Executive-Legislative Relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Leadership Dynamics and Institutional Conflicts During the Buhari Administration (2015-2023)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of executive-legislative relations in Nigeria during Muhammadu Buhari's presidency (2015-2023), employing a mixed-methods research approach to analyze the complex interactions between these governmental branches. Through a comprehensive survey of 180 participants across various political and institutional sectors, the research investigates the factors influencing inter-branch relationships during two distinct National Assembly periods: the 8th (2015-2019) and 9th (2019-2023) Assemblies. The findings reveal a nuanced landscape of governance characterized by significant variations in leadership styles, institutional frameworks, and political dynamics. The study demonstrates that individual leadership approaches, particularly those of Senate Presidents Bukola Saraki and Ahmad Lawan, substantially shaped executive-legislative interactions. President Buhari's military-influenced leadership style emerged as a critical factor, with respondents identifying it as the most influential element in inter-branch relations. Utilising rational choice and institutional theories, the research illuminates how personal agency and structural constraints simultaneously influenced governance outcomes. The analysis highlights the shift from confrontational dynamics in the 8th Assembly to a more cooperative approach in the 9th Assembly, revealing the complex negotiation of power and collaboration within Nigeria's presidential system. The study contributes crucial insights into democratic consolidation, emphasizing the importance of leadership development, institutional capacity building, and the delicate balance between legislative independence and executive cooperation in emerging democracies.

Keywords Executive-legislative relations, Nigerian democracy, Buhari administration, presidential system, legislative leadership, institutional dynamics, governance, political institutions, separation of powers

"The supreme executive power being separated from the legislative, the independence of each can be no more than a mere fiction, where the former has no constitutional means of defending itself against the invasions of the latter." - Alexander Hamilton (1792)

INTRODUCTION

Hamilton's words effectively set the preface for how the delicate balancing act between the executive and legislative branches has unfolded over time. It encapsulates the power dynamics to be explored regarding the relations during the Buhari administration. This article (part of a larger study) that examined the Executive-Legislative Relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic under the Buhari Administration (2015-2023) presents its assessment of leadership and the executive- legislative dynamics in Nigeria.

Leadership is a multifaceted concept with various interpretations across disciplines. It is however, generally agreed that leadership is the process by which an individual influences a group of people to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2021). Leadership involves guiding, inspiring motivating and managing resources to achieve organizational or societal objectives. Effective leadership requires a combination of vision, communication,

character, relationships, knowledge, intuition and adaptability. Scholars distinguish between different types of leadership, including transformational, transactional and servant leadership, among others (Bass, 1990). Each of these styles provides unique frameworks for analysing the behaviour and impact of leaders in diverse contexts.

In governance, leadership transcends individual capability; it involves understanding and leveraging institutional frameworks, political systems and public expectations. Executive leadership refers to the actions and policies driven by the executive branch, typically headed by a president, governor, or prime minister. Legislative leadership, on the other hand, encompasses the roles of legislators in crafting laws, overseeing the executive, and representing the electorate (Barkan, 2010). Both forms of leadership are critical in shaping executive-legislative dynamics, particularly in democratic systems.

Representative democracy exists in two major forms: presidential and parliamentary democratic systems. The separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches is a defining feature of presidential systems. This doctrine aims to prevent any single group or individual from accumulating too much unchecked power (Vile, 1998). By dividing authority and creating a system of checks and balances, the separation of powers acts as a safeguard of individual liberties. At its core, the separation of powers delineates distinct roles, powers, and responsibilities for the executive and legislative branches. The executive branch, headed by the president or prime minister, is tasked with enforcing and administering the laws of the nation. Contrastingly, the legislative branch, usually manifested as a bicameral congress or parliament, is entrusted with drafting, deliberating, and codifying those laws. This separation however is not meant to create two opposing and warring factions of government. Rather, it establishes a relationship of negotiation, compromise, and accountability between the two branches (Neustadt, 1960).

The executive proposes and implements policy initiatives, but the legislative branch holds the power of the purse strings and must approve budgets and have oversight functions over the executives. The separation of powers in a presidential system is also designed to provide checks and balances, preventing any single branch from accumulating excessive power (Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997). However, this separation can also lead to potential conflicts and gridlock between the executive and legislative branches, particularly when they are controlled by different political parties (Linz, 1994).

Nigeria has undergone a more evolutionary process in its government structure. The Nigerian presidential system is modelled after the USA with certain peculiarities related to its colonial realities. Nigeria operated under a parliamentary system for much of the 20th century under British colonial rule. It was not until the return to democratic rule in 1999 that the country adopted a presidential system more akin to the American model, with a directly elected president leading the executive branch (Suberu, 2008). However, the Nigerian model includes some distinct characteristics. One major difference is the role of political parties. In the US, the president is not required to be a member of the majority party in Congress. But in Nigeria, the Constitution mandates that the president appoints at least one member of the Cabinet from each state, which in practice means creating an all-party cabinet (Oyewo, 2007). This serves to inextricably link the executive and legislative branches through partisan ties.

Another key distinction is the centralization of power in the Nigerian presidency compared to the American system of diffused and checked executive powers. The Nigerian president exercises considerable decree powers, appoints judicial officers without legislative approval, and can veto legislation only to have their veto overridden by a two-thirds majority in a joint parliamentary session (Akinsanya, 2005). This is generally viewed as concentrating power and authority in a way the American separation of powers model does not allow. Nigeria's political history has been marked by a tumultuous relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Since independence in 1960, there have been frequent tensions and power struggles between the presidency and the National Assembly (Aiyede, 2005; Omitoogun & Odunuga, 2006). During the First Republic (1960-1966) under the parliamentary system, the prime minister and cabinet were dependent on the confidence of the legislature, leading to frequent political crises and instability (Ojo, 2006). The military coups of 1966 ushered in a long period of authoritarian rule, where the executive branch dominated and subjugated the legislative branch (Omotola, 2013).

The Fourth Republic, although witnessing stable transitions, has still seen contentious executive-legislative

dynamics. The inability to institutionalize democratic principles in the executive and legislature has been a major challenge as the two institutions seem unable to work collaboratively to provide the dividends of democracy, which hampers policy-making, implementation processes and acts as a stumbling block to good governance in the country (Momodu & Matudi, 2013). For context, under the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), which began the Fourth Republic, there were numerous clashes between the executive and the National Assembly over issues of oversight, impeachment threats, and the passage of legislation (Fashagba, 2009; Nwabueze, 2003). This brouhaha caused dramatic and incessant removal of three Senate Presidents from office within the first three years of the administration, which was seen as an attempt to cow the National Assembly into submitting to the whims and caprices of the executive (Garuba & Salawu, 2020).

This adversarial relationship continued under the administrations of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2010) and Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015), with the legislature often asserting its independence and checking the powers of the presidency (Aiyede, 2013; Fagbadebo, 2016). These historical precedents of a turbulent executive-legislative relationship set the stage for the dynamics that would unfold during the Buhari administration, especially between 2015 to 2019.

Executive and Legislative Leadership in Buhari's Administration

The administration of Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's president from 2015 to 2023, provides a compelling case study for examining executive and legislative leadership. Buhari's tenure was marked by significant political, economic and social challenges, including economic recession, security crises, and widespread calls for institutional reforms. Understanding the dynamics between the executive and legislative branches during this period requires an analysis of the leadership styles, priorities and interactions that defined their relationship.

Buhari's Leadership Style

Buhari's leadership style was described by Abdullahi, & Izom (2019) with a slogan of "slowly but surely", as asserted to by Buhari who admitted that people referred to his administration as "Baba go slow". Other referred to his "body language" to allude to his leadership perhaps on the premise of Buhari being a retired Army General and former military Head of state in which he was viewed as tactical and strategic.

In the context of this article, President Buhari's leadership style during 2015-2023 would be described as authoritarian and decisive, with a focus on anti-corruption and security (Campbell, 2018). A retired general in the Nigerian Army, Buhari brought a military ethos to his civilian administration, emphasizing discipline and control. His leadership prioritized centralizing decision-making processes, often sidelining dissenting voices within his party, the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and the National Assembly (). This approach contributed to both stability and friction in executive-legislative relations.

Buhari's anti-corruption agenda was a cornerstone of his administration, earning him widespread public support during his first term. However, critics argued that his policies lacked inclusivity and transparency, which alienated key stakeholders in the legislature (Amaraegbu, 2021). The president's leadership style thus set the tone for interactions between the executive and legislative branches.

Legislative Leadership During Buhari's Tenure

The Nigerian National Assembly, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives, played a pivotal role in shaping the legislative landscape during Buhari's administration. Legislative leadership was characterized by periodic conflicts and collaborations with the executive. Senate Presidents Bukola Saraki (2015–2019) and Ahmad Lawan (2019–2023) epitomized the contrasting dynamics in the legislature's relationship with Buhari.

Saraki's tenure was marked by frequent clashes with the executive branch. Elected against the wishes of Buhari and the APC leadership, Saraki pursued an independent legislative agenda, often opposing executive proposals (Olorunmola, 2017). For instance, the delayed passage of the 2016 budget highlighted the tensions between the two branches. Saraki's leadership emphasized legislative autonomy, which he argued was essential for maintaining checks and balances. However, critics accused him of using his position to shield himself from corruption allegations (Adetula, 2018).

In contrast, Ahmad Lawan's leadership from 2019 was largely aligned with Buhari's administration. Lawan's tenure witnessed smoother executive-legislative relations, with quicker passage of budgets and key legislation. Critics, however, argued that this alignment undermined the legislature's independence, reducing it to a "rubber stamp" for the executive (Ibrahim, 2022). The contrasting leadership styles of Saraki and Lawan underscore the complex interplay between legislative leadership and executive priorities.

Understanding this context is crucial to analysing the leadership dynamics and power struggles that characterized Buhari's tenure. The following sections will examine in detail the executive-legislative leadership during the Buhari administration from 2015-2023, exploring the challenges, lessons and prospects for Nigeria's democratic governance.

Statement of the Problem

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, there have been constant tussles between the executive and legislature, which are the major institutions elected by citizens to represent them and provide good governance for the country. In the presidential system, the constitution states the powers of the executive, which deals mainly with the implementation of policies and laws, while the legislature formulates the laws. This shows a separation of powers and functions, but both arms are supposed to complement each other for the smooth administration of the country.

The relationship between Nigeria's executive and legislative branches during President Muhammadu Buhari's first term (2015-2019) was also not different. Despite both branches being led by the majority party- the All-Progressives Congress (APC), the relationship was notably strained, because of the emergence of the Senate President Bukola Saraki's. Sakaki's became the Senate president of the 8th National Assembly through a rather contentious manner. He secured his position with support from opposition party members, contrary to the preferences of the APC leadership and President Buhari, leading to immediate tensions between the executive and legislative branches.

This discord was evident in several high-profile conflicts, including delays in passing national budgets and disagreements over key governmental appointments. The executive branch attributed its suboptimal performance during this period to the competitive politics between the two branches, which resulted in deliberate delays by the National Assembly in enacting the national budget. President Muhammadu Buhari lamented the lack of cordiality in the relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches under the 8th National Assembly, saying that it was not at its best, which hampered the two institutions from serving the people. He argued "that the principal task of the National Assembly is to cooperate with the Executive so that we can fashion policies that will lift our people out of poverty and illiteracy" (Ailement, 2019).

The strained relationship was further highlighted by the defection of numerous lawmakers from the APC to opposition parties, with Saraki himself leaving the APC in 2018. These defections were seen as significant blows to President Buhari's administration, exacerbating the existing tensions between the executive and legislative branches.

The 9th Assembly came into session with a new leadership of Ahmed Lawan and Femi Gbajabiamila, which were favoured by the ruling APC and the Presidency and led to improved relations between the executive and the legislative branches. However, there were dissenting voices within the legislature and the general public regarding the so-called cooperation, viewing it as rubber-stamping and not in tandem with the separation of powers and the oversight functions of the legislature.

Different literature has attempted to diagnose the problem of executive and legislative relations. Schmidt (2006) submits that the non-adherence to the rule of law and constitution is the major problem, while Stewart (2021) attributes it to the interference and influence of political parties in deciding who becomes leader of the National Assembly.

One of the most remarkable among the researches was the one sponsored by the YIAGA Africa Centre for Legislative Engagement, with Attahiru Jega as the lead researcher. The research revealed that during the 8th

Assembly, 2,166 bills were introduced, out of which 515 pieces of legislation were passed, including 21 constitution alteration bills. Explicitly, the Senate passed a total of 172 bills while the House of Representatives passed 343 bills within the same period. The report submitted that there was a significant increase in the number of bills handled by the 8th Assembly (YIAGA Africa, 2019). Meanwhile, the 9th Assembly, which came into session with a new leadership favoured by the ruling APC and the Presidency, passed 162 bills (Omogbolagun, 2023). For some, this presents a problematic situation; the 8th National Assembly, which was perceived as anti-executive, passed more bills than the 9th Assembly, which had a more cordial relationship with the executive. This begets the question -What were the achievements of the 9th Assembly that had a more cordial relation?

Navigating the nuances of this relationship is crucial in assessing the efficacy and resilience of the country's governance mechanisms, including during the Buhari era. Understanding the interaction between the executive and legislative powers therefore provides valuable insights into the complexities, challenges, and opportunities, and the implications of such behaviour and how it has shaped Nigeria's political landscape in recent years.

From the analysis of the major research, two major issues were extrapolated from the study. Firstly, the characters of political actors who occupy the institutions have significant influence on conflicts that occur between the executive and legislature. Secondly, the executive seems to be cowing the National Assembly due to lack of independence of the legislature and other factors that make them subservient to the executive. The article therefore sought to present why and what types of conflicts occurred between the executive and legislature under Buhari's Administration. Discovering answers to these problems ultimately led to recommendations that will facilitate cooperation and integration of the executive and legislative branches even within the tenets of the separation of powers.

Research Questions

To guide this article, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What was the nature of interactions between the executive and legislature under Buhari's Administration?

2. How did the leadership styles of the major political actors influence the relations between the executive and legislature under Buhari's Administration between 2015 and 2019?

3. What roles did institutional factors play in shaping the dynamics between the executive and legislature?

Research Objectives

The main objective of this article was to analyse the patterns of executive-legislative interactions during the Buhari administration (2015-2023). The specific research objectives were:

1. To examine the differences in executive-legislative relations between the 8th and 9th National Assemblies.

2. To evaluate how leadership styles of key political actors influenced executive-legislative relations.

3. To assess the impact of institutional frameworks and party dynamics on executive-legislative cooperation and conflict.

Significance of the Research

This article is significant in several ways, it helps to define the roles and responsibilities of the executive and legislative branches, outlining their respective domains of authority and spheres of influence. This delineation helps to establish the boundaries of their interactions and the limits of their powers. The study aims to ascertain if and when any branch overreached these boundaries during the administration under review.

Secondly, it explores how the system of checks and balances functioned in practice, where each branch monitored and constrained the actions of the other. This serves as a safeguard against the abuse of power and

promotes more balanced and accountable governance. The study documents any abuses of power that occurred during the administration under review. While separation of powers creates independence for each branch, it also necessitates cooperation between the executive and legislative branches to effectively govern. This research examines the dynamics that shaped the nature of the relationship between the executive and legislature from 2015-2023 and how they navigated their interactions.

Finally, understanding the implications of separation of powers is crucial for analysing executive-legislative relations within Nigeria's political context. This study contributes to existing literature on executive and National Assembly relations in the Fourth Republic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is anchored on two theoretical frameworks: rational choice theory and institutional theory. These theories provide a lens through which to analyse executive-legislative relations in Nigeria's presidential system, particularly during the Buhari administration.

Rational choice theory posits that individuals make decisions based on their personal preferences and goals, aiming to maximize their benefits while minimizing costs (Downs, 1957). In the context of executive-legislative relations, this theory suggests that political actors in both branches act strategically to advance their interests and those of their constituents. Applied to the Nigerian context, rational choice theory can help explain the motivations behind conflicts and cooperation between the executive and legislative branches. For instance, legislators may oppose executive initiatives not necessarily due to ideological differences, but because they perceive such opposition as beneficial to their political careers or their constituencies. Similarly, the executive may seek to build alliances within the legislature based on calculations of political advantage rather than policy alignment.

This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant in understanding the dynamics of the 8th National Assembly (2015-2019) under Buhari's administration, where significant conflicts arose despite the ruling party holding a majority. The theory suggests that individual political actors may have been acting in what they perceived as their best interests, even when this led to friction with the executive branch.

Institutional theory focuses on how institutions shape behaviour and decision-making processes within organizations and societies (March & Olsen, 1984). This theory emphasizes the role of formal and informal rules, norms, and structures in influencing political outcomes. In the context of executive-legislative relations, institutional theory helps explain how the constitutional framework, legislative procedures, and established political practices shape interactions between the two branches. In Nigeria, institutional theory can shed light on how the country's unique political institutions, such as the federal system, the bicameral legislature, and the constitutional provisions for executive-legislative relations, influence the dynamics between these branches. For instance, the constitutional requirement for the president to appoint at least one minister from each state creates a specific institutional context that shapes executive-legislative interactions. The theory also helps explain how informal institutions, such as patronage networks and party structures, can impact formal institutional relationships. This is particularly relevant in understanding the shift in dynamics between the 8th and 9th National Assemblies under Buhari's administration.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative approach utilising a cross-sectional survey research design. Cross-sectional survey research design as apt because it effectively identified the patterns and correlations among variables at a specific moment 2015-2023 (Creswell, 2014). Structured questionnaires were used for primary data collection from defined categories of respondents, complemented by secondary data analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of executive-legislative relations during the Buhari administration.

Sampling and Population

This study adopted a **quantitative research approach** using a **cross-sectional survey design** to capture data at

a specific point in time, focusing on the period between 2015 and 2023 during Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The cross-sectional design was selected because it allows for the collection of data from a sample that represents the larger population, thereby enabling the identification of patterns and correlations among variables related to executive-legislative relations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021).

The target population for the study included key stakeholders involved in Nigeria's executive-legislative processes, such as:

- Members of the National Assembly (Senators and Representatives)

- Legislative aides and administrative staff

- Executive branch officials (civil servants)

- Representatives from civil society organizations, academic experts, media professionals

- Citizens from Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative sample that captures the diversity within the population. The process included:

Simple Random Sampling was used to select participants from the broader population, ensuring each individual had an equal chance of being chosen. This technique minimized selection bias and increased the representativeness of the sample. Given the heterogeneous nature of the population, stratified sampling was then used to divide the population into distinct subgroups (strata) based on:

- **Political party affiliation** (e.g., APC, PDP, minority parties)

- **Geopolitical zones** (North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South, and South West)

- **Legislative committees** (e.g., Finance and Appropriation, Public Accounts, Rules and Business, and other oversight committees)

Stratification ensured that each subgroup was adequately represented, enhancing the study's capacity to provide a comprehensive analysis across different political and regional context. Within each stratum, systematic sampling was applied to further refine the selection process by picking every nth participant from a list, ensuring a structured approach to participant selection (Babbie, 2021., Kumar, 2021., and Creswell, 2020).

Sample size

The sample size was determined using a systematic approach that applied a 10% sampling rate across population categories while adhering to established statistical methodologies, specifically utilizing Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula as a minimum threshold, resulting in a stratified sample of 180 participants.

Comprising 41 legislative branch representatives (including 11 Senators, 30 Representatives, and 42 legislative aides/administrative staff), 42 executive branch officials (spanning senior and junior civil servants), 27 participants from civil society, academic experts, and media professionals and 28 citizens form the six geo-

political zones with the sampling strategy grounded in Cochran's (1977) recommendations for institutional studies, Israel's (2018) guidelines for administrative research, and Baker and Edwards' (2012) expert sampling principles, thereby ensuring both representativeness and methodological rigor in capturing diverse perspectives on legislative-executive relations. Expressed statistically as:

n = 180

Stratification Breakdown:
Legislative Branch (n1) = 41
• Senators (11)
• Representatives (30)
• Legislative Aides/Admin Staff (42)
Executive Branch (n2) = 42
• Senior Civil Servants (20)
• Junior Civil Servants (22)
Civil Society, Academic & Media (27)
Citizen Representation (28). Distributed across 6 Geopolitical Zones

Sampling Rate: 10%

Sampling Error Margin: ±5%

Confidence Level: 95%

z =1.96, p=0.5, e=0.05

$n = 1.96^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)/ 0.05^2$

$n = 0.9604/0.0025 = 180.16$

Data Collection Methods

Structured questionnaires were the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to capture perceptions, experiences, and insights related to executive-legislative interactions. Questions covered topics such as the frequency of conflicts, factors influencing cooperation, and the effectiveness of legislative oversight. Secondary data sources were reviewed systematically to examine Legislative records (e.g., bill passage rates, budget approvals in other to find the trend in the passage of bill between the 8th and 9th assemblies

RESULTS

This research findings reveal a complex and evolving relationship between the executive and legislative branches during the Buhari administration. The relationship during Buhari's first term (2015-2019) was characterised by a mix of cooperation and confrontation. This mixed perception aligns with the historical context of executive-legislative relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. As noted by Okpeh (2014), the relationship between these two branches has often been characterised by periods of cooperation interspersed with conflicts. The Buhari administration's first term seems to have followed this pattern, with moments of collaboration overshadowed by high-profile disagreements. This article will examine executive-legislative dynamics during Buhari's administration in terms the areas of collaboration and then the areas of confrontations based on the analysis of data.

Respondents were asked questions among others on the nature of conflict, the leadership style of the legislative, the leadership style of the Buhair and the impact on the democratic process between 2015-2023.

Table 2: Response on how often did significant conflicts occur between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2015-2019)?

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Very rarely	17	9.4
Rarely	21	11.7
Occasionally	88	48.9
Frequently	33	18.3
Very frequently	21	11.7
Total	**180**	**100.0**
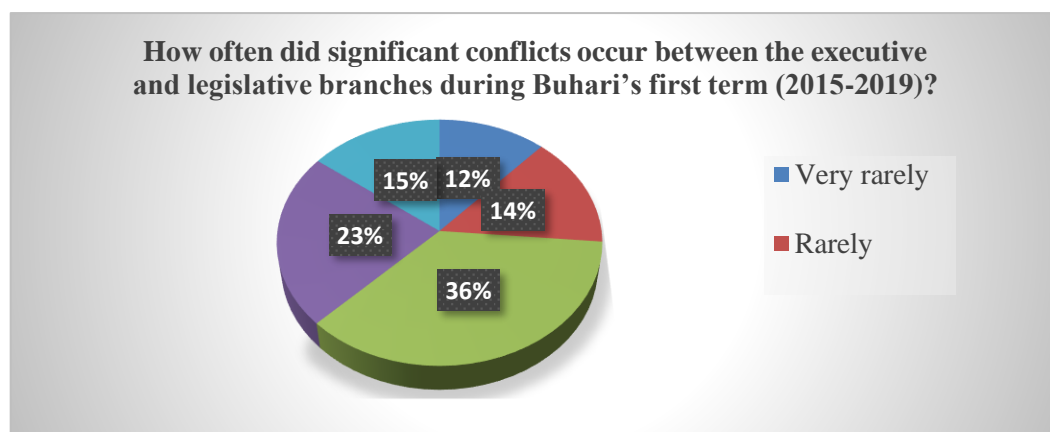
How often did significant conflicts occur between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2015-2019)?
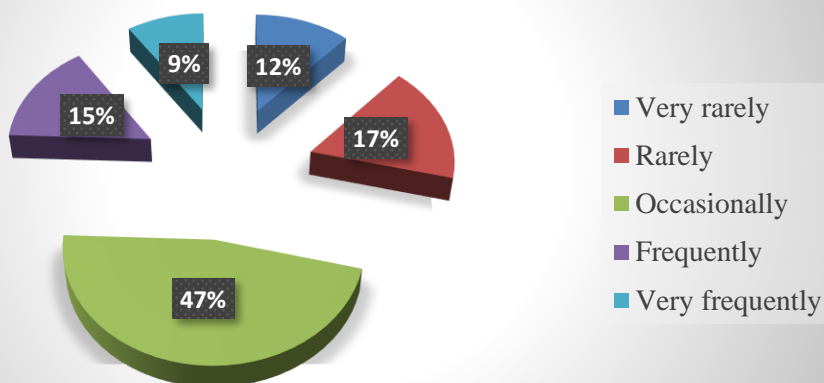
On conflict and challenges, the respondents were asked how often significant conflicts occurred between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2015-2019) and it shows that 17(9.4%) said very rarely, 21(11.7%) said rarely, 88(48.9%) said occasionally, 33(18.3%) said frequently while 21(11.7%) said very frequently. Therefore, it can be said that significant conflicts occurred occasionally between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2015-2019).

Table 3: Response on how often did significant conflicts occur between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2019-2023)?

Statement		Frequency	Percent
	Very rarely	21	11.7
	Rarely	31	17.2
	Occasionally	84	46.7
	Frequently	27	15.0
	Very frequently	17	9.4
	Total	**180**	**100.0**

How often did significant conflicts occur between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2015-2019)?
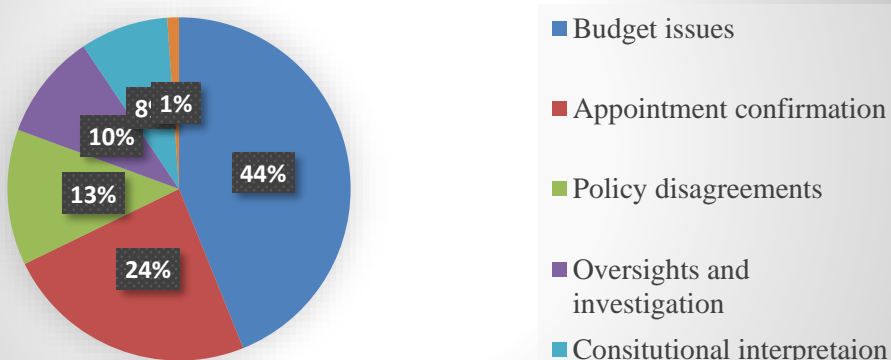
On conflict and challenges, the respondents were asked how often significant conflicts occurred between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2019-2023) and it shows that 21(11.7%) said very rarely, 31(17.2%) said rarely, 84(46.7%) said occasionally, 27(15.0%) said frequently while 17(9.4%) said very frequently. Therefore, it can be said that significant conflicts occurred occasionally between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's first term (2019-2023).

Table 4: Response on what were the main sources of conflict between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's administration?

Statement		Frequency	Percent
	Budget issues	79	43.9
	Appointment confirmation	43	23.9
	Policy disagreements	23	12.8
	Oversights and investigations	18	10.0
	Constitutional interpretation	15	8.3
	Others	2	1.1
	Total	**180**	**100.0**

What were the main sources of conflict between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's administration?

On conflict and challenges, the respondents were asked what were the main sources of conflict between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's administration and it shows that 79(43.9%) said budget issues, 43(23.9%) said appointment confirmation, 23(12.8%) said oversight and investigation, 15(8.3%) said constitutional interpretation while 2(1.1%) said others. Therefore, it can be said that budget issues were main sources of conflict between the executive and legislative branches during Buhari's administration.

Table 5: Response on to what extent did the personalities/ Leadership styles of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's first term (2015-2019)?

Statement		Frequency	Percent
	Not at all	13	7.2
	To a small extent	31	17.2
	To a moderate extent	23	12.8
	To a large extent	49	27.2
	To a very large extent	64	36.6
	Total	**180**	**100.0**

To what extent did the personalities of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's first term (2015-2019)?
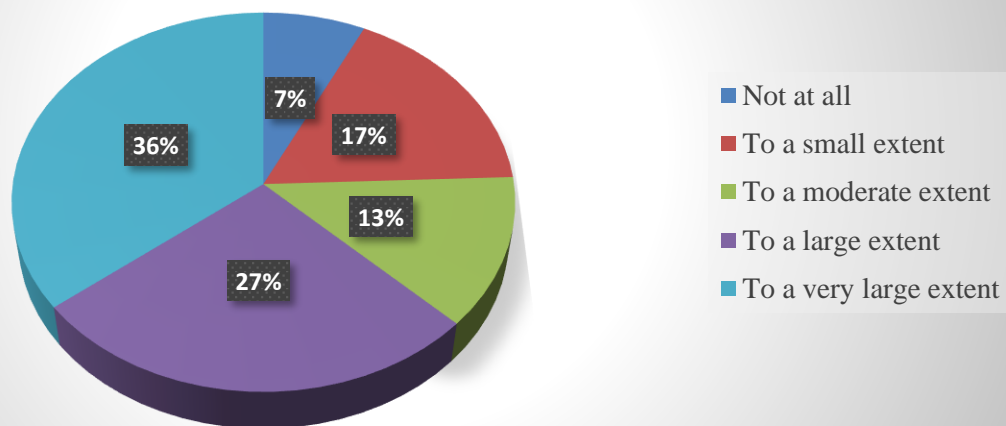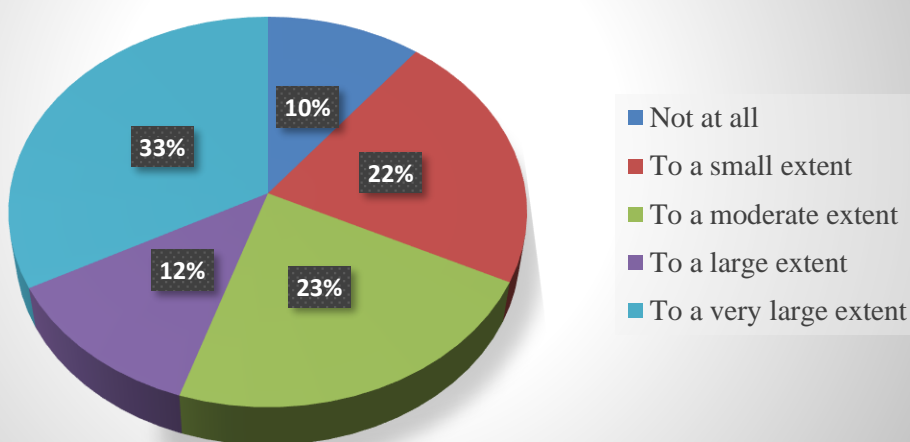
On the impact of political actors, participants were asked what to what extent did the personalities of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's first term (2015-2019) and it shows that 13(7.2%) said not at all, 31(17.2%) said to a small extent, 23(12.8) said to a moderate extent, 49(27.2%) said to a large extent, while 64(35.6%) said to a very large extent. Therefore, to a very large extent, personalities of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's first term (2015-2019).

Table 6: Response on to what extent did the personalities/leadership style of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's second term (2019-2023)?

Statement		Frequency	Percent
	Not at all	19	10.6

To a small extent	39	21.7
To a moderate extent	41	22.8
To a large extent	22	12.2
To a very large extent	59	32.8
Total	**180**	**100.0**

To what extent did the personalities of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's second term (2019-2023)?
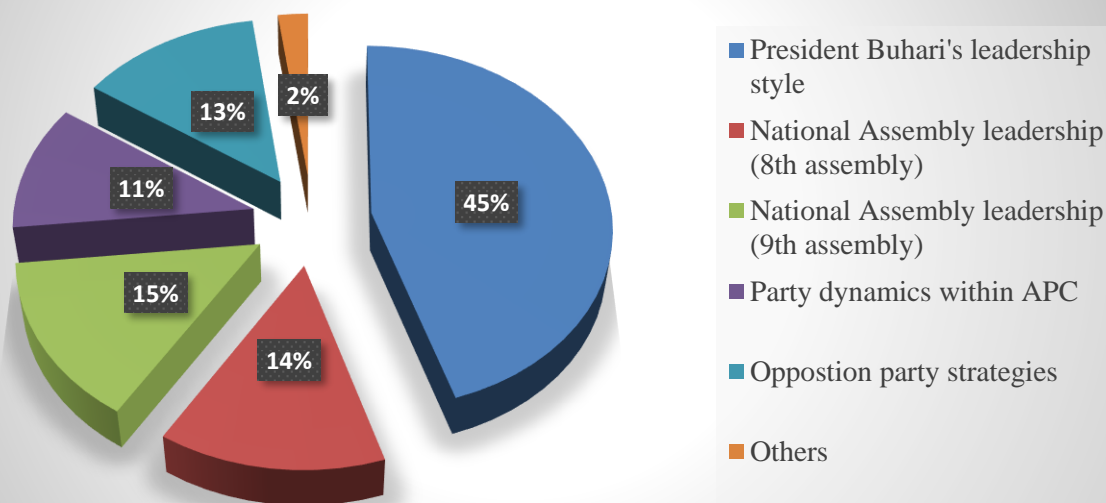
On the impact of political actors, participants were asked what to what extent did the personalities of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's second term (2019-2023) and it shows that 19(10.6%) said not at all, 39(21.7%) said to a small extent, 41(22.8) said to a moderate extent, 22(12.2%) said to a large extent, while 59(32.8%) said to a very large extent. Therefore, to a very large extent, personalities of key political actors influence the executive-legislative relationship during Buhari's second term (2019-2023).

Table 7: Response on which of the following factors most significantly influenced the nature of executive-legislative relations during Buhari's administration?

Statement		Frequency	Percent
	President Buhari's leadership style	81	45.0
	National Assembly leadership (8th assembly)	25	13.9
	National Assembly leadership (9th assembly)	26	14.4
	Party dynamics within APC	20	11.1
	Opposition party strategies	24	13.3
	Others	4	2.2
	Total	**180**	**100.0**

On the impact of political actors, the participants were asked which of the following factors most significantly influenced the nature of executive-legislative relations during Buhari's administration and it shows that 81(45.0%) said president Buhari's leadership style, 25(13.9%) said National Assembly leadership (8th assembly), 26(14,4%) said National Assembly leadership (9th assembly), 20(11.1%) said party dynamics within APC, 24(13.3%) said opposition party strategies while 4(2.2%) said others. therefore, president Buhari's leadership style significantly influenced the nature of executive-legislative relations during his administration.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study reveal complex patterns in executive-legislative relations during Buhari's administration (2015-2023). The findings reveal how leadership styles and institutional arrangements significantly impact executive-legislative relations, with significant variations between his first and second terms, this contrast between the 8th and 9th Assemblies demonstrates how different approaches to legislative leadership can fundamentally alter governmental dynamics. This discussion analyses these findings through the lens of rational choice and institutional theories, examining how leadership dynamics, institutional frameworks and political contexts shaped these relationships.

First Term Dynamics (2015-2019)

The subtleties of the first term were characterised by frequent conflicts during Buhari's first term, with 78.9% of respondents indicating reporting frequent or very frequent conflicts. This aligns with rational choice theory's prediction that political actors pursue their interests even when this creates institutional tension. The 8th Assembly under Saraki's leadership demonstrated this through assertive oversight and frequent opposition to executive initiatives. Analysis revealed that the 8th Assembly had a higher frequency of conflicts with the executive branch compared to the 9th Assembly. The high incidence of budget-related conflicts (43.9% of responses) supports Mainwaring and Shugart's (1997) argument about inherent tensions in presidential systems over fiscal control. This mirrors experiences in other presidential systems where legislative budget powers create natural points of conflict with executive priorities (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2013).

Second Term (2019-2023)

The shift from conflict to cooperation between the 8th and 9th Assemblies under Buhari's administration demonstrates the significant impact that individual leadership, party dynamics and institutional arrangements can have on governance outcomes. The average time taken for budget passage decreased from 5 months in the 8th Assembly to 2.5 months in the 9th Assembly, the 9th Assembly (2019-2023) showed a marked improvement cooperation with the executive branch. This was evidenced by timely passage of budgets, smoother confirmation

processes for executive appointees and greater alignment on policy initiatives. The tensions observed during the 8th Assembly (2015-2019) align with theories of presidential systems that predict potential conflicts when the executive and legislative branches assert their independence (Linz, 1994). The frequent budget delays and appointment confirmation battles during this period exemplify the challenges of divided government, even when the same party nominally controls both branches.

Analysis showed a significant increase in the rate of bill passage and executive appointment confirmations in the 9th Assembly compared to the 8th Assembly. The improved cooperation seen in the 9th Assembly (2019-2023) reflects a different dynamic, more akin to what Cheibub (2007) describes as "coalitional presidentialism," where the executive builds legislative support through party alliances and negotiation. This shift resulted in more efficient governance in some respects, such as timely budget passages and smoother policy implementation. However, the study's findings also raise important questions about the optimal balance between cooperation and independence in a presidential system. While the conflicts of the 8th Assembly were often seen as detrimental to governance, they also demonstrated a robust exercise of legislative oversight and independence. Conversely, the smoother relations of the 9th Assembly, while facilitating governance, prompted concerns about potential rubber-stamping and weakened checks on executive power. These dynamics reflect the ongoing challenge of institutionalizing democratic norms and practices in Nigeria's relatively young democracy. The significant influence of individual leaders and party politics on executive-legislative relations suggests that these institutional relationships are still in a process of maturation and consolidation.

Impact of Individual Parliamentary Leadership

The study highlighted the significant role played by individual leaders in shaping executive-legislative relations. leadership played a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics between the branches. Leadership style scores (based on survey responses) showed significant differences between the leaders of the 8th and 9th Assemblies. Data analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between leadership style scores and measures of executive-legislative cooperation, while more adversarial approaches in the 8th Assembly contributed to frequent clashes.

Rational choice theory underscores the influence of individual decision-making, as leaders prioritized personal or party gains over collaborative governance. When leadership was collaborative a number of gains were achieved. For instance, budgetary processes were a key area of interaction between the executive and legislative branches. Buhari's administration made significant strides in implementing an annual budget cycle, a reform aimed at enhancing fiscal discipline. While Saraki's Senate often delayed budget approvals due to disagreements over allocations, Lawan's leadership facilitated quicker approvals, aligning with Buhari's economic agenda (Eme & Ogbochie, 2020). Both branches demonstrated a shared commitment to anti-corruption efforts, albeit with differing approaches. Buhari's executive leadership focused on prosecuting high-profile cases and recovering stolen funds, while the legislature enacted laws to strengthen anti-corruption agencies. The passage of the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Act, 2022, exemplifies this collaboration. Nigeria's persistent security crises, including insurgency in the northeast and farmer-herder conflicts, necessitated coordinated efforts between the executive and legislature. The National Assembly approved substantial military budgets and supported Buhari's appointments of service chiefs. Despite criticisms of inefficiency, these collaborations underscored the shared responsibility for national security.

There were also areas of conflict as a result of leadership. Electoral reforms were a contentious issue during Buhari's administration. The executive's reluctance to sign electoral bills passed by the legislature, including amendments to the Electoral Act, strained relations. Buhari's eventual assent to the Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill, 2022, following extensive negotiations, highlighted the challenges of achieving consensus on critical reforms (Onyekpere, 2022). The confirmation of executive appointments was another flashpoint in executive-legislative dynamics. The legislature occasionally rejected Buhari's nominees for key positions, citing constitutional and procedural concerns. High-profile examples include the rejection of Ibrahim Magu as Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and delays in confirming ministerial nominees (Ojo, 2019). Efforts to amend Nigeria's 1999 Constitution revealed deep divisions between the executive and legislature. While the National Assembly sought to decentralize power and enhance state autonomy, Buhari's administration expressed reservations about certain provisions, particularly those perceived to weaken federal authority (Okeke, 2021).

Presidential Leadership Style

The finding that 45% of respondents identified presidential leadership style as the most significant factor influencing executive-legislative relations supports rational choice theory's emphasis on individual agency. From a rational choice theory perspective, this finding makes considerable sense. This theory posits that political actors make calculated decisions to maximize their personal and political benefits.

The high percentage (45%) indicating leadership style as the key factor aligns with this theoretical framework because leaders as a rational actor, must choose specific leadership style (s) that they believe will best achieve their goals. In this case, Buhari's leadership approach, characterized by what Campbell (2018) describes as "military-influenced decisiveness," suggests that he made a conscious choice to employ a leadership style that reflected his military background and personal assessment of what would be most effective within the constraints of institutional frameworks which were reminiscence of his previous style as head of state.

Looking at this through institutional theory provides a complementary but distinct interpretation. Institutional theory emphasizes how formal and informal rules, procedures, and norms shape political behaviour. From this perspective, the 45% finding suggests that, while leadership style appears to be highly influential, it operates within an institutional framework. Even though Buhari adopted a military-influenced style, this had to interact with existing institutional structures governing executive-legislative relations. The high percentage suggesting leadership style matters most might actually reveal the degree to which institutional frameworks in this context allow individual leadership styles to significantly impact executive-legislative relations.

The interplay between these theories is particularly interesting in this case. While rational choice theory helps us understand why Buhari might choose a particular leadership style based on his background and goals, institutional theory helps explain how the existing governmental structure either enables or constrains the impact of that leadership style on executive-legislative relations. The fact that leadership style emerged as the most significant factor suggests that in this particular context, individual agency (emphasized by rational choice theory) might have somewhat more explanatory power than institutional constraints. However, we should remember that these leadership styles are still exercised within an institutional framework that sets boundaries for how that individual agency can be expressed.

The interplay between these parliamentary leadership styles and Buhari's executive approach demonstrates what Okeke (2022) calls the "dynamic equilibrium" of Nigerian federal governance. The fact that 45% of respondents identified leadership style as the crucial factor suggests that while institutional frameworks provide the playing field, individual leadership approaches significantly influence how institutions actually function.

This analysis helps us understand why leadership style emerged as such a dominant factor. The varied approaches of Saraki, Lawan, and Gbajabiamila, each responding to the same institutional environment but making different rational choices, illustrate how personal agency operates within institutional constraints. Their different levels of success in managing executive-legislative relations support both rational choice theory's emphasis on individual decision-making and institutional theory's focus on structural influences.

CONCLUSION

The examination of executive-legislative relations during Muhammadu Buhari's presidency (2015-2023) reveals a complex interplay of institutional frameworks, leadership styles, and political dynamics that significantly shaped Nigeria's governance landscape. This study's findings underscore the critical role of individual leadership in navigating the inherent tensions of Nigeria's presidential system, as evidenced by the stark contrast between the confrontational dynamics of the 8th National Assembly and the more cooperative approach of the 9th Assembly.

The research highlights how the personalities and strategic choices of key political actors, particularly the legislative leadership of Bukola Saraki and Ahmad Lawan, profoundly influenced the nature of executive-legislative interactions, aligning with rational choice theory's emphasis on individual agency within institutional constraints. Buhari's leadership style, characterized by a military-influenced decisiveness, emerged as a

dominant factor in shaping these relations, demonstrating the significant impact of executive approach on inter-branch dynamics. The study reveals that while institutional frameworks provide the structure for governance, the interpretation and application of these frameworks by individual leaders substantially determine the effectiveness of executive-legislative cooperation. This dynamic was particularly evident in the handling of critical issues such as budget approvals, anti-corruption efforts, and security challenges, where the shift from conflict to cooperation between the 8th and 9th Assemblies markedly influenced governance outcomes.

The research also illuminates the ongoing challenge of institutionalizing democratic norms in Nigeria's relatively young democracy, as the balance between legislative independence and executive cooperation remains delicate. The frequent conflicts observed, particularly over budgetary issues and appointment confirmations, reflect the inherent tensions in presidential systems identified by scholars like Linz and Mainwaring. However, the study also demonstrates the potential for effective "coalitional presidentialism" as described by Cheibub, particularly during Buhari's second term, where improved executive-legislative alignment facilitated more efficient governance processes. This shift raises important questions about the optimal balance between cooperation and independence in ensuring effective governance while maintaining robust democratic checks and balances.

The study's findings contribute significantly to our understanding of the evolving nature of executive-legislative relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, offering insights into how personal leadership styles interact with institutional frameworks to shape governance outcomes. It underscores the need for a nuanced approach to analysing presidential systems in emerging democracies, where formal institutional arrangements may be less determinative of outcomes than the strategic choices and interpersonal dynamics of key political actors.

The research highlights the importance of leadership development and institutional capacity building in fostering stable and effective governance in presidential systems. It suggests that while constitutional frameworks provide the foundation for democratic governance, the realization of effective executive-legislative relations depends heavily on the ability of leaders to navigate complex political landscapes, build coalitions, and balance assertiveness with cooperation. The study's examination of budget processes, anti-corruption efforts and security collaborations reveals both the potential for productive inter-branch cooperation and the persistent challenges in achieving consistent alignment on national priorities. These findings have important implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria and offer valuable lessons for other emerging democracies grappling with the challenges of executive-legislative relations in presidential systems.

The research underscores the need for continued scholarly attention to the dynamics of inter-branch relations, particularly in contexts where democratic institutions are still evolving. It suggests that future research could benefit from more in-depth comparative analyses across different presidential systems, longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of executive-legislative relations over extended periods, and more nuanced examinations of how specific policy areas are affected by varying patterns of inter-branch dynamics. Additionally, the study points to the importance of developing more sophisticated theoretical frameworks that can account for the complex interplay between institutional structures, individual agency, and broader political and social contexts in shaping governance outcomes in presidential systems. In conclusion, this examination of executive-legislative relations during Buhari's presidency provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of democratic governance in Nigeria. It highlights the critical importance of leadership in navigating the institutional landscape of presidential systems, the ongoing process of democratic consolidation in emerging democracies, and the need for continued scholarly and policy attention to the dynamics of inter-branch relations. As Nigeria continues to evolve its democratic practices, the lessons drawn from this period of significant political transition offer important guidance for future leaders, policymakers, and scholars seeking to understand and enhance the functioning of presidential democracies in complex political environments.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this research. The study was conducted independently, without undue influence from any political parties, governmental institutions, or external organizations. The research findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this article are solely those of the authors and do not represent the official positions of any affiliated institutions.

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