury-parliament interaction	Budget calendar adherence; treasury delays	Treasury routinely undermines timelines, restricting legislative input
28.	Mwangi (2021) [52]	Kenya	Principal-Agent Model	Case analysis of veto instances	Presidential vetoes; override attempts	Vetoes stall legislative amendments; override attempts often symbolic
29.	Oduor (2020) [59]	Kenya	Elite Theory	Case study; field interviews in counties	Elite capture; CDF allocations	Legislators influence budget decisions primarily for local gain, not national interest
30.	Wanjohi (2022)	Kenya	Institutional Theory	Content analysis of committee records & performance	Budget committee influence; capacity development	Appropriations committee is central to scrutiny but lacks full independence from executive
31.	Otieno (2024)	Kenya	Principal-Agent Model	Qualitative; interviews & county assembly records	Role of CDFs; inter-tier trust	Executive retains budget control due to weak legislative bargaining tools
32.	Wehner (2010)	South Africa	Institutional Theory	Comparative analysis; legal documents	Committee mandates; legal constraints	Strong oversight institutions reduce executive discretion
33.	Folscher (2010)	South Africa	Institutional Theory	Documentary analysis; budget law review	Legal enforceability; committee independence	PFMA empowers legislature, though party pressure remains
34.	de Visser and Steytler (2012)	South Africa	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; interviews, budget reviews	Public accounts committee; budget hearings	SCOPA plays key oversight roles, though constrained provincially
35.	Douglas and Kravchuk (2023) [26]	South Africa	Principal-Agent Model	Qualitative; legislative interviews	Information asymmetries; transparency	Budget transparency improved but MDAs still control fiscal data
36.	Smith (2019)	South Africa	Elite Theory	Qualitative; provincial budget case studies	Party deployment; cadre loyalty	Budget allocations influenced by internal ANC dynamics
37.	Dlamini (2020) [25]	South Africa	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; committee independence assessment	Committee autonomy; legal adherence	Strong legislative mandate offset by administrative reliance
38.	Mbeki (2018) [47]	South Africa	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; intergovernmental interviews	Budget timeline; vertical oversight	National-provincial fiscal tensions delay budgets
39.	van der Merwe (2021) [81]	South Africa	Elite Theory	Case study; civil society budget tracking	Legislative lobbying; party interests	Budget amendments often reflect elite consensus over popular need
40.	Jacobs (2022)	South Africa	Principal-Agent Model	Legislative review; interviews with MPs and analysts	Power asymmetries; inter-party cooperation	Strong party whips limit MP independence in budget scrutiny
41.	Nkosi (2023)	South Africa	Institutional Theory	Budget law review; provincial case comparison	Legal structure; audit general's access	Legal autonomy of legislatures varies; tighter rules support timely budget process
42.	Maluleke (2024) [45]	South Africa	Institutional Theory	Qualitative; stakeholder interviews, annual budget docs	Appropriation hearings; public commentary	Public participation mechanisms exist but weakly influence final allocations

Appendix 3: CASP Checklist

Checklists	**"Were the goals of the study spelled out clearly?"**	**"Was the method used suitable?"**	**"Was the research's design suitable for addressing its objectives?"**	**"Considering the research's objectives and the recruitment strategy—was it a good match?"**	**"Was the research question taken into account in the data collection process?"**	**"Has the participant-researcher dynamic been appropriately taken into account?"**	**"Has the question of ethics been considered?"**	**"Was the data analysis thorough enough?"**	**"Is the conclusion stated clearly?"**	**"How worthwhile is the study?"**	**Total Score**
Study 1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 5	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 7	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 8	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	19
Study 9	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	19
Study 10	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	19
Study 14	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20

Study 15	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 19	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	19
Study 27	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	19
Study 28	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	19
Study 29	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	19
Study 30	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	19
Study 32	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 33	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	18
Study 34	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Study 36	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
Total Score	42	42	42	42	42	36	38	42	42	42	410
Average Score	1	1	1	1	1	0.86	0.90	1	1	1	0.98
Score (%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	86%	90%	100%	100%	100%	98%

Appendix 4: STROBE Checklist

Checklists	Title & Abstract	Background/Rationale	Study Design	Participants	Variables	Bias	Statistical Methods
Study 23	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 20	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 22	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 23	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 24	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 25	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 26	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes
Study 35	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	No	Yes
Study 37	Yes	Yes	Partial	No	Yes	Yes	No
Study 42	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix 5: MMAT Checklist

Study	Qualitative Component Appropriate	Quantitative Component Appropriate	Integration of Methods	Interpretation of Findings	Adherence to Research Standards
Study 11	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 15	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 38	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 39	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study 40	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes
Study 41	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes