

EXECUTIVE DOMINANCE ON LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES IN ZAMFARA STATE'S 5TH ASSEMBLY

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Abstract

Nigeria's 65 years post-independence journey have been characterized by series of events that shapes and reshapes the country's political landscape. Notable among these events were civil war, military incursion, and multiple transitions from military to civilian administration. With the return of democracy in 1999, one of the arms of government that was hitherto suspended but revived was the legislative arm of government. Elections into the states and national assemblies were conducted and members were elected to make laws for the nation and their respective states. In Zamfara State, 24 Honourable members were elected to represent various constituencies in line with the provisions of section 90 of the 1999 constitution (as amended) of the federal Republic of Nigeria to make laws for the state. However, available records suggests that the Zamfara State 5th house of assembly did not operate with relative autonomy as contained in section 4, 5 and 6 of the Nigerian 1999 constitution (as amended) which shared powers among the three independent arms of government. This study dwells on the impact of the dominance of the executive arm of government over the legislative arm which affected the capacity of the legislature to carry out their constitutional mandate of law making, oversight function and representation. The study relying on the primary and secondary sources of data argues that despite the existence principle of checks and balances as enshrined in the Nigeria's constitution, the state executive arm has rendered the legislature into a mere rubber stamp so much that many people see it as an extension of the executive arm of government. The study recommends the independence of the legislature through reforms of the Nigerians political institutions.

Keywords: Legislative Processes; Executive Dominance; Political Parties; Democracy; Zamfara State

Introduction

In Nigeria, since the return of democratic governance in 1999, relations between the legislative and executive arms of

government have raised serious concern among scholars. At best, the relationship between the two arms of government has been the case of the old tale of an unholy alliance of strange

bedfellows (Tobi, & Adegami, 2020). Today, circumstances of our democratic or even political life is awash with the gory melodrama of spleen of lack of co-existence and understanding among these arms of government even though from all indications this was not the intent of foremost theoretical architects of modern democracy such as A.V Dicey and Baron the Montesquieu when they conceived the principle of checks and balances to serve as a guide for future democracies such as Nigeria (Kargbo, 2007). The principle of checks and balances as Kargbo observed, create connecting links among the three arms through empowering each arm to limit the powers of the other arms and create a balance of power among the three arms (Kargbo, 2007).

The principle of checks and balances and separation of power was therefore, designed to serve as a medium for not just constructive criticism but also for ensuring healthy working relationship that will facilitate political growth and development. The relationship between the executive and the legislature in the legislative and oversight processes is complex, yet dynamic and robust, with interdependent responsibilities and power-sharing among these two arms of government. The Constitution bestows on the executive the responsibility to draft policy in the context of a legal framework, which in essence gives effect to a “draft bill” which is then referred to parliament for consideration and deliberation. Likewise, the constitution bestows on the legislature the responsibility to pass legislation which the executive arm implements (Kopecky, 2004).

The legislature is an arm government that ensures that sound policies and laws are passed. Parliament’s role is to represent the people and to ensure government and the people operate under the Constitution. This is done through facilitating public involvement in the legislative process and having political oversight over the executive and the judiciary. The extent to which the legislative arm of government effectively fulfils this role depends on the separation and balance of power between itself and the executive. This balance of power can also shift, depending on the political will on the part of both the legislature and the executive.

Several factors are responsible for power relations, and dynamics between the legislature and executives. Saliu (2010), portrays the legislature as selfish politicians who help themselves with public resources either to pursue individual, constituency or political party’s interest and not national interest. On the other hand, the executive arm is largely made up of non-elected members, who do not seem to understand the needs of the people better.

This above assertion is predicated on the assumption that the parliament is made up of elected representatives who logically understand the needs of the people (Saliu, 2010). However, in the bid to enhance a healthy relationship between the legislature and executive, particularly on budgetary matters, the 1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), stipulated the duties and responsibilities of the two arms of government in sections 81-83 and 121-123 of the constitution for federal and state respectively.

However, the executive-legislative relationship in Nigeria often reflects a power imbalance, with the executive arm exerting dominance over the legislative process. This was evident in Zamfara State House of Assembly from 2015 to 2019. During this period, Governor Abdul'aziz Yari's administration significantly influenced the Assembly, largely because the governor and the majority of the lawmakers were members of the same political party, the AllProgressives Congress (APC). This political alignment often resulted in the Assembly serving more as an extension of the executive rather than an independent legislative body (Akintola, 2010).

This article investigates how executive dominance led to a weakened legislative role in lawmaking and oversight in the state. Often, the Assembly frequently passed bills initiated by the governor with little or no debate to ascertain its merit, while legislative proposals that did not align with the executive's agenda were often sidelined or rejected. The frequent attempt by Some Hon. Members to impeach the Speaker during this time was also a testament to the instability within the legislature, often driven by executive pressure (Adebo, 2009). These attempts further undermined legislative independence and continuity in governance. Furthermore, the Assembly's oversight function was compromised, as it failed to hold the executive accountable, especially regarding budgetary approvals and implementation (Tongs, Fagbadebo, & Alabi, 2023). The weak legislative checks on the executive resulted in a lack of transparency and poor governance in Zamfara State.

Conceptual Review on Legislature

Lafenwa (2007) defines legislature as people chosen by election to represent the constituent units and control government. Omoweh (2010), asserts that legislature is law-making, and policy influencing body in the democratic political system. Adebo (2009), affirms that legislature is derived from a claim that its members are representative of the political community, and decisions are collectively made according to complex procedures. The state of the legislature has been identified as the strongest predictors on the survival of every democratic development (Bassey, 2019). Ejibunu (2021), states that legislatures vary in design, structure, organization, operational procedures, and selection process as well as sizes, tenure of office and nature of meetings. The Legislature is the chief source of Law. It is the legislature which formulates the will of the people and of the state into laws and gives it a legal character (UNDP, 2003).

In a democracy, Legislators are most popularly elected. Legislators all over the world respond to and must attend to the demands and requests from their constituents. It is part of their job description. Legislators act as the people's representatives charged with law making and policy formulation functions. Collectively, legislators act as a check on the executive through oversight responsibilities (Abonyi, 2011).

Legislatures (Parliaments) are set up to represent the people and play central roles in national development and the sustenance of a constitutional democracy. Democracy depends on Legislatures for its vitality; they serve as the key political forum through which people's concerns

are voiced and interests are mediated. The Legislature is therefore uniquely and powerfully situated to frame the nation's laws and policies, and to ensure that the government is open, transparent and accountable to the people (Heywood, 2007).

The Legislative

Legislatures across the globe are not just arm of government; they play a key role in the overall governance process. These roles may include:

Power to Make Laws

Legislation is the primary and the most crucial role of the legislature. These laws may originate as private members bills, or they may originate from the executive branch (Ejibunu, 2021). Aiyede (2012), opine that laws made by the legislature must be in the interest of the general populace with the expectation of modifying peoples' behavior and response towards a given situation, be of good quality and self-sustaining. Abonyi (2011) assert that bills are examined and passed through various stages, and in the process this could be altered by addition or deletion. However, the inputs of the legislature, the attitude of the executive and other factors such as concessions to the opposition and other groups against some aspects of proposed laws greatly reduce the legislative powers to that of a mere deliberative assembly. Heywood (2007), stated that the twentieth century witnessed a progressive weakening of legislation power in the form of a decline of legislatures. This situation had reduced many legislative assemblies to mere "talking shops" that do little more than rubber-stamp decisions that had effectively been made elsewhere.

Legislative Oversight Powers

The oversight function is a major component of the activities of modern legislature irrespective of the form of government in practice. Saliu (2010), indicate that legislative body takes active role in understanding and monitoring the performance of the executive arm and its agencies. It is described as surveillance on the activities of the executive arm. The legislature oversees government affairs and holds the person responsible for any actions and omissions (Akintola, 2011). Aluko (2010), reveals that legislative oversight cross-checks the executive by examining the activities of some chief executive, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) of government.

The commonwealth parliamentary association (2002) asserted that the principle behind the legislative oversight was to ensure that public policy was administered in accordance with the legislative intent. The legislative function does not end only on the passage of bills but includes following or monitoring the activities for which the legislation was made. It is the responsibility of the legislature to ensure that such laws are being implemented effectively. The representative looks diligently in all the affairs of government, the eyes and voice to the will of its constituents (Awofeso, 2020). The oversight function of the legislature exists as a corollary to the law-making process. For instance, the legislature controls the executive in financial behaviour and appointments of key officials such as ambassadors, ministers/commissioners amongst others. Lafenwa (2007), assert that effective legislature in governance enhances

transparency, accountability, efficiency and fidelity in government.

Power of Representation

Representation is the central role of the legislature; the complexity of modern administration has made it impossible for the people to run the affairs of the state as it was in the early Greek City-States (Kargbo, 2007). Legislative institution is a mechanism in which the population, special interests and diverse territories are represented and guaranteed in the scheme of things. Awotokun, (1998) argued that representative function provides a platform where citizens and different groups are opportune to have a say in governance. This gives different groups in a society or groups the opportunity to articulate and advance their interests and concerns. Salu (2010), states that the fulcrum of a legislature articulate and aggregate diverse interests of the represented constituencies into the policy process. The power of representation enhances the legitimacy of public policy, reduces alienation and reduces estrangement between government and the governed to enhance stability in the system (Adebo, 1999).

The Executive

The executive, according to Heywood (2007), is the irreducible core of government. Similarly, Okoosi-Simbine (2010) sees the executive as occupying a very crucial position in the administration of a state. According to her, the Executive in all democratic systems exists to, first and foremost decide on the final choice of policies to be submitted to the legislative assembly for approval; secondly, it is the business of the Executive to see to it that the public services fully adhere to that

policy as intended by the legislature; and thirdly, it ensures that it delimits and coordinates the activities of the different departments of state. It is on this score that Puke (2010) sees the Executive as responsible for providing good and responsible governance for the state. Edosa (2010), also defined the Executive as the implementation organ of government. They, noted that from ages, making and enforcing binding rules and allocations through the Executive have been the primary functions of government. They however, argued that while political structures have existed for centuries without separate agencies formaking laws, state structures without Executive organ will be hard to come by. This position is also supported by Heywood (2007) when he affirms that political systems could operate without constitutions, assemblies, judiciaries, and even political parties, but cannot survive without an Executive arm to formulate government policy and ensure that they are implemented. Similarly, Ranney (2013), in looking at the Executive, noted that it is the arm of government that is basically concerned with the application of the authoritative rules and policies of any society. It is the Executive which formulates and then implements various policies. Gbervbie (2013), however, observed both the broad and collective perspective of the Executive as he sees the Executive organ as embracing the aggregate or totality of all the functionaries and agencies which are concerned with the execution of the will of the state as that will has been formulated and expressed in terms of law.

The foregoing definition suggests that the executive encompasses the entire governmental organization. Thus, tax

collectors, inspectors, commissioners, policemen and perhaps the officers of the Army, Navy and Airforce are a part of the executive. Similarly, Aluko (2010), lends his credence and argues that the executive is the aggregate or totality of all functionaries and agencies, which are concerned with the execution of the will of the state. Similarly, Heywood (2007) defines the executive as the branch of government that is responsible for the execution or implementation of laws and policies made by the legislature. He sees the Executive to extend from the head of government to the members of the enforcement agencies and includes both the ministers and the civil servants. He categorizes the executive into political executive and bureaucratic executive. This, according to him, highlights the difference between politicians and the civil servants, and more broadly, politics and administration. In his final analysis Puke (2010) posits that more commonly, the term Executive is now used in a narrower sense to describe the smaller body of decision-makers who take overall responsibility for the direction and coordination of government policy. Puke (2010) also sees the Executive from the broad perspective as he defines the Executive as the arm of government responsible for implementing laws made by the legislature. While Puke (2010) defines the Executive from the broad perspectives, he however equates the functions of the Executive with that of the Chief Executive – the President. This makes the functions of the executive rather ambiguous because the term “President” may not have the same responsibility in all political system.

What does the Literature Say about Executive Interference in Legislative Process?

The functions of the legislature are done through the legislative process (Okoosi-Simbine, 2010). The examination of the extent to which the legislature is independent of executive's interference in its legislative process is therefore, an investigation of the extent to which the legislature is able to perform its constitutional functions without undue interference of the executive. These legislative processes include internal procedures and business of the House, debates and passage of bills, parliamentary finance, investigation process, scrutiny and approval of nominees for political positions, consideration and amendment and approval process of appropriation bills.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) provides for the separation of the personnel, powers and functions of the executive and the legislature. The separation of powers is understood to be a way of controlling the exercise of state power by fragmenting it among the three different institutions - the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. This separation of powers is the basic principle of the presidential system of government adopted in Nigeria since 1979 and enshrined in sections 4, 5 and 6 of the 1999 Constitution. By the general principle of checks and balances, however, the powers are distinct but not wholly separate. Each of the powers designated a specific sphere of action and there are situations when one power has a partial agency in the operation of another. The whole essence is to provide for balance of power among the organs of government so

that no arm of government is superior to the other; neither is any subordinate to the other. Each organ is independent within its own sphere of influence. As noted by Obi (2020), however, the principle of separation of powers is abrogated when a power is exercised by a branch of the government which possesses a different power.

By the principle of separations of powers, the legislature is independent of the executive in performing its constitutionally specified functions and in conducting its internal affairs. A good legislature accordingly, has to be relatively independent of the executive and participate in policy initiation rather than being a rubber stamp of executive proposal.

Furthermore, one of the basic principles of a democratic system is the inherent right of the legislature to regulate its own affairs by determining the pattern and procedure to be followed in the conduct of legislative business (Okoosi-Simbine, 2010).

Independence

of the legislature from executive control is therefore, critical to the performance of the legislature's constitutional functions of citizens' representation through legislations and checking executive excesses, arbitrariness and abuse of governmental power. It is central to democratic governance.

It is in the view of this that Section 60 and 101 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) provide that the nation's legislative assemblies (National Assembly and State House of Assembly) shall have powers to regulate its own procedure, including the procedure for summoning and recess of the House. It is therefore, not only a duty but also a right of the

legislature to exercise its power independently without executive meddlesomeness.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Underpinning

Theoretically, this work relies on Montesquieu theory of separation of power. The relationship between the executive and the legislature is a classical topic in parliamentary literature. The principle of the Separation of powers as a theoretical framework provides a useful guide to the distribution of legislative and executive powers. Nevertheless, when interpreted too rigidly and applied universally, it leads to misconception rather than enlightenment. As noted by King (2009), the Montesquieu theory of the separation of powers, though used widely in the study of interactions between the executive and the legislature; it does not reflect the rise of political parties and the transformation of politics toward party democracies.

King (2009) while admitting the clarity and comprehensiveness of theory of theory of separation of powers in explaining legislature-executive relations, the fact that this theory was based British parliamentary system makes the theory faulty and of limited applicability. While the theory has been used as a theoretical framework for the study of inter-branch relationships in parliamentary democratic states in Europe, the political-cum-economic experience in other continents, such as in Africa, makes the theory inadequate to explain the intrigues and dynamisms of legislative-executive relationships.

Methodology

Qualitative method was deployed to conduct this study. This is because it is suitable in capturing the 'fabric of global phenomena that include complex interactions of culture, institutions, societal norms and government regulations, among a few concerns.

Research Design

The study utilized a case study research design. The essence of adopting a case study design lies in its ability to explore the diverse experiences of different stakeholders that are critical to the study. This approach has captured the complexity and uniqueness of executives-legislative relations as a phenomenon, without the risk of oversampling or making broad generalizations.

Sources of Data

The study relies on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was generated through in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders on the Executive-legislative relations in the Zamfara State. The secondary data was generated from relevant documents from the State House of Assembly (order paper and votes and proceedings) and State Executive Council extract, the constitution of Nigeria (1999 as amended). The data derived from these sources was critically analyzed in relation to the objectives of the study.

Method/Instrument of Data Collection

This study adopted in-depth interview as the major instrument of data collection. The choice of this method is based on the fact that it offers a deeper understanding of the phenomena and provide detailed

information that might be challenging to capture through quantitative approach.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected through the in-depth interviews is analyzed using thematic method of data analysis, particularly Braun and Clarke's approach. The reason for the adoption of this method is because it is theoretically flexible for identifying, describing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within a data set in great detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It fits well with any qualitative study which attempts to explore complex research issue such as Executive-Legislative relation. This method enables the researcher to carefully pick up the only necessary information and avoid obscuring the necessary data. The information obtained is logically presented and analyzed to provide first-hand information that gives analytic support to the relevant literature reviewed.

Population and Sample Size of the Study

The population of this study includes the major stakeholders in the executive and legislative arms of government in Zamfara State, Nigeria. These stakeholders are former Honorable members House of Assembly, former Honorable Commissioners, former Honorable Special Advisers, former Clerks of the House of Assembly, Secretary of the Zamfara State executive council, Staff of the Zamfara State House of Assembly, senior academics on democracy and democratization, and members of the civil society organizations. On the whole, a sample size of twenty-five (25) respondents were selected purposively and interviewed.

Data presentation and analysis of the result

The research relies mainly on secondary sources of data and in-depth interviews to collect data from the target respondents. The key objective of the in-depth interviews is to complement the data derived from the secondary sources to interrogate the relationship between the two arms of Government in Zamfara State and the extent of Executive Dominance on the Legislature in the State. Specifically, the data covers 2015-2019. The interview questions were designed to unveil whether or not the executive exerts more power and influence over the legislature especially in terms of law making, Oversight function

and representation in Zamfara State. More importantly, to suggest a more effective approach to reduce the negative effect of the dominance and promote checks and balances. To address the main and rival research question/hypotheses, a total of 25 respondents were selected purposively in the following order; 7 former Honorable members from the 5th Assembly (four Principal officers and three Honorable Members), 3 former Commissioners, 2 former Clerks to the House, 1 Secretary Executive Council, 5 Staff of the House of Assembly, 5 Senior Academics on democracy and democratization and 2 Senior Executives of the Civil Society Organization (CSOs) in Zamfara State.

Table 1: Six steps framework adopted for thematic analysis of the data collected

Step	Item	Activity
Step-1	Data Familiarity	The first step in any qualitative analysis is reading, and re-reading the transcripts. In this stage the researcher becomes very familiar with the entire body of data collected through in-depth interview. With the aid of notes, every piece of raw data generated from the fieldwork was translated, recorded and transcribed.
Step-2	Generation of initial Codes	In this phase, all the data was organized in a meaningful and systematic way. At this stage, coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning. At this stage, coding and the method was determined by the researcher's perspective and research questions.
Step-3	Search for themes	A pattern that captures significant or interesting events about the data and/or research question was analyzed. As Braun & Clarke (2006) explain, there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme. At this stage, the study developed preliminary themes by considering the main research objectives questions, and interesting facts about the data that were generated through the in-depth interview.
Step- 4	Review of themes	During this phase we reviewed, modified and

		developed the preliminary themes that we identified instep 3 by including what issignificant to the objectives of the study and exclude what is irrelevant to the researchobjectives and assumptions of the study.
Step-5	Define themes	This is the final refinement of the themes and the aim was to identify the essence of what each theme is about.’(Braun & Clarke, 2006).Here, with the aid of a thematic map, we defined and refined the themes to identify whateach theme/subtheme is all about, therelationship to one another and what narrative best explains the extent of Executive Dominance and the law-making process in Zamfara State House of Assembly (2015-2019.
Step-6	Write-up	Usually the end-point of research is some kind of report, often a journal article or dissertation. At the final stage, the study concluded by deriving some research findings, outlined someuseful recommendations, and set a furtherresearch agenda

Table 2: Preliminary themes derived from interview transcripts

1. Theme: Executive Dominance and Legislative Process in Zamfara State House of Assembly (2015-2019) Codes: - Excessive power control - Master-servant relationship - Party affiliation - Lack of legislative independence - Marriage of inconvenience - Rubber stamp	2. Theme: The Effects of Executive on Legislative Independence and Effectiveness in Lawmaking and Oversight Functions Codes: - Lack of freedom - Bills rejection - Executive interference - Executive pressure - Executive dominance - Ruling party
3. Theme:Implications of Executive Dominance on Good Governance inZamfara State (2015-2019) Codes: - Lack of transparency and Accountability - Development of effective public	4. Theme: effect executive dominance transparency and accountability within the government of Zamfara State Codes: - Lack of supremacy of legislature - Power Compromise - Public disgrace

policies - Obstructed major policy reforms - Issues on welfare - corruption - Security	- Bills imposition - Financial influence
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Table 3: Reviewed themes derive from step 4 above

5. Theme: Executive Dominance and Legislative Process in Zamfara State House of Assembly (2015-2019) Codes: - Excessive power control - Master-servant relationship - Party affiliation - Lack of legislative independence - Marriage of inconvenience - Rubber stamp	6. Theme: The Effects of Executive on Legislative Independence and Effectiveness in Lawmaking and Oversight Functions Codes: - Lack of freedom - Bills rejection - Executive interference - Executive pressure - Executive dominance - Ruling party
Theme: Implications of Executive Dominance on Good Governance in Zamfara State (2015-2019) Codes: - Lack of transparency and Accountability - Development of effective public policies - Obstructed major policy reforms - Issues on welfare - corruption - Security	7. Theme: effect executive dominance transparency and accountability within the government of Zamfara State Codes: - Lack of supremacy of legislature - Power Compromise - Public disgrace - Bills imposition - Financial influence

Defining Themes

The raw data presented in tables connotes a consensus among all the categories of the respondents that there is executive dominance in Law Making, oversight and representation in the 5th Zamfara State House of Assembly, particularly imposition of House leadership and witch

haunting oppositions. It further revealed the hostility between the Executive organs and the legislative arm. The argument is what constitutes the dominance and exploitation? In other words, why is legislative arm deficient in exercising its constitutional mandate? What specifically fuels the excessive dominance of the legislative arm? Which actor (s) is

responsible for the dominance? What is the source of hostility between the Executive and legislative arms? These questions and many more must be addressed before an objective perspective can emerge.

Summary and Discussion of Major Findings

This study focused on the analysis of Executive Dominance and the Law-Making Process in Nigeria; A Case study of Zamfara State House of Assembly 2015-2019. Specifically, the study interrogated the extent of dominance of the executive arm of government over the legislature especially in law making process, 2015-2019. The most interesting fact about the raw data generated through an in-depth interview was the consensus among the three key stakeholders that there exists asymmetric information between the Staff of the House, senior academics, and senior executives of civil society organizations. However, the stakeholders were divergent on what was responsible for interplay of the information asymmetry. For instance, the senior academics accused the executive arm headed by the Governor of being unpatriotic by using the resources at their disposal to exert and wield more power and influence over the other arms especially the legislature. On the other hand, the Staff and other legislative aid blamed government in effectiveness in policy formulation as the main factor responsible for the information asymmetry. This exclusion and neglect may perhaps explain the genesis of asymmetric information and dominance between executive and the legislature. For instance, some of the former Honourable members

interviewed confessed to the fact that they were induced with tokens and other incentives to succumb to certain government requests because they have little alternative means of livelihood. This suggests that the inducement of former Honourable Members may not be unconnected with the rising social problems and neglect by the government. In addition, high levels of poverty, illiteracy, poor government institutions, weak political parties, may have contributed significantly to the hopelessness of the former legislatures and perhaps a reason to succumb and become an appendage of the Executive.

Conclusion

The legislative activities of the 5th Zamfara State House of Assembly (2015–2019) were significantly shaped by the overarching dominance of the executive arm of government. During this period, the legislature often operated as an appendage of the executive, lacking the autonomy and institutional strength required to perform its constitutional functions effectively. This dynamic was reflective of a broader trend in Nigerian subnational politics, where governors exert disproportionate influence over state legislatures.

In Zamfara State, this executive dominance was evident in the rubber-stamping of executive bills, the weak oversight of government policies and finances, and the inability of the Assembly to challenge or amend major executive decisions. The close relationship between the executive and the leadership of the assembly largely driven by party loyalty and patronage created an environment in which legislative independence was severely compromised. As a result, laws

were often enacted not through rigorous debate or public engagement but through executive directives. The consequences of this imbalance were far-reaching. The lawmaking process became more of a formality than a meaningful democratic exercise. Executive decisions went unchecked, and the interests of constituents were often sidelined. Furthermore, the suppression of internal dissent within the Assembly discouraged diverse viewpoints and undermined representative governance.

To correct these issues and improve democratic governance in Zamfara State, it is necessary to implement reforms that promote legislative independence, transparency, and accountability. This includes granting the Assembly financial autonomy, enhancing the capacity of lawmakers through training and research support, and promoting internal democracy within political parties. Additionally, civic engagement and media oversight should be encouraged to hold both the legislature and the executive accountable.

Recommendations

1. The Zamfara State House of Assembly should be granted full financial autonomy to reduce its dependence on the executive arm for funding and to enable it to function independently.
2. Legislative procedures and standing orders should be reviewed and enforced to empower the Assembly to carry out its oversight responsibilities without undue influence from the executive.
3. Continuous training and capacity-building programs should be organized for legislators and their aides to improve their understanding of constitutional roles, legislative drafting, and policy analysis.
4. A research and policy analysis unit should be established within the Assembly to provide technical support and enable evidence-based lawmaking.
5. The House of Assembly should amend its rules to safeguard the rights of minority and opposition members, allowing them to voice dissenting opinions without fear of suspension or reprisal.
6. Cross-party cooperation should be encouraged through the formation of bipartisan committees to promote unity and reduce executive manipulation of legislative divisions.
7. Public hearings and stakeholder consultations should be made mandatory for all significant legislative proposals to enhance transparency and democratic participation in the lawmaking process.
8. An independent Ethics and Privileges Committee should be created to objectively investigate cases of misconduct or abuse of power in the legislature, including interference by the executive.
9. Political parties should be reformed to practice internal democracy, ensuring that legislative candidates are selected based on merit and party consensus rather than executive imposition or godfatherism.
10. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be empowered to conduct free and fair

elections that allow the emergence of truly representative lawmakers.

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