



Assessing News Coverage of Legislative Transparency and Legislative Voting Patterns in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the depth and transparency of legislative news reporting in Nigeria, focusing on the availability of individual voting records. Through a quantitative content analysis of 437 articles from *Leadership*, *The Cable*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Vanguard*, the research evaluates how media outlets report on National Assembly proceedings. The study found a major transparency gap because media organizations report 100% of legislative outcomes but they completely fail to show individual lawmaker voting records. The statistical analysis with Chi-Square testing shows that both print and digital formats demonstrate the same shallow content problem. The logistic regression results show that original reporter work together with opposition participation activities deliver deeper contextual understanding which fails to make up for missing voting records that institutions choose not to document. The current reporting system protects MPs from being held personally accountable according to study findings which recommend that the National Assembly adopt open electronic voting systems so media organizations can perform their democratic monitoring role.

Keywords: Legislative Transparency, National Assembly, Accountability Reporting, Voting Records, Senate, House of Representatives.

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INTRODUCTION

Retrospective voting, where citizens judge politicians by their past conduct, is important for democratic responsibility. Access to information about the actions of elected officials is important for voters (Hellwig, 2010; Sulkin et al., 2015). Nigeria's situation shows this; policy shifts between administrations that happen because of public awareness suggest that an involved public makes a difference. Still, this impact is weakened by a lack of information about individual votes, which are the most basic part of what a legislature does. Experts agree that these records are not just routine; they are essential for responsible decision-making, allowing public opinion to turn into political judgment based on facts (Badiora & Ojo, 2021; Ojo, 2022; Peter & Ndinojuo, 2024).

This study addresses the lack of clarity of access to voting records, which is a problem considering that this information should be readily available to journalists and voting public. The research points out a key weakness in Nigeria's system for keeping politicians responsible to the people. The results may help guide actions to better connect the National Assembly with the citizens by keeping them informed of their voting decisions and maybe reasoning behind their voting decisions. This research focuses on the need to understand how legislative voting records in Nigeria's National and state Assemblies are reported (Imouokhome & Otinche, 2025; Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2025), and how a lack of access affects the media's capacity to keep the public informed (Helberger, 2020; Melenhorst, 2017). A key issue lies in a break in democratic responsibility. Nigerians can engage with how the country is run, but they cannot do so well. This is because there is not enough clear, easy-to-find, detailed information on how lawmakers vote on important laws (Ezeoha et al., 2025; Ojo, 2022), with lawmakers being on record advocating for individual voting on issues rather than a voiced group.

This highlights a normative institutional lacuna where opacity, rather than transparency, is often the default. Consequently, the Nigerian electorate is frequently deprived of the essential data required to assign credit or blame accurately, reducing accountability to a generalized assessment of political performance rather than a precise evaluation of legislative behavior. Previous studies have identified that the media, which should be a key source of information in a democracy, is not doing a good job of watching and reporting on what the legislature does (Ohaja et al., 2022; Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024). Current research on Nigerian political communication has a gap: there is not enough detailed, real-world research that breaks down how the press covers the specifics of legislative voting. This study finds its novelty and contribution by focusing on this specific gap. It uses a detailed content analysis to break down how much, how deep, and how accurate media reports are. It also adds to the discourse by modeling variables like news sources, types of laws, and political leanings that affect the quality of parliamentary reporting. The study aims to investigate this issue through a set of clear research goals: to measure how often voting patterns get covered; to assess how in-depth this coverage goes when it comes to reporting on individual votes; to check if the reported outcomes match up with official records; and to figure out what factors in news production affect the quality of information about democracy.

OBJECTIVE (S) OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of this research is to investigate the media coverage of voting patterns among Nigerian lawmakers and the quality and extent of media coverage of these proceedings. The specific objectives of this study include:

- 1) To quantify the frequency of reporting on legislative proceedings and voting patterns in the selected Nigerian newspapers (*Nigerian Tribune*, *The Cable NG*, *Vanguard*, and *Leadership*) from January 2023 to September 2025.
- 2) To evaluate the depth of media coverage by systematically measuring the inclusion and extent of contextual information, with a specific focus on how individual lawmakers' votes or voting patterns are reported on key legislative issues.
- 3) To assess the accuracy and balance of the reporting by verifying media accounts of legislative votes against official records and analyzing the representation of differing viewpoints among legislators.
- 4) To identify and analyze observable factors within the coverage that are associated with variations in its quality, specifically examining the relationship between the depth and prominence of reporting and factors such as the news source cited, the nature of the bill, and the political parties involved.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will be formulated to guide the research:

- 1) How frequently do selected Nigerian newspapers report on legislative proceedings and voting patterns in the National Assembly?
- 2) What is the depth of the coverage, as measured by the inclusion of contextual information such as the bill's purpose, partisan dynamics, constituent impact, and, most importantly, the reporting of individual lawmakers' votes or voting patterns?
- 3) To what extent do the media reporting accurately represent the outcome of legislative votes and provide a balanced representation of differing viewpoints among legislators?
- 4) What observable factors in the coverage, such as the news source cited (e.g., parliamentary correspondents vs. press releases), the type of bill (e.g., contentious vs. non-contentious), or the political party involved, are associated with variations in the depth and prominence of reporting on voting patterns?

LITERATURE REVIEW:

In democratic governance, legislatures function as a cornerstone institution, providing the principal forum for political deliberation, statutory creation, and public policy development (Usonka, 2019). These parliamentary or congressional bodies are constituted by elected representatives who bear the responsibility of advocating for their constituents' interests and steering the trajectory of national policy (Onyekakie, 2022). The internal mechanics of legislative decision-making encompass a multifaceted process of debate, negotiation, and ultimate voting on proposed measures—a process that requires clear public communication to enable constituents to ratify or contest their representative's actions (Bäck et al., 2021). Consequently, transparency in legislative operations serves as a critical mechanism for bolstering public trust and fostering citizen engagement in democratic processes. This transparency is characterized by the open and accessible conduct of parliamentary affairs, encompassing both the procedures underlying decisions and their dissemination to the citizenry. It empowers the public to scrutinize legislative information, comprehend the rationale behind policy outcomes, and effectively hold their elected officials to account (Crepaz & Arikan, 2023; Harrison et al., 2014; Voermans et al., 2015).

Legislative Decision-Making and Voting Patterns

The analysis of legislative voting patterns provides a critical diagnostic tool for understanding the dynamics of democratic governance. These patterns reveal more than just the outcome of a bill; they illuminate the operational realities of party discipline, the bargaining power of constituencies, and the genuine policy preferences of individual lawmakers (Bräuninger et al., 2017). While the formal functions of a legislature enacting laws, setting policy, and conducting oversight are fundamental, it is the transparency of its internal decision-making processes, particularly voting, that authenticates its democratic character (Odalonu, 2020; Olaogun et al., 2025; Oni et al., 2021). For the Nigerian public, this transparency is the essential conduit through which abstract representation is translated into tangible accountability. The ability to scrutinize a legislator's vote is a prerequisite for evaluating their fidelity to electoral mandates. Consequently, the media's role in systematically capturing and publicizing these voting records becomes indispensable, transforming opaque legislative data into the foundational currency of an informed and engaged citizenry, which is the central concern of this investigation.

Media Reporting on Legislative Processes

Functioning as a vital intermediary, the media translates the complex proceedings of the legislature into accessible public knowledge, thereby acting as a catalyst for transparency (Melenhorst, 2017; Yildirim et al., 2023). The press performs an essential democratic service by systematically reporting on parliamentary debates deliberations (Odiegwu-Enwerem, 2024), and most critically for this study the specific outcomes and patterns of legislative votes. This coverage ensures citizens are informed not merely about general political events but about the concrete actions of their representatives, which is a fundamental prerequisite for meaningful accountability (Yildirim et al., 2023). Consequently, the dynamic between the media and the

legislature is not peripheral but central to the public's perception of governmental openness; the quality and depth of this reporting directly shape civic understanding and either reinforce or undermine the perceived legitimacy of democratic institutions (Huber et al., 2022). Therefore, scrutinizing the media's coverage of legislative voting is tantamount to evaluating a key mechanism of democratic accountability itself.

The Nigerian Legislature

Nigeria's national lawmaking apparatus is structured around a bicameral legislature, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives, while its constituent states operate through unicameral State Houses of Assembly (Tongs et al., 2023). Despite this formal institutional design, the historical trajectory of the Nigerian legislative process has been persistently marred by deficits in transparency and public engagement. This opacity is a legacy of prolonged political instability and frequent shifts in governance frameworks, which have systematically impeded the development of robust accountability mechanisms (Muse & Narsiah, 2015). Although recent efforts—such as the live broadcasting of plenary sessions and the intermittent publication of voting records—aim to bridge this accountability gap, their implementation remains inconsistent. This enduring challenge of institutional opacity directly frames the critical necessity of this study: to empirically investigate the dissemination of legislative voting data, a function vital for transforming the legislature's formal structure into a substantively transparent and publicly accountable institution.

Media Reporting in Nigeria

The capacity of the Nigerian press to function as an effective information conduit for legislative accountability is critically undermined by a constellation of structural impediments. Significant challenges including restricted journalistic access to parliamentary chambers, indirect censorship, and the pervasive influence of political elites consistently compromise the integrity of legislative reporting. Empirical research confirms that these constraints generate pronounced disparities in how different media outlets cover parliamentary proceedings, leading to fragmented and often skewed public narratives (Musa & Antwi-Boateng, 2023; Yildirim et al., 2023). This fragmented coverage does not merely represent a difference in editorial slant; it actively cultivates informational asymmetries that distort public comprehension of legislative transparency and stifle meaningful civic engagement. Consequently, the very mechanism designed to illuminate the legislative process instead risks obscuring it, making a systematic analysis of the content, consistency, and quality of this reporting as undertaken in this study is thus considered an essential diagnostic endeavor for understanding the actual flow of democratic accountability.

Theoretical Frameworks

This theoretical review is anchored in Democratic Theory and Media Dependency Theory. Democratic Theory establishes legislative transparency as a cornerstone of accountability, justifying the scrutiny of voting records. Concurrently, Media Dependency Theory explains the public's reliance on media to interpret this political information, thereby framing the analysis of media reporting's content and influence.

The Democratic Theory hinges on the philosophical foundations, institutional arrangements, and societal conditions constituting a democratic system. At the heart of democratic theory is the concept of popular sovereignty, which implies that power and authority in a state must derive from the consent and participation of the governed (Frankenberger & Buhr, 2023; Kobayashi, 2023; Osterberg-Kaufmann et al., 2023). Within the context of legislative transparency and media reporting in Nigeria, democratic theory can provide a rich analytical framework. Legislative transparency is essential for a functioning democracy as it enables citizens to observe and scrutinize the actions of their elected representatives (Onyekakie, 2022). In theory, transparency leads to accountability; lawmakers who know their decisions and voting records are subject to public scrutiny tend to act more in accordance with their constituents' interests and expectations (Benesch et al., 2015; Hollyer et al., 2011). This aligns with the democratic values of legitimacy, where officials' decisions

are acknowledged as rightful and appropriate when made in an open and discernible manner (Snyder & Strömberg, 2010).

Media Dependency Theory posits that the more an individual relies on the media to fulfill his or her needs, the more influential the media will be to that person (Jung, 2017). This perspective becomes particularly influential when a societal system experiences change or conflict and individuals cannot obtain necessary information elsewhere (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Kim, 2020). In the context of legislative transparency and media reporting in Nigeria, the Media Dependency Theory provides a vital framework for understanding the different aspects of information distribution and the influence of media on public perception and engagement in democratic processes (Bukari et al., 2025; Melki Kozman, 2019). In Nigeria, where legislative functions and processes may lack transparency, the media is often the primary source of information on legislative conduct and decisions (Adegboyega, 2023; Okoi & Iwara, 2021); this positions the media as a critical intermediary between the government and citizens. The dependence on media for insights into the legislative process becomes more profound when considering that the average citizen's direct observation of or participation in these processes is limited (Okoi & Iwara, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a quantitative content analysis methodology to investigate the coverage of legislative voting patterns within the Nigerian National Assembly by selected national newspapers. The study was delimited to four prominent Nigerian dailies; the newspapers selected were *Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Cable NG (hereinafter The Cable)*, and *Leadership*. They were selected based on their national circulation, editorial independence, and representation of diverse media ownership structures and geographical influences within Nigeria as well as adoption in previous content analysis studies (Ndinojuo & Ikems, 2023; Ndinojuo, 2022, 2021). The study adopted a census design of all news reports and editorials published by these outlets concerning legislative activities in the National Assembly over a defined 33-month period from January 2023 to September 2025. This timeframe encompasses 365 days in 2023, 366 days in 2024 (leap year), and 273 days in 2025 (January through September), for a total of 1,004 days. With four newspapers in the sample, this creates a comprehensive sample frame of 4,016 potential daily editions for analysis.

The unit of analysis for this study was the individual news article, editorial, or op-ed that contained any mention of legislative proceedings or outcomes within the National Assembly. Data was collected through a systematic search of the online archives of each newspaper using a standardized set of keywords, including "Senate," "Senate vote," "House of Representatives," "voting pattern," "legislative proceedings," "National Assembly," "House of Assembly," and "State Assembly." Only items directly addressing Nigerian parliamentary business were included; articles focused solely on executive actions, political party internal affairs, or individual legislator scandals unrelated to legislative work were excluded.

The analysis followed a directed content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), using a pre-defined coding framework developed from the literature on legislative transparency and media functions. A comprehensive codebook was developed with operational definitions for four primary analytical categories: (1) Frequency & Prominence (measured by article count, word count, and a Digital Prominence Score based on multimedia integration and visual support), (2) Depth of Coverage (assessed by the presence of contextual data such as bill purpose and individual voting records), (3) Reporting Accuracy & Balance (evaluated through verification against official legislative records and analysis of source diversity), and (4) Influencing Factors (identifying variables such as bill type and news source that are associated with variations in coverage quality).

For the Depth of Coverage category, articles were coded for the presence or absence of specific contextual elements, such as the bill's purpose, partisan dynamics, constituency impact, and crucially, the reporting of individual lawmakers' votes or specific voting blocs. Each article could be coded for multiple depth indicators.

The primary categorization for summary tables was assigned based on the dominant characteristic of the reportage (e.g., "Superficial" for brief summaries vs. "In-Depth" for articles containing three or more contextual elements).

A representative selection of articles, constituting 15% of the total dataset (n=45), underwent co-coding by a second trained researcher using the established codebook. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa (κ) (Cohen, 1960). The resulting Kappa score of $\kappa = 0.82$ indicates an almost perfect level of agreement. The category-specific scores were also robust (Frequency & Prominence $\kappa = 0.83$; Depth of Coverage $\kappa = 0.86$; Accuracy & Balance $\kappa = 0.78$). All discrepancies identified during this process were resolved through consensus discussion between the coders, which led to further clarifications in the codebook's definitions before proceeding with the analysis of the complete dataset. This procedure ensured a high degree of methodological rigor and consistency in the content analysis.

To assess the robustness of the dominant depth classification, a sensitivity analysis was conducted comparing the condensed classification (e.g., "Superficial," "Moderate," "In-Depth") against the full range of multi-coded depth indicators. This confirmed that the dominant theme approach effectively captured the strategic emphasis of the reporting rather than just the sporadic mention of contextual details.

After the initial classification, the textual data within the Depth of Coverage category underwent further thematic analysis to identify recurrent sub-themes and narrative frames, such as "Procedural Focus," "Personality-Driven Drama," or "Policy Impact Analysis."

Finally, a Chi-Square Test for Independence was conducted using SPSS v29 to test whether the distribution of coverage depth significantly differed across the four newspapers. This analysis was supplemented by a Multinomial Logistic Regression to understand the relationship between the depth of coverage (the dependent variable) and key independent variables, including the type of legislative bill (e.g., Appropriation Bill, Constitutional Amendment, Executive Screening), the political party sponsoring the bill, and the primary source cited in the article (e.g., Parliamentary Correspondent, Press Release, Wire Service). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for all analyses.

Coding Schema: Media Coverage of Legislative Voting Patterns in Nigeria

Unit of Analysis: Individual news article, editorial, or op-ed pertaining to the Nigerian National Assembly's legislative proceedings.

Unit of Coding: The entire text of the article, including headlines, sub-headlines, image captions, and embedded multimedia elements (where applicable).

Table 1. Coding schema of the study data

Category	Variable	Operational Definition & Measurement	Coding Scale/Instructions
1. Frequency & Prominence	Article Identification	The basic count of relevant articles per newspaper.	Newspaper Name; Date of Publication (DD/MM/YYYY); Article Title; URL.
	Word Count	The total number of words in the article body, excluding the headline and byline.	Numerical value (e.g., 450 words).
	Digital Prominence Score	A composite score based on the presence of intrinsic, resource-	Low (1): Text-only or a single generic image. Medium (2): Multiple photographs/gallery,

		intensive editorial elements.	and/or pull-quotes. High (3): Embedded video/interactive graphics, plus rich visual support.
2. Depth of Coverage	Bill/Issue Identification	Whether the specific legislative bill or issue being voted on is clearly named or described.	0 = No 1 = Yes
	Bill's Purpose/Objective	Whether the article explains the rationale, goals, or intended effects of the legislation.	0 = No 1 = Yes
	Partisan Dynamics	Whether the article mentions party positions, whips, or partisan alignment in the debate/vote.	0 = No 1 = Yes
	Constituency Impact	Whether the article discusses the potential effects of the bill on specific regions or the general populace.	0 = No 1 = Yes
	Reporting of Individual Votes	CRUCIAL VARIABLE: Whether the article specifies how individual lawmakers or specific blocs voted.	0 = No vote mentioned 1 = Only final tally/voice vote mentioned 2 = Individual lawmakers' votes are specified
	Direct Quotations	The diversity of sources quoted.	0 = No direct quotes 1 = Quotes from only one side/party 2 = Quotes from multiple sides/parties
3. Accuracy & Balance	Verifiable Outcome	Whether the article reports a vote outcome that can be checked against an official record (e.g., "the bill passed" or "the motion was defeated").	0 = No clear outcome reported 1 = Yes, a verifiable outcome is reported
	Source Diversity	The range of sources cited to represent different perspectives.	List all source types present: - Executive Official - Ruling Party Legislator - Opposition Legislator - Civil Society Expert - Parliamentary Correspondent - Press Release/Wire Service
4. Influencing	News Source Cited	The primary origin of the	1 = Parliamentary Correspondent (Original

Factors	information in the article.	Reporting) 2 = Press Release/Official Statement 3 = Wire Service (e.g., NAN, Reuters) 4 = Other Media Outlet
Type of Bill	The nature of the legislation being covered.	1 = Appropriation/Budget Bill 2 = Constitutional Amendment 3 = Executive Screening/Appointment 4 = High-Profile National Issue (e.g., Drug Law, Electoral Act) 5 = Other/General Proceedings
Political Party Involved	The party primarily associated with sponsoring or driving the bill/debate.	1 = Ruling Party (APC) 2 = Main Opposition Party (PDP) 3 = Multi-Party/Coalition 4 = Not Specified

Coding Instructions:

- **Multi-coding:** For categories in Depth of Coverage, an article can be coded for multiple variables (e.g., it can have both Bill Purpose and Partisan Dynamics).
- **Dominant Theme:** For summary classification, the "Depth of Coverage" will be categorized as:
 - **Superficial:** Contains 0-1 of the depth indicators.
 - **Moderate:** Contains 2-3 of the depth indicators.
 - **In-Depth:** Contains 4 or more of the depth indicators, including the "Reporting of Individual Votes."
- The coder must read the entire article before assigning codes.

RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings of the content analysis conducted across four major Nigerian media outlets: *Leadership*, *The Cable*, *Tribune*, and *Vanguard*. The primary objective was to evaluate the nature of legislative news reporting in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the transparency of voting patterns and the depth of coverage provided to the Nigerian citizenry. Media outlets published articles about Nigeria's legislative activities from January 2023 until September 2025, which researchers used to collect their data; the researchers analyzed 437 articles through their multidimensional framework, which evaluated the articles based on six specific criteria and political content distribution. The findings demonstrate a "transparency gap" which shows the difference between how legislators work together and the way they should accept their personal blame; the results are shared through the upcoming sections. With the highest, *Vanguard* listed 121 entries; while the *Nigerian Tribune* had the least entries with 95 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency of Bill Types across Newspapers

Bill/Issue Type	Leadership (N=113)	The Cable (N=108)	Nigerian Tribune (N=95)	Vanguard (N=121)	Total (N=437)
High-Profile National Issues	52 (46.0%)	44 (40.7%)	38 (40.0%)	55 (45.5%)	189 (43.2%)
Executive Screening/Appointments	34 (30.1%)	42 (38.9%)	22 (23.2%)	28 (23.1%)	126 (28.8%)

Appropriation/Budget Bills	21 (18.6%)	18 (16.7%)	28 (29.5%)	32 (26.4%)	99 (22.7%)
Constitutional Amendments	6 (5.3%)	4 (3.7%)	7 (7.3%)	6 (5.0%)	23 (5.3%)
Total	113 (100%)	108 (100%)	95 (100%)	121 (100%)	437 (100%)

The four newspapers display their main reporting focus on High-Profile National Issues which make up 43.2% of their complete 437 articles according to Table 2. Media organizations prefer to cover "event-driven" news stories which include tax reforms and electoral acts instead of normal legislative procedures. *The Cable* demonstrates an Executive Screening focus that exceeds the typical level by 38.9% while *Nigerian Tribune* and *Vanguard* present stronger reporting on Appropriation and Budget bills than other news outlets. The newspapers have a shared interest in big national controversies but their secondary focal areas vary between administrative oversight and fiscal monitoring.

Table 3. Depth Distribution Statistics by Newspaper

Depth Category	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>The Cable</i>	<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total
Superficial (0-1 indicators)	48 (42.5%)	32 (29.6%)	45 (47.4%)	51 (42.1%)	176 (40.3%)
Moderate (2-3 indicators)	65 (57.5%)	76 (70.4%)	50 (52.6%)	70 (57.9%)	261 (59.7%)
In-Depth (4+ including individual votes)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	113 (100%)	108 (100%)	95 (100%)	121 (100%)	437 (100%)

The statistical analysis of depth distribution shows that Nigerian legislative journalism has a major transparency barrier which stops journalists from reporting their work. According to the study, all 437 articles were unable to receive an In-Depth classification since they did not include specific vote records. Because 70.4% of its articles achieved Moderate depth, *The Cable* outperformed traditional print publications. This suggests that digital-native platforms provide more comprehensive contextual information. *Nigerian Tribune* and *Leadership* recorded more cases of Superficial reporting because their reporting rates reached 47.4% and 42.5% respectively. The media organizations demonstrate their inability to present complete analysis because they report all legislative details except for the identification of specific individuals who are responsible.

Table 3: Presence of Key Depth Indicators (Cross-Tabulation)

Variable (Presence of Indicator)	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>The Cable</i>	<i>Tribune</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Average
Bill Purpose	90.3%	94.4%	88.4%	91.7%	91.2%
Partisan Dynamics	33.6%	41.7%	31.6%	38.0%	36.2%
Constituent/Societal Impact	36.3%	39.8%	42.1%	40.5%	39.7%
Individual Votes Reported	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Verifiable Outcome	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3 shows that while the media are quite good at reporting the Verifiable Outcome (100%) and the Bill Purpose (91.2%). There is a significant drop in covering the political and social complexities of lawmaking, according to our analysis of depth indicators. Only 36.2% of articles across the four newspapers mentioned Partisan Dynamics, and only 39.7% discussed the Constituent/Societal Impact. The 0% reporting rate for Individual Votes shows that the system depends on both "voice votes" and group voting results. The Nigerian

legislative reporting system operates as an official record system rather than serving as a tool for monitoring individual lawmakers' performance and their connections with constituents.

Table 4: Political Party Involvement & Sponsorship Focus

Political Party	Leadership	<i>The Cable</i>	<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Overall
Ruling Party (APC)	74 (65.5%)	68 (63.0%)	60 (63.2%)	82 (67.8%)	284 (65.0%)
Opposition (PDP/Labour Party)	14 (12.4%)	19 (17.6%)	15 (15.8%)	18 (14.9%)	66 (15.1%)
Multi-Party/Coalition	6 (5.3%)	8 (7.4%)	5 (5.3%)	7 (5.8%)	26 (5.9%)
Not Specified	19 (16.8%)	13 (12.0%)	15 (15.8%)	14 (11.6%)	61 (14.0%)

The data on political party involvement (see Table 4) demonstrates a heavy lean toward the Ruling Party (APC), which is associated with 65% of the total coverage. The executive branch is likely to have authority over the legislative process because it controls the major appropriations and appointment bills. According to the data, opposition organizations from the PDP and Labour Party remained at 15.1%, while *The Cable* and *Nigerian Tribune* media reported on opposition-sponsored proposals and dissenting debates at 17.6% and 15.8%, respectively. The 14% of "Not Specified" affiliations indicates that certain legislative publications continue to portray the Senate and House as unified bodies rather than enemies in political struggle.

Chi-Square Test for Independence

The study used inferential statistics to test whether the differences in reporting quality were statistically significant or created through random chance after researchers established the basic descriptive statistics of their study. The researchers used the Chi-Square Test for Independence to investigate how publication medium related to the amount of legislative details that researchers published. The test compares 'Superficial' and 'Moderate' report frequencies to their expected values to determine whether specific newspapers have special editorial skills for reporting depth or whether Nigerian newspapers follow a common reporting standard that restricts their ability to report on legislative matters.

Table 5. Chi-Square Test Results for Depth of Coverage vs. Newspaper

Statistical Measure	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.428	3	.059
Likelihood Ratio	7.614	3	.055
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.812	1	.368
N of Valid Cases	437		

Note: 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 38.26.

The Chi-Square test yielded a Pearson value of 7.428 with a p-value of .059. The p-value results show statistical non-significance because its value exceeds the standard alpha threshold which is set at 0.05, which proves that Nigerian media outlets provide equivalent coverage of legislative matters. *The Cable* delivered 70.4% of its news content through moderate reporting, which created a higher descriptive trend than other media outlets, but all other newspapers shared the same impact of the transparency ceiling. The statistical results demonstrate that the entire industry fails to achieve In-Depth reporting standards because newspapers universally choose to exclude individual voting records from their content.

Multinomial Logistic Regression Results

The Chi Square result presented in Table 5 showed that news organizations maintained consistent results across different media platforms. The researchers used Multinomial Logistic Regression to identify the specific factors which determine how Nigerian journalists deliver their news reports. The model uses coverage depth as its dependent variable to study how legislative subject matter and political actors and news story sources affect news coverage. The investigation shows which political and institutional systems permit news reports to receive more public interest because they rely on case studies, political participation, and news coverage by journalists.

Table 6. Multinomial Logistic Regression Predictors of Coverage Depth

Predictor Variable	B (Coefficient)	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig. (p-value)	Exp(B) / Odds Ratio
Intercept	-1.124	0.412	7.442	1	.006	—
Type of Bill			12.841	3	.005*	
High-Profile National Issue	0.842	0.321	6.884	1	.009	2.321
Appropriation/Budget Bill	0.615	0.345	3.178	1	.075	1.850
Executive Screening	-0.214	0.312	0.471	1	.493	0.807
Political Party			9.214	2	.010*	
Opposition (PDP/LP)	0.956	0.410	5.431	1	.020	2.601
Ruling Party (APC)	0.312	0.284	1.207	1	.272	1.366
Primary News Source			15.632	2	<.001*	
Parliamentary Correspondent	1.420	0.385	13.601	1	<.001	4.137
Press Release/Wire	-0.814	0.422	3.721	1	.054	0.443

The multinomial logistic regression model (shown in Table 6) identifies Primary News Source as the most accurate forecast tool which shows how extensive coverage will be. Because their unique reporting produces more important material, parliamentary reporters write articles 4.1 times more frequently than press release articles. Also, because they sparked greater public discussion, the opposition party bills that the PDP and LP submitted received 20% more moderate coverage than other laws that lacked political data. The reason for this occurrence is that the topics create greater public disagreement. Finally, High-Profile National Issues significantly increase the odds of better depth (OR=2.3), whereas executive screenings remain predominantly superficial, confirming that reporting quality is highly dependent on the "newsworthiness" and political friction of the legislative activity.

DISCUSSION

The study results show that Nigerian legislative journalism operates at two opposite levels because its journalists can report group outcomes but they miss their duty to disclose who is responsible. This "transparency ceiling" suggests that while the media serves as an effective conduit for institutional news, it currently lacks the investigative depth required to facilitate retrospective voting. The Hellwig (2010) study demonstrates that citizens need detailed information about politicians' legislative record to make accurate assessments of their prior performance. The 437 articles from *Leadership*, *The Cable*, *Nigerian Tribune* and

Vanguard contain empirical evidence which shows that Nigerians receive information about lawmaking but they remain unaware of the individuals who participate in the process.

The study's first objective was to investigate the frequency and prominence of media coverage of National Assembly operations; the editors selected High-Profile National Issues as their primary coverage focus for 43.2% of their total coverage. Ojo (2022) demonstrates that Nigerian media organizations direct their reporting activities toward covering major political events which they believe will attract more audience interest. The main news source for 92% of media organizations depends on Parliamentary Correspondents because they serve as the primary news source. The reporting shows text-heavy content which follows traditional news formats according to the prominence scores from Table 2. Modern digital journalism uses interactive elements and data-driven visualizations to make complex legislative data accessible to viewers however. The findings demonstrate a substantial sponsorship bias because 65% of media coverage focuses on the Ruling Party (APC). The current parliamentary system, which the executive branch leads, creates a risk to develop a "hegemonic narrative" that gives more weight to majority opinions while diminishing the significance of multi-party debate details. The current situation reflects the same problems that Sulkin et al. (2015) identified. The research shows that media coverage helps incumbent politicians because it produces a false image of their legislative work while reducing opposition party activities which include the PDP and Labour Party.

The study found that Individual Voting Records were not present in the four Nigerian newspapers which were examined to fulfill the second research objective (Table 3). The items all contained a Verifiable Outcome yet no document showed the voting activities of individual lawmakers who make up the essential democratic foundation. According to the Democratic Theory, the vote is a fundamental element of political accountability (Badiora & Ojo, 2021). When media outlets only carry voice votes or unanimous consent, the accountability of the lawmakers for their votes to formational laws may remain veiled.

This problem is crystallized in incidents such as the debate on the amendment of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act (Amendment Bill) of 2024. During the debate for the amendment of the bill on drug offenses, Senators from the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), Ali Ndume (representing APC, Borno South) passionately argued for the inclusion of the death sentence on convicted drug traffickers to deter citizens from participation in drug crimes. However, Adams Oshiomhole (representing APC, Edo North) urged for calm heads and asked the assembly to reconsider the death penalty as it may be too harsh and not be in tune with the global outlook where some drugs are being decriminalized or tagged with misdemeanors with sentences ranging from fines and little jail time. He cautioned that some participants may be victims who need rehabilitation more than heavy-handed punishments. He also asked that the voting be made individually instead of through a voiced group vote, as the records need to reflect how each senator voted on this significant bill (Ogundapo, 2024). The substantive discord regarding penal severity was overshadowed by a more fundamental procedural issue: the need for a senator to passionately entreat for an individually recorded vote on a "matter of life and death." This highlights a normative institutional lacuna where opacity, rather than transparency, is often the default. Consequently, the Nigerian electorate is frequently deprived of the essential data required to assign credit or blame accurately, reducing accountability to a generalized assessment of political performance rather than a precise evaluation of legislative behavior.

The Multinomial Logistic Regression results (Table 6) offer a deeper explanation for this. The study demonstrated that Parliamentary Correspondents delivered "Moderate" depth 4.1 times more often than press releases; it further showed that correspondents face a systematic barrier that prevents them from delivering their desired depth of coverage. The lack of an electronic voting system or a publicly accessible "Hansard" that records individual "Yeas" and "Nays" in the National Assembly means that even the most diligent journalist cannot report what is not recorded. The study demonstrates that the media covers institutional news but fails to report on the individuals; this supports the "Transparency Gap" that

researchers discovered through their studies (Ezeoha et al., 2025; Ohaja et al., 2022; Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024). Voters in Nigeria need detailed information because they must be able to identify which representatives supported their needs and which ones followed party discipline. The system establishes complete responsibility because the "Senate" body accepts all its decisions while individual Senators maintain their public invisibility.

The third objective sought to ascertain whether the quality of reporting was a product of specific editorial cultures or a reflection of a broader industrial standard. The Chi-Square Test for Independence shown in Table 5 produced a p-value of .059 which exceeds the standard threshold used to determine statistical significance. This finding is critical because it shows that media type from digital and print does not serve as the main factor which determines deep understanding in Nigeria. While *The Cable* (Table 2) descriptively showed the highest frequency of "Moderate" depth (70.4%), the lack of statistical significance indicates that all four newspapers operate under a similar "transparency ceiling." The identical results support the views espoused by Altheide and Snow (1979) in their Media Logic theory, which states that established institutional formats and procedures will take precedence over every editor's content decisions. In Nigeria, the routine of legislative reporting appears so standardized—relying on the same plenary sessions and official spokespersons—that the output remains uniform across competing platforms. The discovery supports the existence of a communal agreement which prevents people from taking responsibility for their actions. As observed by Ojo (2022), when the primary source of information is the legislative institution itself rather than independent investigative data, the media becomes a "conveyer belt" for official narratives. The lack of significant difference between *Vanguard* and *The Cable*, for instance, proves that even the agility of digital-native media has not yet broken the traditional mold of reporting collective "voice votes" instead of individual "roll-call votes."

The fourth objective utilized Multinomial Logistic Regression (Table 6) to isolate the variables that actually "trigger" better reporting; the results provide a clear roadmap of what drives depth in Nigerian legislative journalism:

1. **The "Correspondent" Factor:** The strongest predictor of depth was the Primary News Source. Articles that Parliamentary Correspondents wrote achieved moderate depth 4.1 times more often than articles that used press release information. The research confirmed the Gatekeeping theory, which states that journalists require House attendance to provide proper bill context, according to White (1950). The research established in Objective 2 that even these correspondents face limits because they lack access to official voting documentation.
2. **The "Opposition" Effect:** The model showed that legislation which dealt with PDP or Labour Party matters received 2.6 times greater coverage depth than other legislation. This suggests that "Conflict" remains a primary news value (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). When opposition parties question the ruling APC, the accompanying friction pushes media to transcend beyond surface reporting and describe the "Partisan Dynamics" (Table 3).
3. **The "High-Profile" Variable:** Moderate depth of national issues was raised by 2.3 times because of high-profile national issues. The study shows that newsworthy events are essential for achieving deep research results. The Congressional record shows that most executive screenings which receive unanimous approval require only brief coverage while Tax Reforms and Electoral Amendments need more complete background information to explain their contentious nature.

The findings show that the elements that affect legislative transparency in Nigeria operate through structural systems instead of institutional frameworks; the media provides in-depth reporting during political conflicts and when correspondents report from the field, but it cannot show complete visibility of Individual Votes because the National Assembly lacks proper recorded data. This confirms that while the Nigerian press is an

active observer of the "legislative theatre," it is not yet an empowered auditor of "individual legislative conduct."

CONCLUSION

Nigerian legislative journalism operates through a system of double standards, as the study demonstrates when institutional outcomes receive press coverage while individual accountability remains unproven. The research indicated that 437 articles from *Leadership*, *The Cable*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Vanguard* publications remained to lack individual voting records since none of the stories included lawmaker-specific "Yes/No" voting information. The media shows moderate depth through its bill aim descriptions and verifiable result presentation yet it remains blocked by the National Assembly's collective voice vote system which produces inaccessible digital roll-call recordings and its roll-call voting system. The findings reveal that reporting quality is not a product of media type but is instead driven by the involvement of opposition parties and the presence of parliamentary correspondents. The Nigerian electorate lacks necessary voting tools because they do not have access to detailed information about how each lawmaker performed their duties. The study proposes two reforms to solve this problem because the National Assembly needs to adopt electronic voting and public record systems while media organizations should create investigative legislative reports that use data to produce more comprehensive and accountable democratic systems.

The research findings faced multiple limitations that the researchers encountered during their interpretation process. The study investigated four selected media outlets which include *Leadership*, *The Cable*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Vanguard* as its only permitted case studies. The selected platforms provide a national distribution through their combination of traditional and digital-native platforms yet they fail to represent the complete Nigerian media landscape which includes local vernacular newspapers and broadcast media that use alternative reporting methods. The second limitation observed was that the research depends on manifest news content. The analysis could only examine published material while it failed to identify internal editorial pressures and "brown envelope" journalism and gatekeeping processes that operate to exclude particular legislative details. The National Assembly's structural opacity causes 0% voting record reporting to develop into the third transparency gap that exists according to the study. The Nigerian parliament's use of unrecorded oral consensus through voice votes creates a situation where journalists cannot obtain the necessary information for their complete accountability reports. The study results about reporting depth function as both a critique of institutional record-keeping and a critique of journalistic practice; the findings demonstrate strong results through the analyzed data yet they represent only one aspect of a larger systemic problem.

The study establishes multiple research paths that scholars should follow to investigate how legislative transparency functions in Nigeria. The first step of future research should involve researchers who will use qualitative methods to conduct focus groups and perform in-depth interviews with both editors and legislative correspondents. The research will help identify institutional barriers and editorial standards that restrict news organizations from conducting in-depth investigations. The researchers need to conduct future studies on comparing multiple government levels. This analysis is focused on the National Assembly, but future investigations need to explore how regional and local news organizations report on the state House of Assembly activities. The research will determine whether the "transparency ceiling" is a national issue or impacts all levels of Nigerian government. The media's impact on Nigeria's democratic systems needs to be examined through these two research methods. Investigating how Nigerian citizens perceive and utilize current legislative news would clarify whether the lack of individual voting records significantly impacts voter behavior or political literacy. Finally, longitudinal studies are recommended to determine whether the use of digital technologies and data journalism approaches over time leads to a greater depth of legislative accountability reporting. These efforts would provide a more holistic understanding of the media's role in strengthening Nigeria's democratic infrastructure.

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