

EXECUTIVE- LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS: INTERROGATING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Executive-legislative relations are fundamental for the effectiveness of democratic governance. Several scholarly texts have dealt countless times with the study of executive-legislative relations and democratic governance. However, how executive-legislative relations have unfolded in democratic governance in Taraba State has received less academic attention. The objectives of the study are to examine how the relationship between executive and legislative arms of government impacted on democratic governance in Taraba State and assess the interplay of power relations between the executive and legislative arms of government in democratic governance. It is in this context that this study examined executive-legislative relations and democratic governance in Taraba State in to contribute to the existing literature on executive-legislative relations in democracies. Using structural functionalism and descriptive qualitative research design, the study used structured interviews and focus group discussions with purposive sampling techniques to gather data from the interviewees. The study reveals that despite harmonious executive-legislative relations in Taraba State, the people have not benefited as expected from democratic governance. This harmony has resulted in the legislature becoming a "rubber stamp" institution, leading to the blind approval of funds and laws that undermine democratic governance. The executive is dominant in the relationship, and this power imbalance has allowed for arbitrary abuse of power without legislative checks.

Keywords: Executive, Legislature, Democratic governance, Taraba State

Introduction

Democratic governance in any country depends essentially on the executive and legislative relations. The executive and legislative relations vary across the world depending on the pattern it is the organisation and pattern of the operation of the political system. Unlike in the parliamentary democracy where the executive and legislative powers are fused, the presidential democracy allows for a separation of powers between these arms of government. In presidential democracies, particularly in Nigeria, the executive and legislative arms of government are imperative institutions for democratic governance. The indispensability of the executive and legislature makes the functioning of the democratic governance effective because they checkmate each other to prevent the tendency of authoritarian rule.

As a result, the relationship between the executive and legislature is mutual and exclusive in that it allows for conflict and cooperation for the purpose of the democratic government to be a representative of the people to whom is responsive and accountable. The executive-legislative conflict occurs in the instance of the activities of either arms of government undermining the effectiveness of democratic governance. They also cooperate to enhance the effective operation of the democratic government. Central to both the executive and legislature is the people's rule operating representatively to not only create the condition for good life but also to provide resources that

enhance the pursuit a good life for the people. Therefore, the relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government plays important roles in democratic governance to ensure that through their activities such that the likelihood of residing to authoritarian rule is not conceivable and democracy is regarded as the alternative political system in the country (Easton, 1965).

The military transition to civil rule on 29 May 1999 created a feeling of freedom from the authoritarian rule to a one that enables the people elect their political leaders at the national and sub-national level to occupy leadership rostrum to govern directly on their behalfs in Nigeria. The act of voting of elected representatives to leadership rostrum makes a democratic government legitimate and the legitimacy is not contemplated so long government continue operate based on popular will. The executive and legislative arms of the government characterise the practice of presidential democracy at both the national and sub-national government in Nigeria. At all levels of the government, while Maduabuchi, and Andre (2011) agrees that the executive as a form of government is responsible for policy formulation, evaluation and execution to realize set targets, the legislature enacts laws and make the same functional as instrument of cohesion in the state.

In Nigeria's democracy the executive and legislature may not necessarily subsist without the other, because of their mutually reinforcing functions they perform in democratic governance, which is essential for the success or failure of the other. Since the return to democratic governance in Nigeria, Taraba State has witnessed successive transition from one democratic government to another. Throughout the transition processes from one democratic government to another, the legislature and executive arms of government have related remarkably to ensure the working of democratic governance. It is noteworthy that the relationship between the legislature and executive has a mixed bag of results in ensuring the effective democratic governance. As a representative of the people, the legislative arm of government has come under scrutiny taking its roles of legislation and the checkmating of the excesses of the executive arm of government in furtherance of democratic governance in Taraba State (Nwanegbo, Emmanuel & Daniel, 2020). How the relationships between the executive and legislative arms of government in Taraba State have fared has not received adequate academic attention in the scholarly literature. It is in this context that this study examines the legislative and executive relations and democratic governance in Taraba State between 2015 and 2022.

Conceptual clarification

Concept of Executive Arm of Government

The concept of the executive has been extensively discussed in political theory, with scholars emphasizing its central role in the governance process. Weber (2018) defines the executive as the administrative branch responsible for executing laws and managing the bureaucratic machinery of the state, ensuring that government functions smoothly. This view is complemented by Linz (1990), who underscores the executive's role in managing state affairs, highlighting the differences in executive power between presidential and parliamentary systems. Rosenbloom (2000) builds on this by focusing on the administrative function of the executive, noting that it not only enforces laws but also oversees

public services, thus playing a pivotal role in public administration. According to Finer (2001), the executive is involved in policy formation and the actualization of governance, shaping both domestic and foreign policy. Ojo (2011) and Ake (2003) emphasize that while the executive is essential for governance, its power must be checked to avoid overreach, particularly in developing democracies like Nigeria, where strong executives often overshadow the legislature and judiciary. Moses (2013) takes a more political view, describing the executive as the political leader with the authority to set national priorities and manage national security, economy, and diplomacy. Finally, Fatile and Adejuwon (2018) argue that the executive's dominance over other branches can affect the balance of power, highlighting its influence on the legislative and judicial branches, which may undermine democratic processes. Together, these scholars illustrate that the executive is a fundamental institution in governance, but its power must be balanced by effective oversight and accountability to ensure democratic health and prevent authoritarianism. In the context of this study, *executive* refers to the branch of government responsible for implementing laws, formulating policies, and administering public affairs. In Nigeria's democratic system, the executive operates at both federal and state levels, with the Governor serving as the head of the executive in Taraba State.

Concept of the Legislative Arm of Government

The legislature's dynamic role in democratic governance is highlighted by recent study on the subject, which has expanded beyond traditional lawmaking to encompass representation, supervision, and adaptive government. According to Volden and Wiseman (2023), legislators must navigate intricate policy procedures in order to affect significant results, in addition to enacting legislation. In a similar vein, the Oxford Handbook of Comparative Legislatures (2023) emphasises the legislature's function as a platform for resolving conflicts and negotiating a range of interests, whereby deliberative procedures are used to determine public policy. The concept of "legislative resilience," which is introduced by Cambridge University Press (2023), focusses on the legislature's capacity to uphold democratic stability during periods of political upheaval by guaranteeing strict supervision and encouraging openness.

According to Heywood (2022), the legislature is the institutional representation of popular sovereignty and is charged with enacting, revising, and repealing legislation as well as acting as a check on the executive branch. According to Norton (2021), the legislature serves as a forum for discussion where a range of viewpoints participate in the government process, guaranteeing representation and accountability. Additionally, Shugart and Carey (2020) examine the legislature's dual position as a legislative body and an executive oversight mechanism, pointing out that the capacity to balance these functions in a shifting political environment is a key component of legislative effectiveness. The legislature refers to the branch of government responsible for making, amending, and repealing laws, as well as providing oversight of the executive's actions to ensure accountability and transparency. In the context of Taraba State, the legislature comprises the Taraba State House of Assembly, which includes elected representatives tasked with representing the

interests of their constituencies, debating policies, approving budgets, and ensuring that executive actions align with democratic principles and the rule of law.

Concept Democratic Governance

The relationship between democracy and leadership appears to be very strong (Onuoha et al., 2021). Having institutions operate following democratic procedures and standards both internally and while interacting with other institutions is the goal of democratic governance (OSCE, 2017). Democratic governance is based on the political institutions' ability to carry out their duties and be held accountable at all times. These institutions, which are primarily the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive branch, as well as other political parties, the private sector, and various civil society organisations, can show this actionability through their decisions and actions on policies as well as through the laws they enact (Dahl, 1989; Held, 1996).

According to Ninalowo, (2003, p.32) accountability "implies that government officials should be prepared to be accountable for their activities to members of the public at all times and be ready to defend their conduct at the level of moral and ethical norms". When money entered the government's treasury and how it was spent must be made public. Accountability is a key element of effective resource management for growth in any community (Richardson, 2008). To Koppell, (2005) accountability has five components: transparency, liability, controllability, responsibility, and responsiveness (2005). These five elements are crucial for enhanced governance and public service delivery in democracies, as well as efficient resource management in a state.

Literature Review

The Executive and Legislative Power Relations in Nigeria's Democratic Government

The relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches in Nigeria's democratic system has been a subject of significant academic attention. Scholars have examined this relationship from various perspectives, focusing on the dynamics of power, accountability, and the balance of influence between the two arms of government.

Ake (2003) argues that in Nigeria, as in many developing democracies, the relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches is often characterized by tension and conflict, largely due to competing interests. He notes that the Executive often seeks to maintain control over the legislative agenda, while the Legislature strives to assert its independence and its constitutional role in making laws.

According to Ojo (2011), the Executive's dominance in Nigeria has frequently led to an imbalance in power between the two branches. Ojo suggests that the Executive often undermines the Legislature, particularly through the control of state resources, thus weakening the legislative oversight function. This situation, he contends, leads to inefficiencies in governance and a lack of checks on executive power, which could ultimately threaten democratic principles.

Ibrahim (2007) similarly points to the centralization of power in the Executive as a major factor limiting the Legislature's ability to effectively challenge the actions of the government. He asserts that the presidential system in Nigeria has compounded this issue, as the President has considerable

authority, making it difficult for the Legislature to assert itself in the decision-making process. Ibrahim's analysis underscores the necessity of a more robust system of checks and balances to ensure that both branches of government can function effectively without one overpowering the other.

In contrast, Jibrin (2012) emphasizes the importance of cooperation between the Executive and Legislative branches for successful democratic governance. He argues that, despite the potential for conflict, both branches must work together to achieve the common goals of national development. Jibrin points out that effective collaboration is vital for implementing policies that benefit the citizenry, suggesting that Nigeria's democracy would be strengthened if both arms of government could find common ground.

Akanbi (2014) provides a more nuanced perspective, suggesting that the Executive-Legislative relationship in Nigeria is shaped by institutionalized party politics. He notes that political parties play a significant role in determining how power is distributed between the Executive and the Legislature. According to Akanbi, when both the Executive and the Legislature are controlled by the same party, cooperation tends to be smoother. However, when different parties control the two branches, as has been the case in Nigeria's recent political history, there is often intense rivalry and conflict.

Olaniyan and Odebo (2017) explore the idea that inter-branch rivalry in Nigeria is exacerbated by corruption and the personalization of power. Their analysis suggests that the desire for power and control over national resources often fuels friction between the Executive and the Legislature. They argue that reforms aimed at reducing corruption and promoting transparency could help mitigate some of the tensions between the two branches of government.

Nwagboso (2015) provides a historical perspective, tracing the evolution of the Executive-Legislative relationship in Nigeria from the colonial era to the present day. Nwagboso highlights that Nigeria's legacy of authoritarianism has influenced the relationship between the two branches, with the Executive often assuming a dominant role in the governance process. He suggests that this legacy continues to shape the way in which the Executive and Legislature interact in the current democratic dispensation.

Fatile and Adejuwon (2018) focus on the role of executive-legislative relations in Nigeria's policy-making process. They argue that while both branches have distinct roles, the effectiveness of governance depends on the nature of their relationship. According to Fatile and Adejuwon, poor executive-legislative relations often result in delayed or ineffective policies, as there is a lack of coordination between the two branches.

Anifowose and Enemu (2019) offer a critical analysis of the conflictual relationship between the Executive and the Legislature in Nigeria, emphasizing that the struggle for power has often undermined the effectiveness of governance. They assert that personal ambitions and party loyalty often overshadow national interests, making it difficult for the two branches to work together for the common good.

Finally, Alabi (2020) explores the role of constitutional provisions in shaping the interaction between the Executive and Legislative branches in Nigeria. Alabi contends that while the Nigerian Constitution provides a framework for separation of powers, the implementation of this framework

has often been inconsistent, leading to friction between the two branches. He calls for stronger enforcement of constitutional principles to ensure that both the Executive and the Legislature operate within their respective mandates.

These scholarly perspectives collectively highlight the complexity of the Executive-Legislative relationship in Nigeria's democracy. While some scholars emphasize the importance of cooperation for effective governance, others highlight the persistent tensions and imbalances of power between the two branches, particularly in a context of political rivalry and corruption. The need for institutional reforms and stronger checks and balances is a recurring theme in the literature.

Theoretical Framework for Analysis

Almond's (1969) structural-functionalist approach has been adopted for the study of executive and legislative relations. It is a theory that aims at providing a consistent and integrated theory from which an explanatory hypothesis relevant to all aspects of a political system can be derived (Lane, 1994). The structural-functional model is most associated with Parsons (1951), whose work was greatly influenced by Durkheim (Chilcote, 1998). But Almond (1969) has changed the plan so much that he has an effect on it even without Parsons (Charlesworth, 1968).

According to Almond's structural-functional analysis, all political systems must perform certain requisite functions, and, by comparison, one must identify which structure performs the tasks (Peter 2005). Almond's structural-functional theory describes societal reality largely in terms of structures, processes, mechanisms, and functions. In this model, the parts and pieces of an organism contribute to the functioning of the organism as an entity. The functionalist tradition postulates that social systems meet certain needs and suggests that there are functional imperatives that must be met for a group to survive (Malinowski, 1944; Radcliffe-Brown, 1950; Parsons, 1951). Malinowski (1944) defined function as the satisfaction of a need. Radcliffe-Brown (1951) claimed that the rules of conduct within a society lead to a social structure consisting of defined roles that are coordinated by these rules.

As these roles are enacted, they contribute to maintaining the social structure. This alignment of social relations is critical for the survival of society. Society can, therefore, be viewed as a system of mutually interdependent parts (Radcliffe-Brown, 1950). A change in one segment of the culture of a society results in corresponding changes in other segments of the culture of that society (Malinowski, 1944; Merton, 1949). This simple model of a socio-cultural system established on the mechanical structure of the human body can indicate the place of a particular element of a culture or social institution concerning other elements in the system (Spencer 1965). Thus, no custom or institution exists in a vacuum. Charlesworth (1968) identified certain characteristic features embodied in the structural-functionalism approach, which include an emphasis on the whole system as the unit of analysis, the postulation of particular functions as requisite to the maintenance of the whole system, and the functional interdependence of diverse structures within the whole system. The idea of a structural-functionalist approach in political science represented a vast improvement over the then-prevailing mechanistic theories of David Easton and others (Varma, 1975).

Almond outlined an approach to understanding political systems that took into account not only their structural components (institutions) but also their functions within the system as a whole. Thus, instead of focusing on such concepts as institution, organization, or group, Almond turned to "role and structure." The role is defined as the interacting units of a political system, while the structure is a pattern of interrelated roles or patterns of interactions (Chilcote, 1998). Varma (1975) says that Almond's definition of a political system shows three things: a political system is a concrete whole that affects and is affected by its environment, and it is held together by a legitimate force; people don't interact with each other but with the roles, they take on; and the political system is an open system that is in constant communication with entities and systems outside of it.

A system, according to Almond (1969), is characterised by comprehensiveness, interdependence, and the existence of boundaries. A system is comprehensive in the sense that it includes all the interactions inputs as well as outputs—that affect the use of physical coercion in all the structures, including undifferentiated structures like kinship and lineage and anomic phenomena like riots and street demonstrations, and not merely the interactions that take place within the structures associated with the state, like parliament, executives, and bureaucracies, and formally organised units, like parties, interest groups, and media of communication.

Structural-functionalism, despite its contributions to political analysis, has been criticized for its overemphasis on stability and consensus, often overlooking conflicts and power struggles that may arise, particularly in executive-legislative relations in contexts like Taraba State. The theory's static view of society has also been challenged, as it may not fully account for the dynamic and evolving nature of political systems, which is crucial when considering shifts in the political landscape or emerging challenges between governmental branches. Furthermore, the theory's downplaying of individual agency can be problematic in understanding executive-legislative relations, where the actions and decisions of key political actors play a significant role in shaping governance outcomes.

Application of the Theory to Executive-Legislative Relations in Taraba State

The structural-functionalist theory offers an insightful perspective for examining Taraba State's legislative and executive branch relationships. Through an analysis of the functions and configurations of the political system, the research evaluates the ways in which various establishments collaborate to advance democratic government. For example, the efficiency of the legislative branch in carrying out its oversight duties and the executive branch's compliance with legislative orders are important aspects of governance quality.

The application of Almond's structural-functionalism to the study of executive-legislative relations in Taraba State offers a systematic approach to understanding how these two branches of government interact within the broader political system. The theory allows for an examination of how the executive and legislature perform their requisite functions, such as lawmaking, oversight, and implementation of policies, and how these functions contribute to the overall stability and governance of the state. The study focused on the roles and structures within the political system, the theory helps

to analyse how the interdependence of these branches either promotes or hinders democratic governance.

In the context of Taraba State, the structural-functional model can be used to explore how the executive and legislature coordinate their roles to maintain the political system. For instance, the theory could be applied to assess how legislative oversight impacts the executive's decision-making and how the executive's policies, in turn, influence legislative activities. The emphasis on structure and function also provides a framework for understanding the formal and informal institutions that shape executive-legislative relations, such as political parties, bureaucratic agencies, and local governance mechanisms.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining both primary and secondary data to evaluate executive-legislative relations. The study used structured interviews and focus group discussions with purposive sampling techniques to gather data from the interviewees.

State creation and The History of Political Leadership in Taraba State

The history of the creation of Taraba State could be traced to the creation of the then North-Eastern State which was created on the 27th May, 1967, with its capital in Maiduguri. Thereafter, on 3rd February, 1976 the North-Eastern State was divided into Borno, Bauchi and Gongola States for political and administrative convenience. Gongola State comprised Adamawa and Sardauna Provinces of North-Eastern State together with Wukari Division of the then Benue-Plateau State. This situation continued till the military government divided Gongola State into Adamawa and Taraba States in 1991.

Taraba State was created on August 27th 1991 out of the defunct Gongola State by the then Military Administration of President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The State got her name from River Taraba, one of the three main rivers that run through the state and covers a land area of approximately 60,000 Km² and a land mass total area of 60, 291.82 Km² which makes it the third largest in the country after Niger and Borno States (Taraba State Government, 2014; 2018).

The State lies between 60 30' and 80 30' north of the equator and between longitude 90 00' and 120 00' east of the Greenwich Meridian. The state shares boundaries with Bauchi and Gombe States in the north, Adamawa state in the east, Plateau state in the north-west, Benue and Nasarawa State in the west, and shared international boundary with the Republic of Cameroon in the south. The population of the State in 2006, according to 2006 Census figures released by the National Population Commission (NPC), was Two million three hundred thousand, seven hundred and thirty-six people (2, 300, 736). However, the current projection of the population of the state as at 2016 is 3 million people (TSG Diary, 2018).

Taraba State is the most ethnically diverse State in Nigeria with over 80 ethnic groups each with its distinct historical and cultural heritage which had cohabited peacefully with one another. Some of these tribes include; Mumuye, Ichen, Wurkun, Mambilla, Kuteb, Chamba, Jukun, Yandang, Kunini,

Fulani, Jenjo, Lo, Ndoro, Kambu, Kaka, Bandawa, Munga, Tiv, Zo, Bambuka, Jibu, Shomo, and Jole respectively (Egbunu, 2018, p. 15).

At inception, the state comprised nine (9) Local Government Areas namely; Jalingo, Bali, Gashaka, Lau, Karim Lamido, Sardauna, Wukari, Takum and Zing. In addition, in September, 1991, Ibbi, Donga and Yorro Local Government Areas were created. Similarly, in 1996, the Military Junta of General Sani Abacha created four (4) more Local Government Areas; ArdoKola, Kurmi, Ussa, and Gassol which increased the number to sixteen (16) Local Government Areas in the state. Presently, the State has two Development Areas, Yangtu and Ngada (Agbu, 2016, p.1).

The History of Political Leadership Succession: Since its creation in 1991, Taraba State has been administered by two major types of leadership; found and practiced in post-colonial Nigerian-State; Military and democratic regimes.

Table 2: Military Administrators of Taraba State Since 1991

| S/N | Name | Period of Service |
|-----|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Navy Capt. Ambrose A. Afolahan | 28 th August, 1991-31 st Dec. 1991 |
| 2 | Col. Yohanna Mamman Dickson | 9 th Dece.1993- 22nd August, 1996 |
| 3 | Compol A. E. Oyakhire | 22 nd August, 1996- August, 1998 |
| 4 | Col. Joseph O. Owoniyi | August, 1998- 29 th May, 1999 |

Source: Taraba State Government Diary, 2018 cited in Mohammed, Atando and Magaji (2020).

Table 3: Executive Governors of Taraba State Since 1991

| S/N | Name | Party | Zone | Year |
|-----|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------|---|
| 1 | Rev. Jolly T. Nyameh | Social Democratic Party | Northern | 2 nd January, 1992 - 17 th November, 1993 |
| 2 | Rev. Jolly T. Nyameh | People's Democratic Party | Northern | 29 th May, 1999 - 29 th May, 2003 |
| 3 | Rev. Jolly T. Nyameh | People's Democratic Party | Northern | 29 th May, 2003 - 29 th May, 2007 |
| 4 | Pharm Danbaba D. Suntai | People's Democratic Party | Central | 29 th May, 2007 - 29 th May, 2011 |
| 5 | Pharm Danbaba D. Suntai | People's Democratic Party | Central | 29 th May, 2011 - 29 th May, 2015 |
| 6 | Arch. Darius D. Ishaku | People's Democratic Party | Southern | 29 th May 2015 - 29 th May, 2019 |
| 7 | Arch. Darius D. Ishaku | People's Democratic Party | Southern | 29 th May 2019-2023 |
| 8 | Dr. Agbu Kefas | People's Democratic Party | Southern | 29 th May 2023 - Date |

Source: Adapted from Taraba State Government, 2019 cited in Mohammed, Atando and Magaji (2020) and updated by the authors.

It is important to note that, Governor Suntai was involved in a plane crash alongside his aides on 25th October, 2012, which created vacuum and political impasse in the leadership of Taraba State. His Deputy, Alh. Garba Umar (UTC) was sworn-in as Acting Governor from 2012-2014. In dramatic Supreme Court judgment, the earlier impeached Deputy Governor Alh. Sani Abubakar Danladi was

reinstated on the ground that his impeachment was illegal and served for six (6) months, November 2014- May 2015, as Acting Governor (TSG, 2015).

Executive and Legislative Relations and their Impact on Democratic Governance in Taraba State

The roles that executive and legislative relations play in democratic governance are enormous. According to several reviews of the literature, the legislative institution, which serves as the people's representative, is the hallmark of governance in democracies, particularly in presidential democracies. Although the executive arm of the government also has responsibility for keeping to the social contract entered into with the people before their election to the leadership rostrum, it is the legislature, which consists of legislators elected from the various states' constituencies, that is responsible for ensuring that the executive is accountable and responsive to keeping to the tenets of democracy and the yearnings and aspirations of the citizens. Consequently, the executive and legislative arms of government require cooperation to achieve the purpose of democratic governance. For the foregoing to be possible, as Adibe and Mbaegbu (2017: p.50) noted,

For stability and ultimately good government to be achieved, some degree of cooperation and understanding amongst these three arms is expected. The virtue, spirit, and essence of democracy are the extents to which policies and programmes reflect the needs of the people or are relevant. And, without a doubt, a relevant programme operates within the framework of the law. Taking consideration that it is the legislature that enacts the law and that the executive (or government) is expected to operate within the parameters of the law thus enacted, one can conclusively say that the legislature in modern democracies is the soul and essence of the nation.

Field data revealed that executive and legislative relations in Taraba State have been construed as cordial following the election of Governor Darius Dickson Ishaku in 2015. A member of the House of Assembly in Taraba State noted that:

The House of Assembly in this state has enjoyed a cordial relationship with the executive, especially since 2015. We have worked closely with the executive for the betterment of the people of Taraba State. Our responsibility as legislators is to make the law or adhere to bills sent to us by the executive arm of government. As representatives of the people, we pass bills into law that will promote democracy and the living conditions of the people in the state. On our part, we have passed several bills sent by the executive arm of the government into law. To show how friendly we are with the executive, I'd like to say that we usually move quickly to discuss and pass bills into law, putting the needs of our constituents at the centre of our decisions and actions (Interview with a member of the Taraba State House of Assembly, May 2022).

According to a legislative aide, the relationship between the executive and legislature in the state promotes democratic governance. Democratic governance is about the people, and since democracy is a form of government that comes from the people, legislators are always working to serve their constituents through the process of making laws, checking the excesses of the executive when necessary, and helping the executive arm of the government deliver good governance (Interview with a Legislative Aide, in Jalingo, August 2021).

This assertion is contrary to the postulation that the executive and legislature are constantly entangled in a battle for supremacy and control over policy-making and implementation processes, thereby undermining the quest for good governance (Igbokwe-Ibeto and Anazodo, 2015). The legislative arm of government has been supportive of the executive arm of government, particularly in Taraba State. This can be seen in Table 1, which shows how executive bills became laws.

Table 1: Executive Bill or Law Passed by the Legislature, 2015-2020

| S/N | Bill/Law Passed | | Contents of the Bill/law | Law No. | Date |
|-----|--|---|---|---------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Taraba | State | A bill for a law to authorize the issue out of the consolidated revenue fund of Taraba State of Nigeria | - | Dec. 31 st , 2015 |
| 2 | Ngada development creation order | Special area | Ngada Special development area creation order | - | 2016 |
| 3 | Taraba Appropriation law | State | A law to authorize the issue out of the consolidated revenue fund of Taraba State of Nigeria | No. 1 | Dec. 31 st , 2016 |
| 4 | Taraba State Responsibility Commission (Amendment) Law | Fiscal | A law to Amend the Taraba State Fiscal Responsibility Commission Law, No. 7 of 2011 | No. 2 | 2016 |
| 5 | Taraba State Government (Amendment No.10) Law | Local | A law to make Provision for the Amendment of the Taraba State Local Government Law 2000 and for other Purposes Connected therewith | No. 3 | 2016 |
| 6 | Taraba State Debt Management Office Establishment (ETC) law | Debt | Taraba State Debt Management Office Establishment Law | No. 5 | 2016 |
| 7 | Taraba State Agency for Community and Social Development Project (Amendment No.1) Law | | A law to provide for the Amendment of the Taraba State Agency for Community and Social Development Project Law No. 7 of 2009 and for other purposes connected therewith | No. 6 | 2016 |
| 8 | Taraba State Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency law | | A Law to provide for the Establishment of the Taraba State Rural Water supply and sanitation agency and other Purposes connected therewith | No. 7 | 2016 |
| 9 | Taraba Supplementary Appropriation Law | State | A Law to authorise the issue out of the consolidated Revenue fund of Taraba State | No.8 | Dec 31 st , 2016 |
| 10 | Taraba Appropriation Law | State | A Law to authorise the issue of the Consolidated Revenue fund of Taraba State | No. 1 | 2017 |
| 11 | Taraba State Inter-Religious affairs, Peace building and conflict resolution council Law | Inter-Religious affairs, Peace building and conflict resolution council | A Law to make provision for the Establishment of the Taraba State Inter-Religious affairs, Peace building and conflict resolution council Law | No. 2 | 2017 |

| | | | | |
|----|--|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| 12 | Taraba State Law officers harmonization of conditions of service with magistrates (Amendment No.1) law | A Law to amend the Taraba State law officers Harmonisation of conditions of service with magistrates law (No.3) of 2005 | No. 3 | 2017 |
| 13 | Taraba State Survey Law | A Law to make provision for the establishment of the office of the surveyor general, appointment thereof, survey of lands in the state | No. 5 | 2017 |
| 14 | Taraba State thuggery and other | A Law to make provision for the amendment of the prohibition of thuggery in the State | No. 6 | 2017 |
| 15 | Taraba State open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law | A Law to prohibit open grazing of livestock and to provide for the establishment of ranches | No. 7 | 2017 |
| 16 | Taraba State Appropriation law | A Law to authorise the issue out of the consolidation revenue fund of Taraba State | Law No. 1 | Dec 31 st 2018 |
| 17 | Taraba State supplementary appropriation law | A law to authorise the virement or re-allocation of certain sums of money from the Taraba State appropriation law 2019 from certain heads and sub-heads of the said appropriation law to meet certain Government exigencies within the financial year | Law No. 8 | 2019 |
| 18 | Taraba State appropriation law | A law to authorise the issue of the consolidated revenue fund of Taraba State | Law No. 1 | Dec 31 st 2020 |
| 19 | Taraba State appropriation (amendment) Law | A law to amend the Taraba State appropriation law 2020 | Law No. 7 | 2020 |

Source: Taraba State House of Assembly, 2022.

The passage of the foregoing into law is proof of the executive and legislative harmony in Taraba State. As explained by a member of the executive arm of government, the legislative arm of government has been supportive of the executive, and the executive is enjoying the roles the legislature is playing in promoting democratic governance. If they chose to oppose the executive branch of government, the state's socioeconomic development would have stalled. Igbokwe-Ibeto and Anazodo (2015:31) quote Nwokeoma (2011), who says that a democratic government is better able to provide good governance to its citizens when the executive and legislative branches of government work well together.

Those within the circle of the executive arm of government in Taraba State noted that for the executive arm of government to deliver its democratic promises to the citizens who promised them during the 2015 general election, there is a need for harmony between the arms of government. To be true, the legislative and executive arms of government have been working together in harmony. Well, it was the former Speaker of the House of Assembly who wanted to generate a rift between the

executive and legislative arms of government simply because the government refused to fulfil his quest. Given the majority of the legislators who were in support of the government's efforts to deliver democratic governance, the Speaker decided to resign without any impeachment being decided against him. The legislative arm of government has been doing well, and the impact of the cooperation with the executive is reflected in the laudable development projects this government is providing for the good people of Taraba State (FGD conducted in Jalingo, September 2022).

In addition, another group noted that the government between 2015 and now has fulfilled major promises. In Jalingo, the state capital city, nobody ever imagined that it would have a dual carriageway and a flyover bridge with several pedestrian bridges constructed on the highway. The executive arm of the government has ensured that development reaches the rural areas in Taraba State. Several roads are being built by the state's various local governments. This is courtesy of the legislative arm of government because they support the government morally and otherwise. The government has also received several awards for its performances in the areas of water supply, agricultural development, education, and service delivery, among others. Recently, the government openly stated that, within seven years of its tenure, it has delivered on democratic governance and that the entitlements and demands of the citizens have been responded to by its administration. One example is the employment of over 3,000 teachers under the Rescue Teachers emblem, for which the government has been paying salaries since their enrolment in the state civil service. It recently upgraded their salaries to reflect their entry qualifications (FGD with a pro-government group, in Jalingo, November 2022).

In response to the relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government, Dugba (2016) disagreed with the foregoing assertions, stating that according to the doctrine of separation of powers, the legislature is a separate entity and is supposed to operate independently of the executive. Unfortunately, the two arms of government operate as if they are the same. He asserted:

As far as I can remember, the legislature and executive perform almost the same function. The legislature in the state is mostly a rubber stamp. People are so timid in this area. They don't even understand their powers. You see members of the House of Assembly drafted to do the functions of the executive instead of consigning themselves to the legislative function. If you want, perhaps, to be appointed as Permanent Secretary in the state, sometimes you go to the Speaker to lobby. There are so many ad hoc committees, for example, the Committee on Flood Victims. Most members of the committee were members of the legislature. That is executive work. It has nothing to do with the legislature. We have not seen a single incident in which the legislature disagreed with the executive, and I cannot say they should agree on everything else. There are so many things that are detrimental to the government! They have not spoken, which means that they are working in tandem. So I can hardly draw a line between what the legislature is doing and what the executive is doing. I have been nominated to serve on several committees as a civil servant, and I have found myself working under a member of the House of Assembly as the Chairman of that committee.

Although this may be perceived as an oversight function for the legislators provided by the executive as an aspect of democratic governance in Taraba State, it is a form of bribery to the legislators requested by them or provided to them to enable the government to have undue privileges from the

legislature. The report by the Vanguard (2018 online) shows that such practice between the executive and the legislature is "business as usual." It stated explicitly that "there are continuous links of bribe-demanding and -taking, all in the name of oversight functions... with all sense of responsibility that... the executive and legislature are joint contenders in this game of corruption," along the lines of "demanding and taking or offering and accepting." This explains that rather than the legislature preventing executive corruption, it has in many ways encouraged it in Taraba State. As Dugba (2016) described, one of the ways legislators have encouraged corruption is by agreeing to perform a function assigned to them by the executive.

Fish, Michel, and Lindberg (2015) noted that the legislature has several powers at its disposal to prevent the misuse of executive powers and mismanagement of resources that should bring about development in the state. Specifically, they noted that "a legislature with the ability to investigate the executive in practice, control its finances, or pass legislation in practice can impose more constraints on the executive than does a legislature without these powers, and these powers help deter the executive from committing corrupt acts" (Fish, Michel, and Lindberg, 2015). Despite the legislative powers the legislators are endowed with to control the excesses of the executive in Taraba State, several of the relationships between the executive and legislative arms of government in the name of harmony for democratic sustenance have given rise to excesses by the executive arm of government. The government, according to an interview, has engaged in unnecessary borrowing without any meaningful social and economic development to present to the citizens as evidence in Taraba State (Interview with a member of the public in Jalingo, September 2022).

Yusuf, (2022) pointed out that, according to records, the Taraba State House of Assembly approved a series of loans for the state government between 2020 and 2022. This shows that the executive and legislature work well together. A 2.5 billion naira loan approved on March 12, 2020, to be paid in ten years; a 1.5 billion naira loan approved on November 16, 2020; an 18 billion naira loan approved on July 21, 2021; and a 5.5 billion naira loan approved on October 19, 2022. Yusuf questioned the role of the legislature by asserting that "in as much as accessing loans to develop the sectors of the economy is a good thing, the question is whether these monies have translated to physical development or have travelled to individual pockets and businesses?" According to Dugba (2016 online), the state has not seen any reasonable development since it was created in 1991. This claim has been disputed by other interviewees, who are of the view that the government has performed remarkably since the period in which Dugba made the statement. They argue that people like Dugba, who are many, may not see the level of development committed to the people of Taraba State by the state government until the tenure ends (Focus Group Discussion, in Jalingo, October 2022).

On the contrary, an interviewee noted that during the 2015 electoral process, the present government asked the good people of Taraba State to give it peace, and they would receive development. Several years later, especially now that the tenure is expiring, the more you try to check for developments, the less you see them. Even though "development" is a relative term, it is hard to point categorically to any development the present democratic dispensation has brought to the people in the state. The federal government gave state governments money, including the Taraba State bailout and Paris Club

money. Yet, Taraba State is highly indebted due to the several loans collected by this government in the name of delivering democratic dividends. If the government cannot fulfil its democratic mandates in terms of physical development, it should develop the people by paying their monthly remunerations. Taraba State civil servants are complaining about epileptic salary payments. Pensions and gratuities for retirees are still hanging in the balance. The tenure of the government is almost over without any serious projects commissioned by the state government. It is the failure of the legislative arm of the government to resolutely demand the government work for the people by checking its excesses that have brought the state to this sorry condition (interview with a citizen, November 2022). How the legislative arm of government behaves is an indication that it is controlled by the state government. The legislators as individuals and the legislature as an institution independent of the executive arm of government are weak in Taraba State. The legislators, as a body with separate powers, have no moral authority to question the behaviour of the executive toward democratic governance because they are also contributors to the problem the state is facing today. For example, Dugba (2016 online) revealed that "In Taraba, the Speaker then, who was Chairman of the Speakers' Forum, opposed the *financial autonomy of the legislature* on the instruction of the governor." That amendment did not pass, even though it was intended to give members of the House of Assembly freedom. This situation, among others, makes it difficult to have effective democratic governance that is democratic dividend-oriented, as construed by the relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government in Taraba State.

The Interplay of Power Relations between the Executive and Legislative Branches of Government in Democratic Governance of Taraba State

The power and use of it are essential in decision-making, taking action, and exercising control over state-valued resources. The centrality of power in exercising effective governance has remained a serious problem in democratic regimes. Because the executive and legislative branches of government are independent, power relations characterise their relationship in a democratic setting, particularly in presidential democracies (Obiyan, 2013). Consequently, the quest for good governance in Nigeria has been more threatened by the unending conflicts between the legislature and executive, who are often entangled in a constant battle for supremacy and control of the policy-making and implementation processes. Due to the conflict that often characterises the relationship between the executive and the legislature, the doctrine of the separation of powers was necessary to prevent such conflict through the process of checks and balances (Nweke, 2013).

The creation of healthy power relations between the executive and legislative arms of government is necessary because it helps in protecting the rights and liberties of the citizens, advances the cause of good and accountable governance, and safeguards the collective interests of the people who voted political representatives into the leadership rostrum (Heywood, 1997; Oleszek, 2014). Despite the essence of healthy power relations, in African democracies, particularly democratic practise in Nigeria, there has been unhealthy conflict between the executive and legislative arms of government.

The unhealthy relationships have led to impeachment attempts or the impeachment of some governors or legislators (Fagbadebo, 2016; Omitola and Ogunnubi, 2016; Ikubaje, 2000).

Although this has been the case in the past in some states, the situation in Taraba State following the 2015 governorship election has been relatively different. According to an interviewee, democratic governance has flourished because of relatively healthy power relations between the legislators and the executive. There is a healthy, positive relationship between these two arms of government because they understand their stated responsibilities as separate institutions (Interviewee with a Politician at the House of Assembly in Jalingo, October 2022). While the situation presents itself as if there is no power tussle in the democratic process in the state, an interviewee noted that "the legislators are overwhelmed always by the influence of the state government, which uses different tactics to bring them under its caprices." Some of the tactics used by the executive include bribing the legislators in cash, kind, or both. Legislators who are ready to sacrifice their consciences are given huge sums of money to share or assorted vehicles for personal use to enable the executive to have his way. Those who refuse to be cowed, who are usually few, are marginalised by their colleagues. They may also suffer neglect by the government (Interviewee with a Politician in Jalingo, October 2022).

The legislators, rather than contest power with the executive arm of government, contest it among themselves. The contest for power is much influenced by the executive arm of government, which stirs rifts among the legislators. This usually happens when the executive feels uncomfortable about certain roles a legislator or a group of legislators play in the House of Assembly. The executive can use its authority and resources to rally a majority of legislators to impeach the perceived opposing legislator. This was seen recently in the Taraba State House of Assembly when there was an attempt to impeach the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Honourable Abel Peter Diah, who has fallen out with Governor Ishaku due to the accusation that he planned the impeachment of the governor. In this connection, an interviewee noted that:

Following the return to democracy in 1999, the practice of democracy has been on trial in Nigeria. In different states, the trial of democracy has been a result of conflict between the executive and legislature over power relations. Since 2015, the executive and legislative arms of government in Taraba State have enjoyed harmony, until there was an attempt to impeach the Speaker of the Taraba State House of Assembly, Abel Peter Diah, which led to his voluntary resignation to avoid impeachment alleged to have been sponsored by the executive and led by his colleagues who wanted to occupy the prestigious position of the speaker of the House of Assembly. The attempt to impeach him was because he was trying to lead a rebellion against the state government by using legislative power to question the action of the executive arm of government in the management of public resources (Interview with a Politician in Jalingo, October 2022).

From the foregoing context, it is evident that the powers of the legislature as a critical arm of government in sustaining democratic governance in Taraba State are undermined in two ways. Firstly, the powers of the legislature are undermined externally by the executive arm of government through undue influence and interference in the internal affairs of the legislature. The legislature is not accountable to the executive branch of government; rather, it is accountable to the people of the constituencies from which they are elected. The influence of the executive arm of government makes

the legislators less accountable and responsive to the people who elected them because it connotes that the legislator who is loyal to the executive also enjoys the executive's support and has the tendency to enjoy a continuous stay in the House of Assembly. Secondly, the legislature's powers are undermined internally within the legislative arm of government due to the pursuit of personal interest or gain. Because of personal gain or interest, the legislators, rather than working in the interest of the people in their respective constituencies, work in the interest of the executive by establishing booby traps for one another. This makes it possible for outside forces to get in and mess with their powers, making them useless.

In this way, legislatures are an important part of good governance in democratic systems under normal conditions. This role is primarily discharged through the exercise of the basic legislative functions of law making, representation, and oversight. For instance, Johnson and Nakamura (1999) write that "effective legislatures contribute to effective governance by performing important functions necessary to sustain democracy in complex and diverse societies." Through their legislative function, the legislative arm of government is responsible for reviewing bills and enacting legislation, amendments, and regulations that are needed to support reforms and development programmes (Sharkey, Dreger, and Bhatia, 2006). Unfortunately, the roles of Taraba State's legislative arm of government, as designed primarily for them by the Nigerian constitution and presented above as a critical institution for promoting good governance, suffer from an unequal interplay of power relations. The power relations between the executive and legislature show that the executive is powerful and the legislature is weak.

In Taraba State, the legislature cannot stop the executive from using power arbitrarily because the legislature is not strong enough. In the 1999 constitution, there is a provision that empowers the legislature to sanction the executive for arbitrary use of power. The sanction comes in the form of impeachment, which is meant to ensure the accountability of the government to the people. Awotokun (1998) says that impeachment provisions are a good way to make sure that the executive branch doesn't use its power randomly and that the government is responsive and accountable. Accordingly, the most potent weapon against possible abuse of state power by the executive is the use of impeachment power, which the legislative arm of government wields. The legislature's ability to impeach is necessary to keep the executive branch from getting too much power.

However, an interviewee argued that the legislature in Taraba State is not using impeachment powers because they cannot be used against a government that has proven to be unaccountable and unresponsive to the people, but because the legislative arm of government is a collaborator in the promotion of governance practises that are operating against popular will in the state. Even in matters of veto power, the legislature can override the executive veto by invoking Section 100(5) of the Constitution, which empowers it to bypass executive assent by passing the bills into law with a two-thirds majority of its members. This means the legislative arm of government has several instruments at its disposal to control the arbitrary use of power by the executive, as we are witnessing in the manner in which it is conducting itself in government (interview with a citizen in Jalingo, October 2022).

For a democratic government to be able to give citizens the real benefits of good governance, the executive and legislative branches of government must work well together and communicate well. Although the relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government has been cordial, it has been to the disadvantage of the people in Taraba State. People's reactions from different parts of Taraba State against the government are a demonstration that the executive has not delivered on the democratic promises it claimed to have achieved within seven years of governance. The public declaration by the executive of exaggerated state government performances would have led to serious scrutiny by the legislative arm of the government. The body is not ready to scrutinise the government's claim, and not even a legislator is ready to speak out against the executive because they are betraying themselves in the House of Assembly and the people who voted for them to act directly on their behalf. Presidential democracy, they said, reinforces the separation of powers of the different arms of government to prevent arbitrariness, tyranny, and recklessness; in the case of Taraba State, it has proved otherwise because the executive has more power than the legislative arm of government (FGD in Jalingo, November 2022).

Conclusion

Executive-legislative relations are an essential aspect of democratic government. The effectiveness of any democratic government depends largely on the relationship between the executive and the legislature. The study of executive and legislative relations and democratic governance revealed mixed feelings about the relationship between these arms of government and how it impacts democratic governance in Taraba State. Generally speaking, the study shows that the relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government has been dominated by the executive arm of government in Taraba State. Several factors warrant such dominance, and they include the lack of independence hampered by legislative financial dependence and the internal conflict within the institution over the control of the House of Assembly in the state, as well as the gregariousness among the legislators for favours and money that comes with being loyal to the executive arm of government. It can be concluded that the relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government has failed to yield the much-desired dividends of democracy. Within this period, the people of the state have witnessed a low level of human and capital development and a high level of indebtedness. The following recommendations are made:

- i. The relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government can be strengthened to impact democratic governance in Taraba State. The legislative arm of government is required to be trained since most of them are not a related field which enables them to understand their roles as legislators. They should be knowledgeable enough to know that blind harmony is not the purpose of their election as legislators but that it also involves construing conflict that would enhance democratic governance in Taraba State.
- ii. The interplay of power relations between the executive and legislative arms of government should be redefined within the principle of the separation of powers to ensure effective democratic governance in Taraba State. The redefinition of the interplay of power relations

occurs when the dominance of the executive in the relationship is transformed to see each of the arms of government as independent in their rights. They should perform their functions as defined by the law provided in the constitution of Nigeria to prevent and mitigate arbitrary abuse of executive powers and to promote effective democratic governance in Taraba State.

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