

A Study of the Performance of Legislative Aides in the Nigeria's 9th House of Representatives

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Abstract

Legislative aides are important instrument for the attainment of greater legislative performance and effectiveness. They technically assist lawmakers in their quest for excellence and efficiency of legislative processes and practices. However, the demonstration of these effectiveness has been subjected to series of public scrutiny, resulting to questioning their impact on the legislative activities and outcome. In view of this, this study adopted the mixed research design (primary and secondary data sources) including content analytical framework for the assessment of the performance of legislative aides in the 9th National Assembly particularly on the House of Representatives. Findings shows that, among others that the role of legislatives aides in the National Assembly spans across planning/coordination, research and report writing, communications, lobbying/relations, committee activities. They assist legislators to meet the demands of their offices through bill drafting and analysis, drafting motions and briefs of arguments, report writing, fixing meetings, committee activities, oversight visits and hearings, constituency relations, etc. The 9th National Assembly has introduced 2,500 Bills (769 in Senate and 1,634 in the House of Representatives) out of which many have been passed and assent to by the President. Similarly, the National Assembly has helped several pro-people interventions in cushioning the effect of COVID-19 pandemic, strike actions embarked by labor in education and health sectors, among others. While this glory cannot be attributed to the legislators alone as their aides are also an integral part of the entire process, this study, thus, revealed that legislative aides have contributed no less profoundly to legislative activities in the National Assembly as pointed out above. In fact, they have also played their roles well such that some aides have graduated from being aides in past assemblies to being legislators at various levels and elected into executive positions in Nigeria. They have also enhanced legislative activities in the National Assembly through bill drafting and analysis, writing of motions and briefs of argument, research and documentation, etc. The study further revealed some challenges faced by legislative aides in performing their duties: logistics challenges, lack of interest in legislative activities by some legislators and aides, poor remuneration and work incentive, etc. It then recommended the facilitation of proper and adequate remunerations for legislative aides to boost their morale to work; logistics challenges should be addressed by availing Aides good office/work environment, modern ICT equipment, office furniture's, operational vehicles, etc. There should be prioritization of the appointment of Aides with the requisite skills and requirements to enhance effective discharge of responsibilities by law-makers and NASC.

Keywords: Legislative Aides; Representatives; National Assembly; Law-Making; Constituents; Democracy

1.0 Introduction

As an institution, the Legislature is primary in the proper representation of the existence of democratic governance system in a nation state. This is supported by Section 4 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) which empowers the National Assembly to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation or any part thereof with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative List set out in Part 1 of the Second Schedule to the Constitution and the Concurrent Legislative List set out in Part 2 of the Second Schedule to the Constitution respectively. Legislators, therefore, perform the very important work of law making, oversight, representation and constituency services that have direct impact on the day-to-day lives of the citizens and constituents. Sections. 4, 60, 62, 71, 80, 81, 88, and 89 etc.

It is no doubt that elected lawmakers are the public face of parliamentary politics and are charged to cater and represent the interest of the constituents, make laws for good governance and the production of public goods, and serve as a checks on the other arms of government. Still, these people in question cannot work in isolation efficiently without the assistance of legislative aides (Okereke, 2021). As Okereke (2021) further states, legislative aides on the other hand are the gears that keep the political machine running smoothly and properly. The rationale behind this is that several individuals who ventured into or have penchant in politics started as legislative aides. Some even make being legislative aides their goal and become part of the core staff that work with one particular elected official or more, even as they move from office to office. Alternatively, some aides may work for multiple elected officials over the course of a long career.

It should be borne in mind that any legislature that is not mindful of the dictates of these mandates does not only become a failure, but also presents itself as a threat to the welfare and security of the people. Justifiably, this is the reason legislatures are under attacks whenever the citizenry feels short-changed. Individual legislators bear the direct brunt of their constituents' anger, pains and frustrations, always. An incompetent legislature is even assumed as the reason behind the failure of any presidential democracy. Apparently, this is a burden that the 9th national assembly is contending with. Even those who are versed on the expectations from the various arms and tiers of government are unfortunately at the vanguard of the unwarranted vilifications visited on the Institution. For political expediency and or self-fulfillments, the ignorant and vulnerable are being exploited and instigated at will against the legislature, thereby presenting the legislators as the real problems of the country. And quite sadly, the legislature is not telling its own story appropriately.

The legislature requires a number of human and material resources in order to up to its responsibilities. Hamalai, Dan-Azumi & Omotola (2016) argued that resources in this perspective incorporate a range of inputs, both tangible and intangible which, depending on their nature, including types, quantity and quality, could interact to enhance or undermine legislative performance and productivity. They further opined that: *“The import of this is that depending on certain intervening variables such as their effective coordination, resources can be an indication of the strengths or weakness of an organization”* (Hamalai, Dan-Azumi & Omotola, 2016).

Aside other institutional personnel of the National Assembly, National Assembly Service Commission (NASC), National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) as well as the National Assembly Budget and Research Office (NABRO), legislative aides stands out as important set of personnel required by lawmakers to effectively discharge their responsibilities. In the language of Okereke (2021), legislative aides are a team of carefully selected professionals who work directly in the offices of Representatives/Senators in order to provide the essential support needed in the key areas of planning, research, policy briefs, legislative arguments, bill drafting, bill scrutiny, motions, constituency relations, reports, planning and strategy, oversight design, public relations, coordination, administration and communications.

In Nigeria, lawmakers' performance is measured in terms of the number of legislative Bills they have sponsored, the bulk of developmental projects they have attracted to their constituency and the number of giveaways they have been able to give to their constituents during weddings, burials, naming ceremonies, etc. (CISLAC, June 10, 2019). This is a bit in contravention of what applies in advanced democracies where legislative responsiveness, contribution to enactment of laws, thorough overseeing of the ministries, agencies and departments, etc. are the parameters for measuring legislative performance (CISLAC, June 10, 2019). An assessment of the various sessions of the National Assembly since the first session (1999-2003) has always scored the nation's apex lawmaking institution average (Guardian, 11 March 2021).

They also perform other specific important task of presentation of motions, public petitions, appropriation, public/investigative hearing, legislative argument, project lobbying into the budget, and constituency engagement etc. Legislators' carryout public engagement functions as well, speech making, and paper presentation. Etc. Legislators would not be able to

effectively accomplish these tasks successfully without the help of a professional, resourceful, dedicated, committed, and loyal legislative aides.

It is evident that without assistance of legislative aides, legislators cannot deliver effectively and efficiently on their mandate of law making, oversight and representation. Thus, there has been a growing influence of legislative aides across democracies in the world, due to their enormous contributions to legislative business. The growing influence of legislative aides in the American Congress for instance, has resulted to their being labelled variously as “Unelected Representatives” of the people (Malbin 1980), “the power lovers” (McPherson, 1975), “ghost on Capitol Hill” (Widen, 1975), “the hidden power elite” (Alphen, 1975), “invisible men who run congress” (Evans, 1963). According to Habu (2020), legislative aides are the personal staff of the legislators and their appointment is at the instance of their principals (i.e the legislators). This underscores the importance of legislative aides in the parliament. However, legislative aides are not recognized by the constitution in some democracies such as it is the case in Nigeria. Conversely, the appointments of legislative aides are derived directly from specific Constitutional provisions in the United States of America. For example, in line with Article V, Section 12 of the Colorado State (USA) Constitution, the resolution of the Legislature on the selection of Legislative aides stipulates that:

Each member of the Senate and the House of Representative may employ a Legislative Aide during each regular session. Legislative aides shall be hired by each Member through the Office of the Secretary of the Senate or the Office of the Chief Clerk of the House of Representative, as appropriate ... Legislative aides serve at the pleasure of the hiring Member or Members and are appointed without regard to the State Personnel System.

According to Hamalai, Dan-Azumi & Omotola (2016), in Nigeria just as it is the case in other democracies, legislative aides complement the abilities of legislators in discharging their tripartite functions of lawmaking, representation and oversight. Legislative aides assist in no small measure in access information for their principals (the lawmakers). They assist their principals in the discharge of all the legislative duties that they are engaged in the course of the duties. Thus, this entails that these aides are selected based on their qualifications (both in skills and education). The number of legislative aides is subject to institutional requirements and guidelines. In Nigeria, members of the two chambers of the National Assembly are entitled to five legislative aides each (Hamalai, Dan-Azumi & Omotola, 2016).

In preparation to the nation’s return to civil rule, a new constitution titled ‘the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999’ was enacted to streamline state objectives, rights and

duties of citizens and leaders. The constitution in Section 48 states that the Senate shall consist of three senators per state and one for the Federal Capital Territory (i.e., 109 senators). While Section 49 of the same constitution that - *subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the House of Representatives shall consist of three hundred- and sixty-members representing constituencies of nearly equal population as far as possible, provided that no constituency shall fall within more than one State (FRN, 1999)*. This means that the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended states that the National Assembly consists of 469 members. Thus, there are not less than 2,345 legislative aides in each session of the National Assembly.

Just like Premium Times (June 14, 2021) suggests, the successes and failures of every session of the legislature (National Assembly) are not exclusively on the lawmakers but legislative aides have their own fair share of the praises and blames that emanates from the performance of the legislature. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the performance of legislative aides in the 9th Session of the House of Representatives.

For Dan-Azumi & Omotola (2016), the legislature stands out as a key institution of governance in every democracy across the globe. Given the tripartite traditional functions of representation, legislation and oversight encompasses all sphere of governance in a democratic setting. These are very demanding duties that requires adequate allocation and effective application of resources (Okereke, 2021). This is because public expectations of these lawmakers are always high and unwavering. Paradoxically, it is the same public that places so much expectations on the legislature that is also usually in the fore front of the outcry about the perceived high cost of legislative governance in Nigeria (Hamalai, Dan-Azumi & Omotola, 2016).

The three core roles and responsibilities of the legislature are defined. Representation is about individual legislators speaking and working in favour of their constituencies for government interventions through infrastructural development and other life-enhancing deliverables. Legislation involves making laws for peace, order and good governance. And then over-sight functions, technically called checks and balances, entail exercising control, monitoring and supervisory roles over the executive, to ensure efficiency in government as well as prevent waste in governance (Ayodele, 2020). But, while law-making and over-sight duties create the enabling pathways for the executive towards good governance, the latter demands effective synergy between the executive and the legislature for success. And whereas law-making is relatively a long-term approach, over-sight functions offer opportunities for more direct and immediate measures concerning some peculiar socio-economic and political challenges

bedeviling third-world nations, particularly. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the performance of legislative Aides in the 9th session of the Nigerian House of Representatives to identify challenges affecting such important performance while proffering policy recommendations in order to enhance legislative effectiveness and deepen Nigeria's democratic practices.

2.0. Literature Review

Legislative assessment and performance have remained the most topical issue in democratic discourse. This study acknowledges the existence of various literature on legislature and the performance in representative democracy as there are various views and perceptions on the major functions of the legislature in a democratic system. Essentially, the legislative institution provides for the citizenry the platform for participatory political processes. Fashagba (2011) notes that the presence of legislative institution in any modern polity suggests the indirect participation of the electorate in making decisions on issues that affect their daily lives. Not only is the presence of a legislature salient to the acceptability of democratic regime, but also the extent to which the legislature demonstrates capability to freely express itself and asserts its powers, determine the extent and depth of democratic institutionalization (Aremu, Bakare and Abayomi, 2017; Abayomi and Saka, 2021).

In many existing studies, there has been the establishment of the centrality of the legislature to democratic governance, stating that democracy cannot exist without the people's assembly otherwise referred to as the legislature (Abayomi and Saka, 2021; Aiyede, 2006; Bello-Imam, 2004; Barkan, 2010; Fish, 2006; Volden & Wiseman, 2013). However, the behaviour of the legislators in and out of the legislature and its outputs have subjected the institution to public condemnation. Since 1999, the question of the effectiveness of the National Assembly has been generating concerns among political analysts, scholars and other stakeholders. This is attributed majorly to the effectiveness of the National Assembly, its partisan reactions to issue of national importance, excessive and needless confrontations with the executive and some others that have been categorized corrupt and immoral behaviours (Bakare and Bello, 2020). Some scholars have questioned its capacity and competence of its human resources to effectively dealing with social, economic and political issues (Hamalai, Dan-Azumi and Omotola, 2016).

Meanwhile, Hamalai, Dan-Azumi and Omotola (2016) highlighted the human resources of the National assembly as: 469 legislators, 2,708 legislative aides, and 3,281 permanent staff.

According to them, the legislators performs the functions of the institution and represent the core people's interest that involves lawmaking, representation and oversight. Legislative aides complement the capacity of the legislators, while legislative staff provides the institutional management capacity. Collectively, these three categories of human resources make up the knowledge base or intellectual capital of the legislature. What can be said about this resources? In this study, the performance of legislative aides at the 9th National Assembly is the focus of enquiry.

The resources have been queried based on the performance of the legislature since the beginning of the fourth republic. Bakare and Bello (2020) explained that the Nigerian legislature has received a wide condemnation in the public space, thus, posing the institution as the known enemy of democracy and development. Nnamdi (2017) also stated that the trajectory portrays the institution as an arm of government 'too weighty to discard and much problematic to retain'. This shows that the resources available to work with are having issues. Meanwhile, legislative aides complement the abilities of legislators. Among other things, they help access information for their principals. This demands have ancillary skills set. The number of legislative staff is determined by institutional requirements. In Nigeria, federal legislators are entitled to five legislative aides. Since there are 469 legislators, the total number of aides should be 2,354 at any one time. There were 2,280, 2,718 (Hamalai, Dan-Azumi and Omotola, 2016) and 2,728 legislative aides in the sixth, seventh and eight assemblies respectively.

The doctrine of Separation of Powers, ensures the division of government responsibilities into distinct branches to limit any one branch from exercising the core functions of another. The intent is to prevent the concentration of power and provide for checks and balances. Therefore, the legislature is saddled among others with law making functions. It is responsible for enacting the laws of the state and appropriating the money necessary to operate the government.

The legislature has the power to pass legislation in various fields enumerated in the national constitution; in some fields the legislative power is shared with the National Parliament, while in others it is reserved to the province. The fields include such matters as health, education (except universities), agriculture, housing, environmental protection, and development planning

Section 4(1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended captures the powers and functions of the legislature thus;

- 1. The legislative powers of the federal Republic of Nigeria shall be vested in the National Assembly for the Federation which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives*
- 2. The National Assembly shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Federation or any part thereof with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive List set out in Part 1 of the Second schedule of this Constitution*

The legislature, because of its representativeness, has been considered as a basic fundamental of a representative democracy. This is because it is the only governmental institution that distinguished democracy from other forms of government. Other institutions, executive, judiciary and even the press are feature of other governmental structure. In fact, some scholars argued that the success of a country's democracy hinges on the strength and competence of the legislature. According to Fish (2014), the presence of a powerful legislature is an unmixed blessing for democratization. A weak legislature undermines democracy in two ways. First, it undermines "horizontal accountability.... That is the control that state agencies are supposed to exercise over other state agencies. If the legislature is unable to provide checks on executive power, including the bureaucracy, abusive practices are more likely to occur. Second, weak legislatures destabilizes "the growth of vertical accountability, meaning the ability of the people to control their representatives" (Fish, 2014).

However, varying literatures have emerged over the years interrogating the questions of the core responsibilities of legislature. Some scholars based their arguments on the legal dynamics of these responsibilities (Hynes & Johnston, 2011; PILLAI, 2013; Thomas, 2003; Swendiman, 2012) while others proceeded and toll a line of legal cum socio-cultural morale underpinning the duties of legislature in a typical representative democratic setting (Edwin, Reed and Donna, 1996; Dewhurst & Straus 2015). Hynes & Johnston (2011) argues that parliamentary institutions of various representative democracies in the world are the body of people representative upon which they were saddled with basic three constitutionally recognized responsibilities of law-making, oversight and representation. According to them, "in this arena of functions they can serve as a pillar of a functioning democracy". This line of argument represents the content of Pillai (2013), Thomas (2003) and Swendiman (2012). In the other opinion is the argument of Edwin, Reed & Donna (1996) who advocated a responsibility of parliament towards socio-cultural cum morale while literally deviating from the aged long legal discussions. In their discussion, they advocated for 21st century parliament to be wary of social integration, social inclusion and social participation in their daily legislative duties, most importantly in a heterogeneous society.

Acknowledging the position of scholars on the side of the legal structure of legislature's responsibilities, Omoyele (2011) and Barkan (2009) also considered that the basic tenets of legislature varies but includes representation, legislation, oversight and budgeting. Fashagba (2009) affirmed that in modern democracies the roles of representation, law-making and oversight of administration are often ascribed to the legislature while Alabi (2012) established that the power to make laws distinctively resides with modern parliaments. Omoyele (2011) describe law making as an expression of the interests of various constituents and the people of the state at large.

Meanwhile, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, created and institutionalized three arms of government namely, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary in line with popular practice that obtains in other presidential systems of government around the world and especially in the United States of America. Arising from this, the constitution also established distinct functions for the three arms of government. Though the constitution in principle provides for equality among the three arms of government, in practice, the President, who controls the Executive, actually enjoys a "first-among-equal" status. Nevertheless, the Legislature by its functions is the bull-walk of modern-day government. This is because of the working of the other organs of government, i.e., the Executive and the Judiciary and the activities of other entities in the state are moderated and controlled by the Legislature (Gidado, 2012). This is because, "it is the Legislature that lays down the basic laws, which the Judiciary has to interpret and which the Executive has to apply in the implementation of policies and execution of laws" (Ojo, 1997). This is what Baron du Montesquieu in his popular treatise "The Spirit of the Laws" published in 1748 described as the principle of separation of powers amongst the various arms of government. The legislature has the following core responsibilities:

- i. Scrutinizing, debating, and passing legislation (law-making function);
- ii. Creating legal frameworks for development activities;
- iii. Deliberating on and approving national budget (ex ante);
- iv. Exercising effective budget oversight (ex post);
- v. Scrutinizing and approving foreign loans and conditions attached to them;
- vi. Monitoring executive branch implementation of budgets;

- vii. Engaging with constituents on development issues and community level monitoring;
- viii. Representing citizens' interests in policy preparation and formation;
- ix. Accessing executive branch progress reports and reviewing these in committees;
- x. Contributing to the formulation of aid policies and overseeing their implementation;
- xi. Approving, where relevant, poverty reduction strategies and country strategy papers

In the meantime, legislature has been acknowledged as one of the most important and crucial to the existence of the democratic system and even other nations. For its importance to be known and well felt, it has also been signified that legislature alone cannot translate to nation's growth and development except the operators of such institution possess the adequate knowledge and expertise to do so (Thom-Otuya, 2012). Fashagba (2011) noted that the presence of legislative institution in any modern polity suggests the indirect participation of the electorates in the making decisions on issues that affect their daily lives. Not only is the presence of a legislature salient to the acceptability of democratic regime, but also the extent to which the legislature demonstrates capability to freely express itself and asserts its power determine how democratic the government is.

It is, therefore, to ensure an adequate training on the three cardinal functions of the legislature. Their principal roles are those of legislation, representation and oversight which constitute the three pillars of parliamentary democracy. Legislation is about passing laws and initiating a policy decision which constitute a country's legal framework, while representation is about collecting, aggregating and expressing the concerns, opinions and preferences of citizens. Parliamentary oversight is the process in which parliament reviews, monitors and oversees activities of government and public agencies, including the implementation of policy and legislation on behalf of citizens (Mfula & Mayaka 2013). The oversight of the Executive therefore, becomes one of the most important roles of the Legislature as it ensures that policies announced by Government and authorized by Parliament are actually delivered. However, events in this country where budget implementation is very poor has shown that parliament has not been very effective in the discharge of this all-important function.

This is because parliamentarians are in most cases new in parliaments and lack the necessary knowledge. This is compounded by the low return rate in National Assembly where law-

makers that have been properly trained and those that have the needed experience in legislative affairs are always dropped by the party godfathers.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted the mixed research design (an interplay of survey and secondary data). This involved a combination of desk review and the administration of structured interview. This is a roadmap for conducting a study with effective control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. Thus, survey and exploratory design will be adopted. Exploratory research design entails addressing research objectives from already existing documentaries such as journal articles, textbooks, newspapers, magazines, archives, etc. Therefore, questionnaire and documents were deployed to carry out this study. Questionnaire is a method for collecting information or data as reported by individuals based on their experience or perceptions. It is suitable for this study because the participants/respondents provided the information self-report/ personal experience manner. It is important because it was used to get an idea of how an organization has fared in the discharge of its mandate and its feel on a number of things, such as political debates, etc. In this case, it was used to determine the performance of legislative aides in the 9th session of the House of Representatives. Adopting the Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size and population in the study, primary data is sourced through the use of questionnaires and the desk review of relevant documents of the 9th session of the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Data were also gathered from secondary sources such as text-books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines etc. to complement primary data.

4.0 Presentation and Discussion of Finding

In order to ensure the respondent, have adequate knowledge of legislative processes in general and the functions of legislative aides in particular, they were therefore asked to indicate whether they are aware of the role of legislative aides. As it can be seen from the table below, 100% of respondents indicated that they are aware of the roles of legislative aides in the legislature.

Table 10: Showing responses of awareness of the roles of legislative aides in the legislative process

Group Respondents	of Total numbers	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
Legislators	11	11	100%	0	0%	100%
Legislative Aides	72	72	100%	0	0%	100%
CSOs	46	46	100%	8	0%	100%

Sources: Field Survey 2022

The researcher's aim is to properly evaluate the research objectives in relation to finding the course of this study, and below is the analysis of responses by the respondents.

4.1 Analysis

In order to address the objectives of the study, the researcher dug into the research questions (1-3).

Research Question One (1): What are the core responsibilities of Legislative Aides?

Legislative aides are in office to support/ provide technical, governance and other ancillary services to ensure that their principals deliver quality representation to the people and be re-elected for a consideration (interest, passion, wages, salaries and/or allowances (Okereke, 2021). Therefore, legislative aides perform wide ranging functions in assisting their principals in the discharge of their mandate of law-making, representation and oversight. These functions according to Okereke (2021) include: -

i. **Planning/Coordination and Research:**

Legislative aides are required to engage in critical thinking, developing work-plan, legislative agenda, organization of legislators' office (correspondences), visits, appointments and tracking of legislations and legislative performances, monitoring of legislative schedules etc. (Okereke, 2021). According to Okereke (2021), legislators propose and debate bills, policies and motions, conduct oversights; present legislative arguments either for or against certain legislative proposal on the floor of the Senate or House and/or vote on executive policies. Thus, lawmakers require a clear understanding of what the issue is about, read summarized research studies on the subject matter, surveys and data on the subject in order to lead a robust debate or contribution on the floor. Legislative aides are thus expected to apply legislative research knowledge to provide the necessary support needed. They also carryout research on bills, laws,

motions, petitions, other constituents' complaints/casework, national, regional, continental and global news as well as government policies, programmes and projects.

Other functions of legislative aides are

ii. **Writings/reports, communication and documentation:**

Legislative aides engage in preparing briefs, summaries, speeches, papers for presentation, bill scrutiny report, committee/oversight reports, legislators' activities and milestone reports including budget analysis reports, reviews and daily news and summary headlines presentation. They implement effective process of legislative record keeping of correspondences, legislative actions, legislative tracking reports, storage, and retrieval. Generally, they ensure that documents etc. are safe. Legislative aides explain policies, procedures and legislative interventions to the constituents. They contact constituents/public on legislative proposals, public hearing, committee results and status of legislative interventions. Manage the image of the legislator, facilitate meetings between the legislator and the constituents. Aides also serve on important matters of bringing the constituents concerns to the legislator and also relay the legislator's activities to the constituency members. Aides may be designated to inform the public of the Legislator's stand on different subjects' especially conflicting issues. They work together with legislators in crafting their speeches, press releases, publications on the legislator's activities and other engagements.

Legislative Aides serve as the outstretched arm of the legislator in the area of public relations and other sensitive official engagements. Aides also create relationships that gives them opportunity to acquire useful information for the benefit of their principal including lobbying other lawmakers to support their principal's propositions in the house. Constituency office management is one of the most important areas, where legislative aides prove to be indispensable. They ensure proper constituency mapping, constituency services, casework, responding to enquiries, questions, protocol arrangements, personal explanations and tracking of legislators' electoral promises. Maintain a safe register of constituency information at both offices. Legislative aides sometimes answer phone calls and arrange the schedules for their principals, attend meetings with he/she, write reports, travel to the constituency with their principals and other legitimate functions as may be required by the exigencies of legislative office.

Therefore, the effective functioning of the legislator's administrative office is also a core mandate of legislative aides, aides must be abreast of their daily routine and ensure they meet

deadlines on tasks and reports. Aides work to draft and edit proposed legislation, bring up motions and public petitions, generate new ideas, give objective advice, counsel and proffer recommendations to the legislator on issues of both national and constituency interest. Aides engage in research, conduct budget reviews, analysis and ensure the tracking of projects in the budget for the constituency. They play vital role in the planning and conduct of oversight visits, committee activities by writing briefs (information, data, policies), reports, etc. It is also required that legislative aides are involved in drafting legislative bills, motions, and legislative briefs of arguments. They monitor legislation, track issues specific to the legislator's constituents, attend meetings and hearings and perform other information-gathering duties. Hence, dedicated aides help to deepen legislative performance and effectiveness, manage transition between visioning, actions and results.

iii. **Constituency Office Management**

In literal terms, constituency office is like any other office in every sense of it. However, constituency office, in terms of purpose, is an organized office space often located at the electoral district of a legislator where a member of a local, regional or national legislative house is able to engage and meet constituents. Constituency offices respond to the central thrust of legislative representation; which is "*bringing representation home*" (Smith, 2003) or put differently, '*taking parliaments to the people*'. The offices play a vital role in providing both efficient and effective administrative support to Members of Parliament. Critically, Constituency Offices serve as centres of information on government programmes.

Management of constituency office, is the whole gamut and processes of understanding the constituency area (population, geography, commerce and trade etc.) through constituency mapping strategy. Constituency office management also involves strategic planning and implementation of constituency office programmes, budgets, use of constituency office allowance (if any), office furniture, equipment and supplies, constituency office staffing, IT support and internet access, telecommunication, office security, records management, data management, structured feedback mechanism, public disclosure, regular visits by the legislator and strategic partnership development with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the Media etc., for the benefit of constituents and enhancement of the representation function of the legislator for service and political gains.

Research Question Two (2): Sought to assess how the performance of Legislative Aides in the 9th Session of the House of Representatives is rated by the public.

The duty of legislative aide is to assist their principals in the discharge of their statutory mandate of law-making, representation and oversight. Therefore, the performance of the legislative aides is tied to successes and performances of their principals, vice-versa. According to the president of the Senate, Sen. Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, the cooperation of the 9th Assembly with the executive, have improved the efficiency in law-making (Lawan, 2021). This is in a bid to disabuse the mind of Nigerians who's perception about the 9th National Assembly is a *rubber-stamp* legislature. As at November 2021, about 2,500 Bills have been introduced; 769 in the Senate and 1,634 in the House of Representatives (Lawan, 2021). When juxtaposed with the number of Acts gazetted during previous regimes since 1999, there is a huge increase. Olusegun Obasanjo regime (1999-2007) enacted and gazetted 82 Acts; 38 Acts under Umar Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2009); Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2010-2015) enacted and gazetted 40 Acts while Muhammadu Buhari regime (2015-date) have enacted and gazetted 84 Acts (Vanguard, December 13, 2021). Some Bills passed by the 9th National Assembly and assented to by the president include – the Finance Act, 2021, the CAMA 2020, Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Act, 2019, Defence Intelligence Agency Civilian Pensions Board (Establishment) Act, 2019, National Biosafety Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2019, Petroleum Industry Act 2021, Climate Change Act, 2021, etc. This is a true reflection of high performance in law-making.

The National Assembly especially the House of Representatives have in its oversight of the executive intervened in several industrial disputes to forestall workers from embarking on industrial action (strike). Chief among these efforts is the several interventions of the House in brokering understanding between government and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) when they threatened strike (The Nation, Dec 31, 2021).

Samson Itodo (Executive Director, YIAGA) in his rating of the performance of the National Assembly in the 9th session stated that: “

On one hand, you can identify how the National Assembly, in performance of its legislative function has contributed to deepening legislative accountability or providing the necessary oversight in enhancing the quality of governance or making laws for the good governance of the country. For example, the Petroleum Industry Act. The fact that the National Assembly made good its promise, by passing that bill and breaking the jinx of decades of failure to enact legislation that governs the petroleum sector. You can also see legislation like the

Companies and Allied Matters Act. Although the act has been passed, it has some challenges. On the whole, you will see that they passed legislation that tends to provide and promote good governance and development. The other issue that you might want to highlight as a success is the fact that the National Assembly has tried over the last year to ensure that the budget is passed within a record time. The only snag with that particular process is the level of due diligence that the National Assembly undertakes in its consideration of the budget which brings us to the challenges (The Nation, Dec. 31, 2021).

Others are of the opinion that despite challenges and shortcomings, the 9th National Assembly has out-performed previous sessions especially in passing the Petroleum Industry Act which its predecessors were unable to pass (The Nation, Dec. 31, 2021). The timely passage of Appropriation Bills into Law since 2019 is another great feat under this session of the National Assembly. In achieving all these, the contributions of legislative aides cannot be overemphasized. In otherwords, these achievements are testaments to the effectiveness of legislative aides. Their performances are overtly or covertly a reflection of their capabilities and qualities and can be measured in terms of the quality of policy briefs, research input, bill analysis, bill drafting work and role in public hearing, data gathering and processing for their principals, the legislators

Table 12: Research Question Three (3): How will you rate the performance of Legislative Aides in the 9th Session of the House of Representatives?

Respondents' responses when they were asked to rate the performance of Legislative Aides in the 9th Session of the House of Representatives. They were asked to indicate whether the performance of the legislative aides has been effective, average or poor in the 9th session and their responses are captures in table 12 below:

Group Respondent's	TN	Effective	%	Average	%	Poor Performance	%	Total %
Legislators	11	3	27.3 %	7	63.7%	1	9.0%	100%
Legislative Aides.	72	51	70.8 %	14	19.5%	7	9.7%	100%
CSOs	46	11	23.9	30	65.3	5	10.8	

Sources: Field Survey 2022.

The inference from the table above is that majority of the legislators (7(637%)) rated the performance of legislative aides average, 51 (70.8) of the legislative aides rated themselves effective in the discharge of their duties to their principals whereas 30 respondents representing 65.3% of CSOs officials rated the aides average. This therefore indicates that legislative aides in the 9th National Assembly have been on the average effective in performing their duties.

To further confirm the claims of respondents on the performance of legislative aides in table 12 above, respondents were asked to give reasons for their answers and their reasons are summarized as follows:

- i. Most of legislative aides' assignments are demand-driven and that every aide strives to ensure that he/she delivers on assignments given by his/her principal;
- ii. The high rating of the performance of the 9th Session of the National Assembly especially House of Representatives is a confirmation to the fact that legislative aides have given their best to ensure that their bosses succeed;
- iii. Senior legislative aides and secretaries are indispensable aides to law-makers as SLAs ensure and engage in intensive research work to strengthen the positions of their principals during debates, etc. They also engage in image-making politics for law-makers as well as ensure that correspondences are properly attended to.
- iv. Law-makers are always busy travelling and attending events and meetings. Thus, without their aides preparing their programmes and holding brief for them in their absence, legislative business will become overwhelming for these law-makers.

Field work, 2022

To further substantiate the responses captured in table 12 above as well as the accompanying comments. Question 3 is posed to address objective 3 in a bid to ensure logical flow of arguments and strengthen the study.

Research Question Three (3): Has the performance of Legislative Aides enhanced legislative activities in the National Assembly?

The question put forward was on whether the performance of legislative aides has enhanced legislative activities in the National Assembly. In response to this, existing body of knowledge underscored the importance of the legislative aides to legislative activities. Ayodele (2020) notes that legislative aides are silent contributors to the attainment of legislative mandates. Therefore, they are being seen in two distinctive areas by two different school of thought that captured their indispensability in legislative business. The first school of thought, which he termed the praise singers, see administrative staff and legislative aides as the engine room of the legislators, and servant's in-charge of legislative business (Suswan, 2006; Selhi, 1998).

Senator Humbert of the United State of America congress described legislative aides as “those who do the job and without them the job will not be done”.

The second school of thought do not just see legislative aides as servants but as inner members of the power game in the legislature (Malbin, 1980; McPherson, 1975; Alphen, 1977). Malbin (1980) view them as the “unelected representative” of the people and shadow law-makers in parliament. McPherson (1975) notes that legislative aides are power lovers who do not just ensure that their principals remain in power but also seek to win elections or influence public policies behind the scene. Alphen (1977) collaborated McPherson (1975) stated that legislative aides are the hidden power elite who manipulate the system to consolidate and hold on to power. Practical experiences in Nigeria attest to the views of this school of thought as some of the former legislative aides have transformed into law-makers and even governors. The current governor of Sokoto state and former speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal was an aide to Sen. Abdallah Wali (former Senate Majority Leader) between 1999-2003. The current deputy minority leader of the House, Hon. Toby Okechukwu was also an aide to Sen. Ike Ekweremadu, the list is endless.

This therefore means that these aides give-in their best in ensuring that law-makers succeed and are seen to be effective in legislative business in order to enable them to continue to lay hold onto power.

To further test how legislative aides contribute to legislative effectiveness, respondents were asked to air their views on whether the performance of Legislative Aides has enhanced legislative activities in the National Assembly. To properly understand this, the following questions were posed:

Table 13: Showing responses how the performance of legislative aides has enhanced legislative activities in the National Assembly.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Planning and coordination	16	12.4
Research, Writings/Reports and Documentation.	22	17.0
Communication	26	20.2
Lobbying and Relations	21	16.3
Committee activities	29	22.5
Constituency Office Management	15	11.6
Total	129	100

Sources: Field Survey 2022.

Table 13 above shows that the performance of legislative aides has enhanced legislative activities in the National Assembly in several ways. However, they have been more involved in committee activities (meetings, oversight visits, investigative hearings, etc.) with 22.5% of respondents pointing out that aides have been more involved in committee activities. This is closely followed by communication (20.2%), research, writing/reports and documentation (17.0%), lobbying and relations (16.3%). It also shows that constituency office management is the area aides have contributed the least in legislative activities in the National Assembly with 11.6%. This is followed by planning and coordination (12.4%) as area legislative aides have been least involved in steering activities in the National Assembly.

Research Question Four (4): Are there challenges associated with the responsibilities of the Legislative Aides of the National Assembly?

The question put forward to determine whether there are challenges associated with the responsibilities of the legislative aides of the National Assembly.

Table 14 below shows 93.1% of respondents affirming that there are challenges faced by legislative aides while a paltry 6.9% are of the view that there are no challenges. This confirms that legislative aides are constrained by challenges inhibiting the effective performance of their functions in the National Assembly.

Table 14: Responses as to whether there are challenges associated with the responsibilities of the legislative aides in the National Assembly.

Responses	Yes	No
Frequency	120	9
Percentage	93.1%	6.9%

Source: Fieldwork 2022.

To further determine what constitute these challenges faced by legislative aides in the discharge of their duties, respondents were asked to identify or mention these challenges. Table 15 below captures the list of challenges identified by respondents:

Table 15: captures a list of challenges being faced by legislative aides in the National Assembly

- i. Logistics challenges;
- ii. Poor remuneration and work incentive (Law-makers exploiting their aides);
- iii. Aides are not always exposed to adequate training to acquaint them with the rudiments and intricacies of legislative business;
- iv. Most Senators and Honorable Member do not allow or delegate assignments to their aides. Some of them even demean their aides by mistreating and talking-down on their aides;

- v. Some legislative aides appointed by law-makers lack the knowledge and willingness to perform their duties;
- vi. Poor planning and lack of legislative agenda/work-plan as well as the absence of laid chain of supervision or clear-cut job description/demarcation.

Source: Fieldwork 2022.

The above identified challenges were collaborated by Okereke (2021) and Ayodele (2020) when they listed the challenges faced by legislative aides in the National Assembly to include the following:

- a. Inadequate provision work tools;
- b. Lack of interest in legislative activities by some legislators and aides;
- c. Poor remuneration and work incentive;
- d. Poor planning and lack of legislative agenda/work-plan;
- e. Unwillingness to delegate responsibilities;
- f. Capacity issues;
- g. Time management; and
- h. Poor supervision and organization of office duties.

The National Assembly has witnessed several protests by legislative aides demanding either better working condition or payment of accumulated arrears of allowance (Vanguard, 13th April, 2021). That is serious indication that legislative aides suffer serious motivational challenge as *the worker is worthy of his wages* (these wages must be timely). Thus, whenever these wages are delayed, the aides get discouraged and distracted from performing their duties effectively. In Nigeria, the appointment of legislative aides is usually embroiled in the politics of patronage and appreciation of loyalty. This in turn adversely impact the quality of aides appointed to assist these law-makers.

Question N0. 4: What are the solutions to challenges associated to effective performance of legislative aides in the National Assembly?

Haven underscored the challenges associated to effective performance of legislative aides in the National Assembly, the study further attempted to find possible solutions to remedy the identified challenges. Therefore, respondents were asked to oblige this study possible and practical solutions to the challenges and their response are captured in table 16 below:

Table 16: Solutions to challenges associated with the effective performance by legislative aides.

- a. Proper and adequate remunerations for legislative aides to boost their morale to work;
- b. Logistics challenges should be addressed by availing aides good office/work environment, modern ICT equipment, office furniture, operational vehicles, etc.
- c. Law-makers and indeed NASC should prioritize the appointment of Aides with the requisite skills and requirements to foster effective discharge of responsibilities by these legislative aides. There are several Nigerian who can be classified as professional legislative aides due to their wealth of experience gathered over the years in the National Assembly;
- d. Regular capacity-building trainings for legislative aides should be prioritized to strengthen the capacity of these aides. NILDS has been doing that in recent times, but there is room for improvement;
- e. Legislators should begin to appreciate and delegate responsibilities more to their aides as an avenue to boost their confidence and improve their skills;
- f. Premium should be placed on planning and a clear-cut legislative agenda to guide both legislators and their aides in meeting the demands of legislative responsibilities.

Sources: Field Survey 2022.

5.0 Summary of Findings

The summary is basically on the responses of the respondents.

- i. The major findings reveals that the role of legislatives aides in the National Assembly cuts across planning/ coordination, research and report writing, communications, lobbying/relations, committee activities. They assist legislators to meet the demands of their offices through bill drafting and analysis, drafting motions and briefs of arguments, report writing, fixing meetings, committee activities, oversight visits and hearings, constituency relations, etc.
- ii. It found the performance of the National Assembly in general and the House of Representatives in particular is tied substantially to effectiveness of legislative aides. The 9th National Assembly has introduced 2,500 Bills (769 in Senate and 1,634 in the House of Representatives) out of which many have been passed and assent to by the president. Among is the Financial Act, 2021; the CAMA 2020, Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Act, 2019, Defence Intelligence Agency Civilian Pensions Board (Establishment) Act, 2019, National Biosafety Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2019, Petroleum Industry Act 2021, Climate Change Act, 2021. The National Assembly has also been instrumental to several pro-people interventions to cushion the effect of COVID-19 pandemic, strike actions embarked by labour in the education and health

sectors, to name few. Legislators alone cannot take the glory of these achievements as their aides are also an integral part of the entire process;

- iii. The research equally revealed that legislative aides have contributed no less profoundly to legislative activities in the National Assembly as pointed out above. They have also played their roles well such that some aides have graduated from being aides in past sessions to being legislators at various levels and elected into executive positions in Nigeria. Legislative aides have enhanced legislative activities in the National Assembly through bill drafting and analysis, writing of motions and briefs of argument, research and documentation, maintaining effective communication and attending to correspondences, lobbying of other law-makers to support their principals on issues of debate at plenary, committee activities, etc.
- iv. The research further found out that legislative aides are rated to have performed their duties effectively in the current 9th National Assembly as simple majority of respondents rated them very effective (50.4%), whereas 39.5% rated their performance average with a paltry 10.1% rating their performance poor. This is indicative that they have performed creditably well in the current session;
- v. The study equally found the challenges faced by legislative aides in performing their duties to include – logistics challenges, lack of interest in legislative activities by some legislators and aides, poor remuneration and work incentive, capacity issues, poor planning and lack of legislative agenda/work-plan, unwillingness to delegate responsibilities, etc.
- vi. The research also revealed that to properly address the identified challenges the following solutions will suffice:
 - a. Proper and adequate remunerations for legislative aides to boost their morale to work;
 - b. Logistics challenges should be addressed by availing aides good office/work environment, modern ICT equipment, office furniture, operational vehicles, etc.
 - c. Law-makers and indeed NASC should prioritize the appointment of Aides with the requisite skills and requirements to foster effective discharge of responsibilities by these legislative aides. There are several Nigerian who can be classified as professional legislative aides due to their wealth of experience gathered over the years in the National Assembly;
 - d. Regular capacity-building trainings for legislative aides should be prioritized to strengthen the capacity of these aides. NILDS has been trying in recent times, but there is still room for improvement; etc.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The legislature as the first arm of government is saddled with the tripartite mandate of law-making, overseeing the executive and representation. Legislators as peoples' representatives carryout public engagement functions as well as, speech making, and paper presentation, etc. aside their three main functions. Law-makers would not be able to effectively accomplish these tasks successfully without the help of a professional, resourceful, dedicated, committed, and loyal staff – the legislative aides. Thus, this study is undertaken to assess the performance of legislative aides and their contributions to legislative activities in the 9th session of the House of Representatives.

Findings from the study shows that these aides have contributed effectively to legislative activities in the 9th Assembly through research, communication, relations, documentation etc. The avalanche of Bills introduced, passed and assented into law as well as effective oversight of the MDAs under this regime are testaments to effective roles being played by legislative aides in boosting legislative activities in the National Assembly.

Although there are challenges inhibiting the effectiveness of legislative aides in the parliament, they have continued to flourish in the face of dearth tools, poor remuneration, capacity need, ill-treatments from their principals. This study is an attempt aimed at bringing to the fore the importance of legislative aides to the legislature and harp on the need to address identified challenges. In line with the above analysis, the study therefore recommends the following measures:

1. The National Assembly Service Commission (NASC) should prioritize competence and requisite skills in the appointment of legislative aides. Therefore, their appointment should not be seen as an opportunity or an instrument for appreciating political loyalist and patrons. Thus, legislators should not have control over the appointment of their aides in order to avoid bias and sentiments.
2. National Assembly should fashion out measures to recognize and reward excellence, hard-work, dedication and loyalty as a way of encouraging aides to put in their best performance.
3. The practice that after every session, law-makers would retire home with everything in their office is a bad culture. Therefore, National Assembly should ensure that tools used in the current Assembly are retained and augmented to ensure that legislative aides in the 10th National Assembly do not lack the needed tools to deliver on their duty.

4. When people with the needed experiences and skills are appointed, they perform their duties without fear, favour or molestation and can even stand-up to his/her right when a law-makers wants to demean his/her personality or cajole such aide into doing anything to the contrary.
5. Law-makers should understand that they are more or less generalists while their aides are professionals in various filed. Thus, they should discover theirs aides areas of strength and utilize them judiciously.
6. Effectiveness of legislators' performance depends on existing commitment and dedication of Legislative Aides. Thus, legislative aides should create working group (of like minds) that focuses more on key policy areas that principals' legislative interests and device effective ways of helping them deliver excellence in the legislature.
7. Frequent turnover of legislative aides limits institutional memories and weaken continuity of efforts and approaches. Thus, there is need to ensure that experienced aides are retained in order to retain their wealth of experience in the National Assembly;
8. Regular and adequate training for legislative aides is very critical to the success of the National Assembly. The current efforts of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) at ensuring that all aides are trained before the end of the 9th session should be sustained.

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