



Assessment of the Channels of Communication for Public Participation in Law Making Process of the 9th National Assembly, Nigeria (2019-2023)

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Abstract. The study unveiled the effectiveness of the channels of communication for public participation in law making process of the 9th National Assembly. The main objective was to assess the effectiveness of the channels of communication of the Nigeria 9th National Assembly. The study was anchored on Deliberative Democratic Theory which helps to understand the quality inclusiveness, and democratic integrity of the country's law-making process, particularly with the citizen. The study adopted survey method and Krejci and Morgan 1920 formula to select 380 respondents in Abuja metropolis. The respondents were purposely selected to allow people with in-depth knowledge participate in the survey. The study however, discovered that there is troubling narrative about the legislative process during Nigeria 9th Assembly, particularly covering public participation in Law-making. The study further discovered that none of the channels for public participation was effective in disseminating information. Law-making process channels like television, radio, newspaper, town hall meeting, and social media were not effectively utilised to communicate to the public during the law-making process. More so, several challenges were discovered on the hindrance to effective public participation in the law-making process such as lack of awareness and information about legislative procedure, ethnic complicity, technical language use during the law-making process, lack of internet, partisan and lack of accountability, constitute challenges to the public participation in law-making process in the country. However, the study recommended that the National Assembly should adopt more inclusive and transparent mechanism for public participation and media channels should be effectively utilised to reach out to the public.

Keywords: Civic Education, 9th Assembly, Channels of Communication, Public Participation, Law Making Process.

1. Introduction

Law-making process serves as the pathway by which the collective desires, needs, and aspirations of the people are formalized into binding rules. Through legislative deliberations, consultations, and approvals, public interests are carefully shaped into statutes that reflect societal values and priorities. Ultimately, this process ensures that governance is based on the consent of the governed and provide a legal framework that organizes and regulates social behaviour. As observed by Oni, Olanrewaju and Deinde-Adedeji (2019), the law-making process is a vital mechanism through which the will and aspirations of the people are translated into enforceable regulations and statutes that govern society. It is crucial for establishing a just and equitable society, protecting individual rights, promoting economic growth and maintaining public order and safety (Audu, 2021). In this regard, the law-making process can be viewed as upholding the principle of democracy, enabling laws that uphold the rights and values of the populace while adapting to the ever-changing dynamics of the modern world. The foundation of democracy is the belief that every person has an equal right to participate in decisions that impact their life (Fashagba, 2011; Luqman & Ojo, 2024). The law-making process thus, embodies transparency, representation, and active participation of the people, serving as a cornerstone of a just and equitable society. Active participation of the people in

the law-making process ensures that people have a voice in the decisions that concern their lives (Irabor & Irabor, 2016; Amusan, Saka & Ahmed, 2017). In this regards, public participation is pivotal to law making process in a democratic polity (Amusan, Jegede & Saka, 2017).

Public participation in the law-making process is a fundamental principle of democratic governance, ensuring that citizens have a voice in the laws and policies that affect them (Aris & Salman, 2020). Public participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance and plays a vital role in shaping laws and policies that reflect the will and interests of the people (Aris & Salman, 2020). While challenges exist, efforts to enhance and institutionalize public participation in the law-making process are essential for promoting inclusive and responsive governance. Public Participation involves engaging the public in various stages of the law-making process, providing them with opportunities to contribute their perspectives, insights, and feedback. As averred by Ghai (2001), public participation in the law-making process embodies the democratic principle of governance by consent, ensuring that laws reflect the collective needs, values, and beliefs of the citizenry (Nwogwugwu, & Ajayi, 2015). The imperative of public participation in the law-making process is succinctly encapsulated by Wardana, Sukardi and Salman (2023) when they asserted that participation from the general public in the law-making process is an essential component that must be taken into account during the legislative process and is essential to the operation of laws in a democratic polity. Public Participation involves citizens through mechanisms like public hearings, town hall meetings, online consultations, and surveys to obtain their input on legislation and policy decisions. It strengthens democratic governance and also enhances the quality and legitimacy of laws and policies, making them more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. In this regard, public participation in the law-making process is a crucial aspect of democratic governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and legitimacy in the development and enactment of laws (Wardana, Sukardi & Salman, 2023).

In Nigeria, citizen participation in the law-making process is primarily governed by the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution (Constitution, 1999; Audu, 2021). The Nigerian Constitution establishes the National Assembly, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Members of the National Assembly are elected by Nigerian citizens through the electoral process (Constitution, 1999). This allows citizens to participate in the selection of their

representatives who, in turn, play a crucial role in making and amending laws (Oni, Olanrewaju, & Deinde-Adedeji, 2019). The Nigerian National Assembly often holds public hearings on important bills and legislative matters. These hearings provide a platform for citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to present their views and opinions on proposed legislation. It allows for direct input from the public and ensures transparency in the legislative process. Besides, Nigerian citizens have the constitutional right to petition the National Assembly. This means that citizens can submit petitions concerning issues they want the National Assembly to address. While this may not directly result in the making of new laws, it can draw the attention of legislators to specific concerns (Saka & Bakare, 2019). In addition, the Nigerian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, which allows citizens to voice their opinions and concerns, including those related to legislation. This freedom enables citizens to engage in public discourse and advocate for changes in the law (Adegbami, 2023). It is on the basis of this background information that this study investigates the extent of public participation in the law-making process of the National Assembly with particular focus on the 9th National Assembly.

Several studies have been conducted in respect of the legislature, its constitutional powers in a democratic polity (Mbaya, Tella, & Adole, 2013; Ekeyi, 2021; Audu, 2021; Oni & Dele-Dada, 2022; Aigbokhae, 2022; Adegbami, 2023; Dubakeme, Folarin & Oni, 2023). Few studies are in the area of public participation in the legislative process. Lack of adequate studies on public participation in the law-making process of the legislature is therefore, an obvious gap in literature which is the thrust of this study. This study intends to fill this gap in knowledge as it aims to unravel the intricacies of public participation in the law-making process of the legislature, offering valuable insights that pave the way for a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable democratic governance system. Meanwhile, in a democratic society, citizen involvement in the lawmaking process is fundamental to ensuring that legislation reflects the will and needs of the populace. It fosters transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within the legislative system. In recognition of the fundamentals of public participation in decision making process, developed countries such as Ireland, France, and Switzerland establish credible mechanisms that allow direct public involvement in shaping legislation (Ebbesson, 2007; Rose-Ackerman & Perroud, 2012; Kübler, 2024).

The return to democratic government in 1999 after decades of authoritarian rule generated high expectations that citizens would finally play an active role in shaping laws that affect their lives (Irabor & Irabor, 2016; Kolapo & Luqman, 2021). To this end, the 1999 Constitution established a bicameral National Assembly and state legislatures, enshrining formal avenues for public participation including public hearings, town-hall meetings, petitions, committee engagements, online platforms, citizen assemblies and even referenda, while also guaranteeing voting rights for every Nigerian over 18 (Constitution, 1999; Audu, 2021; Wardana, Sukardi & Salman, 2023). As noted by Irvin and Stansbury (2004) and Kim & Lee (2017), effective public participation channels are pivotal for ensuring that laws and policies reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. Despite these enabling legal framework and channels, actual public involvement in the law-making process remains low, and persistent gaps between citizen input and substantive legislative influence raise questions about the effectiveness of these channels (Audu, 2021). The low involvement of the citizens in the law-making process despite these avenues and structures for public participation and the academic debate over the effectiveness issues, demands empirical research to assess how participatory mechanisms function in practice, identify barriers to engagement and evaluate lawmakers' responsiveness to public input.

1.1 Research Objectives

- To investigate the level of public participation in the law-making process of the 9th National Assembly;
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the channels for public participation in law making process of the 9th National Assembly;
- To find out the challenges affecting public participation in law-making process of the Nigeria 9th National Assembly.

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 Public Participation and Lawmaking

According to Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2015), the public is comprised of several stakeholders who hold different perspectives and interests over a topic. To ensure fair treatment, meaningful involvement, and social inclusion of all people, regardless of race, colour, national origin, sexual orientation, or income, the input should be gathered from a wide spectrum of stakeholder interests to carry out meaningful public participation. This will result in a wide range of views and concerns. It is therefore the responsibility of the

sponsoring agency to strike a balance among these perspectives and concerns, and to communicate the decisions to the public in a way that clarifies how these perspectives were taken into consideration. In this view, Nabatchi & Leighninger (2015) adds that to engage in meaningful public participation, it is necessary to solicit public input at particular moments in the decision-making process and on those particular problems when such input has the potential to help shape the decision or action that is being taken.

Kamlage and Nanz (2017) define public participation as various channels through which members of the general public voice their opinions and, ideally, have some level of influence over a variety of political, economic, managerial, or other social issues. According to Van Deth (2014), political participation is the active involvement of individuals in the political process, including activities such as voting, attending political rallies, joining political groups, and engaging in political conversations. De Piccoli & Rollero (2010) submit that any process that directly involves the public in the decision-making process and takes into account all of the public's input while making that choice can be considered to be an instance of public participation. For Denhardt & Denhardt (2015), public participation is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing activity. It is made up of a series of actions and activities that are carried out by a sponsoring organization over the course of a project's whole existence to both inform the public and get input from them. According to Giannetti (2017), public participation is an essential component of democratic societies since it enables citizens to communicate their preferences, exert influence over decision-making, and hold their representatives accountable for their actions. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that public participation involves the active engagement of citizens through various channels to express their views and influence decisions on political, economic, and social matters. It is an ongoing, structured process that values public input and seeks to inform and empower communities throughout decision-making. Public participation is fundamental to democracy, fostering accountability, responsiveness, and shared governance.

Law making on the other hand, refers to the procedural and deliberative process involved in the creation and formulation of legislation. In its most fundamental form, it serves as the foundation of governance (Sanyaolu, Sanyaolu & Segun, 2017). In contemporary democratic societies, the process of creating legislation is mostly carried out by legislative bodies, which operate at several levels of governance, including local, regional, and national tiers. The

legislative bodies are responsible for formulating laws that are deemed suitable for their respective levels of authority, and these laws possess the power to compel compliance among individuals and entities falling under their jurisdictions (Mikva, Lane, Gerhardt & Hemel, 2022). These governing bodies are subject to the influence of lobbyists, pressure organizations, and occasionally partisan concerns. However, the ultimate accountability of the legislators lies with the voters who elected them, assuming the system is functioning as intended. The allocation of public monies by the government is a component of the legislative process, as in many countries, the budget is established through legal means (Mikva et al., 2022).

Although, the enactment of laws primarily falls under the jurisdiction of the legislative body, other governmental entities also play a role in this procedural undertaking. The executive and legislative branches of government are involved in the process of lawmaking (Aman et al. 2020). The government assumes responsibility for the majority of bills and exercises varying degrees of influence over the legislative process. The executive authority of the state has the prerogative to affix their signature to a legislative act or exercise the power of veto. The constitutionality of the adopted statute can be subject to review by the judiciary. If a law is in effect, it signifies that all branches of the government have reached a consensus over its substance. The state exercises a greater degree of influence over the legislative process of enacting laws compared to other sources (Aman et al., 2020). According to Zander (2015), the process of law-making involves the transformation of an initial idea into a legally binding statute. The law encompasses various forms, sometimes referred to as sources, including legislation enacted by legislative bodies, orders and instructions issued by executive agencies, judicial precedents, and legal conventions. Each source of law possesses unique characteristics in the process of law-making.

3. Theoretical Perspective

3.1 Deliberative Democracy Theory

Deliberative democracy Theory was propounded by Jurgen Habermas in 1996 to provide a powerful theoretical lens for analyzing and evaluating the involvement of the public in the legislative functions of the National Assembly. At its core, deliberative democracy argues that legitimate laws and policies emerge not simply through the aggregation of votes but through processes of inclusive, rational, and transparent deliberation among citizens (Tutui, 2015). The theory emphasizes the importance of citizens

discussion, reasoning, and mutual understanding in the process of democratic decision-making (Olson, 2014). The theory also posits that decision-making should arise from open and inclusive dialogue rather than elite control. Unlike traditional forms of democracy that often focus on voting and the aggregation of preferences, deliberative democracy holds that the legitimacy of laws and policies stems from the public reasoning behind them (Levy & Orr, 2016). Although, the roots of deliberative democracy theory can be traced back to classical thinkers such as Socrates and Aristotle, who emphasized civic dialogue in public life, the modern formulation of the theory emerged in the 1980s (Markiewicz, 2020). A key figure in this development is Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher and sociologist. In his works, especially *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) and *Between Facts and Norms* (1992), Habermas argued that democratic legitimacy arises from communicative action, dialogue among citizens aimed at reaching mutual understanding rather than advancing private interests (Chriss, 2022). Other important proponents of the deliberative democracy theory include John Rawls, whose 1993 work; *Political Liberalism* introduced the idea of “public reason” as a foundation for democratic legitimacy (Krugger, 2016).

The theory of deliberative democracy rests on a number of key assumptions. First, it assumes that individuals are capable of engaging in rational discourse and, of setting aside personal biases to consider the common good. Second, it presupposes equality among participants, ensuring that everyone has an equal voice and opportunity to influence decisions. Third, the theory assumes that legitimate decision-making requires open and inclusive dialogue, rather than simple majority rule or elite control. It also assumes that people can revise their preferences through exposure to different viewpoints and reasoned argument. Lastly, deliberative democracy assumes that deliberation is best conducted in settings that are transparent and accessible to the public (Neblo, 2019). Deliberative democracy also highlights the importance of institutional design in facilitating meaningful participation. Mechanisms such as citizen assemblies, public consultations, and participatory budgeting are practical tools that can support deliberative processes in modern democracies (Hammond, 2019).

Despite its appeal, deliberative democracy has not gone without criticism. A common critique is that it is overly idealistic and unrealistic in its expectations of citizens. In practice, people may not be willing or able to engage in sustained, rational discourse, especially in politically polarized environments like Nigeria. Furthermore, some critics argue that deliberation can

mask power imbalances. Those with better education, rhetorical skills, or social standing may dominate discussions, while others remain unheard (Dryzek, et al.2017). There is also concern that deliberative processes can be time-consuming and inefficient, placing heavy demands on participants. Critics such as Shapiro have argued that while deliberative democracy may work in small settings, it is not scalable to large, complex societies (Curato, Hammond & Min, 2019). Another practical concern is that deliberative mechanisms are often symbolic; they may be used by policymakers to create an illusion of public engagement while the final decisions remain unchanged. Strategic behaviour by participants, pretending to be open-minded while secretly pursuing fixed interests, is also a potential limitation.

Applying Deliberative Democracy theory to the workings of a legislative body like Nigeria's National Assembly helps expose the quality, inclusiveness, and democratic integrity of the country's lawmaking processes, particularly with respect to how it engages citizens. In the context of Nigeria, the National Assembly, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives plays a central role in crafting legislation that governs all aspects of national life. According to the ideals of deliberative democracy, this legislative role must not be limited to elite or closed-door processes. Instead, it should be open to robust citizen input and public reasoning. From this perspective, public participation is not merely a "tokenistic ritual" or a procedural requirement; it is an essential component of democratic legitimacy. Citizens must have opportunities to voice their concerns, propose alternatives, and engage with lawmakers in a manner that influences the outcome of legislative debates and decisions.

Moreover, deliberative democracy theory demands that decisions be made on the basis of reasoned arguments rather than political patronage, elite capture, or ethnic and religious considerations. When the National Assembly considers public input in the course of lawmaking, the quality of that engagement, how seriously it takes public reasoning and justifications, becomes a measure of its democratic health. In practice, public hearings in Nigeria are sometimes perfunctory, with limited opportunity for genuine interaction between lawmakers and citizens. Often, civil society organizations and a few elite interest groups dominate participation, leaving out the voices of marginalized communities, grassroots organizations, and everyday citizens. This undermines the assumption of equal participation and mutual respect central to deliberative democracy.

Furthermore, deliberative democracy theory stresses the need for institutional arrangements that facilitate meaningful public involvement. In applying this to the National Assembly, the structure and openness of parliamentary committees and the use of digital technologies to gather feedback, as well as the transparency of legislative processes become crucial. For instance, when the National Assembly utilizes platforms such as public forums, online consultations, and town hall meetings to engage constituents, it moves closer to fulfilling the ideals of deliberative democracy. However, if these efforts are merely symbolic without any tangible impact on legislative outcomes, they fall short of true deliberation. Another important element is the iterative nature of deliberative processes. Deliberative democracy theory assumes that individuals can change their views in light of better arguments. Therefore, for the National Assembly to be deliberative, it must be willing to revise proposed laws based on public reasoning. However, many times, feedback from public hearings is not sufficiently integrated into final legislative drafts. This may reflect political expediency, bureaucratic inertia, or an unwillingness to relinquish legislative authority to the public, a dynamic that weakens the spirit of shared democratic reasoning.

4. Research Methodology

This study utilizes a Cross-sectional Survey research method. Cross-sectional surveys are valuable for studying prevalence, patterns, and associations within a population, making them useful for exploratory research, proposition testing, and policy evaluation. However, they may not capture changes over time or establish causality between variables, as they only provide a snapshot of data at one point in time (Leavy, 2022). Cross-sectional survey research method is particularly suitable for studying public participation in the law-making process of the Nigerian National Assembly due to its ability to capture a snapshot of public opinions, attitudes, and behaviours at a specific point in time. This approach allows for the exploration of factors influencing public participation, such as socio-demographic characteristics, political affiliation, and access to information. Given Abuja's status as the capital city and the epicenter of national governance, research findings on public participation in the law-making process conducted in Abuja hold significant policy relevance and national significance. The choice of Abuja as a study location for examining public participation in the law-making process of the Nigerian National Assembly therefore offers a rich socio-political context, diverse population representation, and proximity to decision-making

centers, making it an ideal setting for in-depth research on this crucial aspect of democratic governance.

The research population comprises all subjects under investigation (Kowalczyk & Airth, 2021). For this study, the population consists of 2,702,443 residents of Abuja, as reported in the Demographic Statistics Bulletin of 2020. This population includes the Civil Society Organizations, Political Parties, NGOs, Media Organizations, and Interest Groups in the Federal Capital Territory. The sample size of 380 respondents for this study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table, established in 1970 (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). This study adopted the purposive sampling technique to select

key officials from Civil Society Organizations, Political Parties, NGOs, Media Organizations, and Interest Groups in the FCT who could offer essential information for the research. Purposive sampling allowed these researchers to target individuals such as legislators, government officials, legal scholars, and civil society representatives who possess in-depth knowledge of the legislative process and can offer informed perspectives on public participation dynamics. Adopting purposive sampling for studying public participation in the law-making process of the Nigerian National Assembly is justified by the need to capture diverse perspectives, access key informants, and address specific research objectives within the complex and dynamic legislative environment.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Objective 1: To investigate the level of public participation in the law-making process of the 9th National Assembly.

To provide answer to this research objective, the researchers used responses to questions 1 to 5 to gather data. The data gathered was presented in the Table 1 below:

Table 1: The level of Public Participation in the Law-making Process of the 9th Assembly

S/N	Statements	SA		A		D		SD		Total
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
1	The 9 th National Assembly actively sought public input in the formulation of legislative proposals?	25	6.6	28	7.4	93	25	234	51.6	380
2	The 9 th National Assembly effectively communicated proposed legislation to the public for feedback and input.	15	3.9	19	5.0	110	29	236	62.1	380
3	The 9 th National Assembly is responsive to public concerns and feedback during the law-making process.	20	5.3	18	4.7	139	37	244	64.2	380
4	The 9 th National Assembly was transparent in the law-making process.	19	5.0	22	6	155	40.8	182	47.9	380
5	Overall, the 9 th National Assembly was inclusive in its law-making process.	9	2.4	31	8.2	166	43.7	174	45.8	380

For the first statement, regarding whether the 9th Assembly actively sought public input in legislative proposals, 6.6% (25 respondents) strongly agreed, and 7.4% (28 respondents) agreed. However, a significant proportion disagreed, with 51.6% (234 respondents), and 20% (74 respondents) strongly disagreed. On the second statement, which examined the Assembly's effectiveness in communicating proposed legislation for public feedback, only 3.9% (15 respondents) strongly agreed, and 5% (19 respondents) agreed. In contrast, a larger percentage expressed disagreement, with 62.1% (236 respondents) disagreeing and 18% (67 respondents) strongly disagreeing. Regarding the Assembly's responsiveness to public concerns during the law-making process, 5.3% (20 respondents) strongly agreed, and 4.7% (18 respondents) agreed. However, 64.2% (244 respondents) disagreed, and 20% (75 respondents) strongly disagreed, indicating a perception of limited responsiveness. When asked about transparency in the law-making process, 5% (19 respondents) strongly agreed, and 6% (22 respondents) agreed. A considerable number of respondents disagreed, with 47.9% (182 respondents), and 24% (91 respondents) strongly disagree. Lastly, in terms of overall inclusivity in the law-making process, only 2.4% (9 respondents) strongly agreed, and 8.2% (31 respondents) agreed. On the other hand, 45.8% (174 respondents) disagreed, and 20% (74 respondents) strongly disagreed, reflecting a perceived lack of inclusivity. These findings suggest that the level of public participation in the

law-making process of the 9th National Assembly was low with concerns about public input, communication, responsiveness, transparency, and inclusivity.

Research Objective 2: To evaluate the effectiveness of public participation in law-making process of the 9th National Assembly.

To provide answer to this research objective, the researchers used responses to questions 6 to 10 to gather data. The data gathered was presented in the Table 1 below:

Table 2: Effectiveness of the channels of communication for public participation in law-making process of the 9th National Assembly

S/N	Statements	SA		A		D		SD		Total
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
6.	The traditional media channels (e.g., television, radio, newspapers) were effective in disseminating information about proposed legislation and soliciting public feedback during the 9 th National Assembly's law-making process.	25	6.6	28	7.4	93	25	234	51.6	380
7.	Digital platforms and social media channels (e.g., official websites, social networking sites) effectively facilitated public engagement and participation in providing input on legislative proposals during the 9 th National Assembly.	15	3.9	19	5.0	110	29	236	62.1	380
8.	Public hearings and town hall meetings organized by the 9 th Assembly to gather input and feedback from citizens on proposed legislation were effective.	20	5.3	18	4.7	139	37	203	53.4	380
9	Citizen engagement initiatives (surveys, feedback forms and public consultations) enabled meaningful public participation in the law-making process of the 9 th National Assembly.	19	5.0	22	6	176	46.3	91	24	380
10	Direct engagement with elected representatives (e.g., constituency outreach programmes, meetings with legislators) were effective channels for conveying public concerns and influencing legislative decisions during the 9 th National Assembly.	9	2.4	31	8.2	166	43.4	174	45.8	380

For the first statement, assessing the effectiveness of traditional media channels in disseminating information and soliciting public feedback, 6.6% (25 respondents) strongly agreed, and 7.4% (28 respondents) agreed. However, 51.6% (234 respondents) disagreed, and 20% (74 respondents) strongly disagreed, indicating dissatisfaction with the role of traditional media. Regarding the second statement on the effectiveness of digital platforms and social media in facilitating public engagement, only 3.9% (15 respondents) strongly agreed, and 5.0% (19) agreed. A significant number of respondents expressed disagreement, with 62.1% (236 respondents) disagreeing and 18% (67 respondents) strongly disagreeing, reflecting a perception of limited impact from digital tools. On the effectiveness of public hearings and town hall meetings organised by the 9th Assembly, 5.3% (20 respondents) strongly agreed, and 4.7% (18 respondents) agreed. However, a large proportion of respondents, 53.4% (203), disagreed, and 20% (75) strongly disagreed, suggesting that these initiatives did not meet public expectations. For citizen engagement initiatives, such as surveys, feedback forms, and public consultations, only 5.0% (19 respondents) strongly agreed, and 6% (22 respondents) agreed. In contrast, 46.3% (176 respondents) disagreed, and 24% (91 respondents) strongly disagreed, pointing to a perceived lack of meaningful public participation through these channels. Finally, regarding direct engagement with elected representatives, such as constituency outreach programmes and meetings with legislators, 2.4% (9 respondents) strongly agreed, and 8.2% (31 respondents) agreed. However, 45.8% (174 respondents) disagreed, highlighting concerns about the effectiveness of these interactions in conveying public concerns and influencing legislative decisions. The findings reveal a general dissatisfaction among respondents with the effectiveness of various channels used by the 9th Assembly for public engagement and participation in the legislative process.

Research Objective 3: To establish the challenges affecting public participation in law-making process of the Nigeria 9th National Assembly.

To provide answer to this research objective, the researchers used responses to questions 11 to 15 to gather data. The data gathered was presented in the Table 1 below:

Table 3: Challenges of public participation in the law-making process of the Nigeria 9th National Assembly

S/N	Statements	SA		A		D		SD		Total
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F
11.	There is lack of awareness and information about legislative proceedings and opportunities for public participation.	122	32	187	49	56	15	15	4	380
12.	Level of complexity and technicality of legislative language and procedures for ordinary citizens to understand and engage effectively in the law-making process is an issue of public concern.	101	26.6	181	47.6	66	17.4	32	8.4	380
13.	Socio-economic disparities and inequalities in access to resources (e.g., education, internet connectivity) constitute serious challenge to public participation.	202	53.2	85	22.4	71	18.7	22	5.8	380
14.	Political polarization and partisan interests as obstacles to inclusive and bipartisan public engagement in the law-making process of the Nigeria National Assembly.	225	59.2	65	17.1	71	18.7	19	5.0	380
15	Lack of transparency, accountability, and public trust constitute challenges to public participation in the law-making process.	116	30.5	189	49.7	53	14	22	6	380

Table 3 above highlights respondents' perspectives on various challenges to public participation in the law-making process of the Nigerian 9th National Assembly. Regarding lack of awareness and information about legislative proceedings and opportunities for public participation, 122 respondents (32%) strongly agreed, while a significant 187 (49%) agreed. However, 56 (15%) disagreed, and a smaller group of 15 (4%) strongly disagreed, indicating that most participants recognized this as a major issue. For the level of complexity and technicality of legislative language and procedures, 101 respondents (26.6%) strongly agreed, and 181 (47.6%) agreed, making up the majority. Meanwhile, 66 respondents (17.4%) disagreed, and 32 (8.4%) strongly disagreed, showing a relatively lower but notable recognition of this barrier. Concerning socio-economic disparities and inequalities in access to resources such as education

and internet connectivity, over half of the respondents, 202 (53.2%), strongly agreed, and 85 (22.4%) agreed. In contrast, 71 (18.7%) disagreed, and only 22 (5.8%) strongly disagreed, reflecting widespread acknowledgement of these disparities. The issue of political polarization and partisan interests as obstacles to inclusive and bipartisan public engagement received the strongest agreement, with 225 respondents (59.2%) strongly agreeing and 65 (17.1%) agreeing. Conversely, 71 (18.7%) disagreed, and 19 (5.0%) strongly disagreed, underscoring the dominant perception of political biases as significant hurdles. Finally, regarding the lack of transparency, accountability, and public trust as challenges to public participation, 116 respondents (30.5%) strongly agreed, and 189 (49.7%) agreed. However, 53 (14.0%) disagreed, and 22 (6.0%) strongly disagreed, indicating that the majority view this as a critical issue.

The data demonstrates a consensus among respondents that factors such as lack of awareness, complexity of processes, socio-economic disparities, political polarization, and lack of transparency significantly hinder public engagement in the legislative process.

6. Discussion of Findings

Objective 1: The level of public participation in the law-making process of the 9th National Assembly.

The findings reveal a troubling narrative about the legislative process during Nigeria's 9th Assembly, particularly concerning public participation in law-making. Despite efforts to enhance openness, key factors such as public input, communication of proposed legislation, transparency, and inclusivity failed to significantly influence public engagement. Among these, transparency had the most positive effect but was still insufficient to foster meaningful trust or involvement. This aligns with the observations of Tullah (2014), who emphasized that transparency alone is inadequate in fostering citizen engagement if mechanisms for direct participation are weak. The findings suggest that while initiatives to promote openness were in place, they were not robust enough to bridge the gap between the legislature and the citizens.

Public input and communication of proposed legislation, which are critical for ensuring that citizens have a voice in governance, were found to have negligible effects. This minimal influence points to underdeveloped or ineffective channels for public contributions and the dissemination of legislative information. These findings are consistent with Sefora (2017), who identified similar limitations in participatory governance frameworks in other developing contexts. Similarly, inclusivity, a vital component for incorporating diverse perspectives, showed only a slight positive relationship with public participation. Limited efforts to include marginalized voices in the legislative process further constrained public involvement, echoing Widman's (2022) argument that inclusivity requires intentional designs to ensure diverse representation. This undermines the ideals of participatory democracy as theorized by Pateman (1970), who argued that democracy thrives only when citizens are actively engaged in decision-making. This finding underscores the need for improved strategies to inform citizens about legislative activities and encourage their participation. This aligns with Habermas's (1989) theory of the public sphere, which underscores the importance of open communication channels in fostering

participatory democracy. To this end, the media always advocate for greater collaboration between the press and the National Assembly to enhance public awareness and build trust, thereby ensuring greater accountability in governance.

Research Objective 2: Effectiveness of the channels of communication for public participation in the law-making process of the 9th National Assembly.

The findings from the regression analysis present a sobering account of the inefficiencies in public participation during the legislative process of Nigeria's 9th National Assembly. Key channels traditional media, digital platforms and social media, public hearings, and constituency outreach were statistically insignificant in impacting legislative outcomes. This reinforces the proposition that "The channels for public participation in the law-making process of the 9th Assembly of Nigeria's National Assembly are ineffective." Feedback from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) sheds light on the reasons for this ineffectiveness. While still critical for disseminating legislative information, traditional media often falls short in facilitating meaningful public engagement. The one-way communication style of these channels limits their capacity to foster two-way dialogue between lawmakers and citizens. Although widely accessible, radio and television primarily serve as platforms for broadcasting updates rather than enabling active public involvement. This finding aligns with Sala (2015), who highlighted the limitations of traditional media in encouraging participatory democracy. Despite their efforts to foster public participation, traditional media remain limited to disseminating information, while social media, though amplifying discussions, often lacks the depth required for sustained engagement. Restrictions on media access to legislative sessions further reduce transparency, hindering the free flow of information necessary for public oversight. Madanipour (2022) highlighted the importance of transparent and interactive communication for a vibrant public sphere, emphasizing the need for accessible media to facilitate informed citizen participation.

These findings underscore a troubling disconnect between the Nigerian National Assembly and its citizens, undermining democratic principles. Legislative decisions risk being made in isolation from public needs and voices, eroding trust and legitimacy. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms across all channels of engagement. Reforms should begin with traditional media by incorporating interactive formats such as live debates, call-in shows, and town hall programmes to foster direct dialogue.

Bridging the digital divide is equally critical, with targeted investments in internet infrastructure and digital literacy programmes to include marginalized rural communities. Public hearings and constituency outreach must be better publicized and organized to enhance inclusivity. Clear mechanisms should be established to demonstrate how public input influences legislative decisions, reinforcing trust and accountability. Simplifying legislative language and processes is another essential step. Legislative documents should be available in accessible formats and languages, enabling broader understanding and participation. Finally, robust feedback mechanisms must be implemented, ensuring that citizens can see the tangible impact of their contributions. These measures align with Bovens et al. (2014), who emphasized the role of accountability and transparency in participatory governance, and Young (2022), who argued for inclusive designs that protect the voices of marginalized groups. By addressing these systemic gaps, Nigeria's legislative process can move closer to a more inclusive, participatory, and democratic framework.

Research Objective 3: Challenges affecting public participation in the law-making process of the Nigeria National Assembly

The findings highlight a critical issue: factors such as clarity and accessibility, responsiveness, utilization of technology, and citizen sensitization do not significantly influence public participation in Nigeria's legislative process. This shows that the administrative capacity of the 9th Assembly may not have effectively addressed the challenges of public participation. Consequently, the proposition that "The administrative capacity of the 9th National Assembly was inadequate for public participation in the law-making process in Nigeria" is validated. These results align with Arowolo (2010), who emphasized that legislative institutions in Nigeria often lack the institutional and administrative capacity to facilitate meaningful public engagement. This emphasis was echoed by Daudu and Fagbadebo (2019) and Nwaenyi (2020), who noted that public hearings in Nigeria are often procedural rather than substantive, serving as mere formalities rather than genuine avenues for public input. One respondent emphasized that lack of transparency and inclusivity discourages meaningful engagement, undermining the credibility of these platforms as tools for participation. The absence of feedback mechanisms exacerbates the issue, leaving citizens feeling that their contributions are neither acknowledged nor valued, as Culhane and Roberts (2021) observed the disconnect between public inputs and legislative actions.

Media representatives similarly expressed frustration over the limited impact of their efforts to promote public participation. While traditional media channels such as radio and television effectively broadcast information, they largely operate as platforms for one-sided communication rather than fostering interactive dialogue. This supports the findings of Jatula (2020), who argue that Nigeria's media often serve as information outlets rather than facilitators of public discourse. Social media was credited with amplifying discussions around legislative processes, but its effectiveness was criticized for often resulting in superficial engagement rather than sustained involvement or tangible policy influence. As Relly and Pakanati (2020) observed, while social media can generate significant public interest, it often struggles to translate online activity into meaningful offline outcomes. Additionally, restricted media access to certain legislative sessions diminishes transparency and undermines public trust. This aligns with the findings of Singh and Marusak (2021), who emphasized that restricted access to legislative information limits media effectiveness in bridging the gap between lawmakers and citizens.

7. Conclusion

The study underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to improve public participation in law-making. This includes developing more inclusive, transparent, and accessible channels of communication for engagement, simplifying legislative procedures, and addressing the digital divide. This study concludes that it is only through these reforms that the National Assembly could foster a truly participatory democracy that reflects the will and needs of the people it serves. As Nigeria strives for a more democratic and inclusive governance system, enhancing public participation must be a central goal for future legislative reforms. This study observes that despite the existence of mechanisms like town hall meetings, online platforms, and referendums, these tools are underutilized due to systemic inefficiencies, lack of awareness, and administrative shortcomings. The study identifies challenges such as inadequate legislative capacity, limited public awareness, and socio-economic barriers that hinder effective participation.

The study also concludes that lack of effective mechanisms to incorporate public input and the limited inclusivity in the legislative process highlighted a fundamental disconnect between the legislature and the people it serves. This disconnect drew criticism from various quarters. Opposition

parties used this lacuna to emphasize the government's failure to bridge the gap between lawmakers and citizens, advocating for stronger systems to ensure public consultation. More so, the administrative capacity of the 9th Assembly to facilitate public engagement was also inadequate. Factors such as the responsiveness of lawmakers, the clarity of legislative materials, and the utilization of technology did not significantly improve participation. Public hearings and outreach efforts often lacked genuine intent to incorporate public input, leading to the perception that they were conducted merely to fulfill formal requirements. Additionally, the complexity of legislative language and procedures alienated many citizens, making it difficult for them to engage meaningfully in the legislative process.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the study:

- The National Assembly should adopt more inclusive and transparent mechanisms for public participation. This includes improving the quality of public hearings by ensuring they are well-publicized, accessible, and genuinely focused on incorporating public input into legislative decisions.
- Legislative language and procedures should be simplified to make them more accessible to ordinary citizens. Summaries of proposed bills should be made available in plain language and translated into major local languages to cater to Nigeria's diverse population.
- Investments in internet infrastructure and digital literacy programmes are essential to ensure that digital platforms reach rural and underserved areas. This will enable broader participation and reduce the exclusion of marginalized groups from legislative processes.
- Traditional and digital media should be leveraged more effectively to foster interactive dialogue between citizens and lawmakers. Initiatives such as televised debates, town hall-style discussions, and interactive radio programs can encourage direct engagement and amplify public voices.

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