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Enhancing Legislative Transparency and Civic Participation through Interactive National Assembly TV Online Engagement

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Abstract

Perceived transparency of the legislature is a critical factor that can foster engagement or influence trust in democracies. When citizens believe that the processes of legislation are open and accessible, they develop more trust. Transparency reduces information asymmetry between the government and the public, enabling citizens to better understand decision-making processes and hold representatives accountable. However, when there are low levels of perceived transparency, it can lead to skepticism and political apathy, undermining participation and legitimacy in democratic systems. Engaging with the National Assembly TV platforms can enhance citizens' perception of transparency in the legislature and encourage civic participation in politics, but only where legislative content is accessible and interactive, and citizens are aware. The study examined the National Assembly TV Online Engagement and how it enhances legislative transparency among the online audience. The study adopted a survey design. A sample size of 417 respondents was obtained using Slovin's sample formula. A voluntary response sampling strategy was employed, and a self-structured questionnaire was used to gather data. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.786 to 0.933. Response rate was 100%. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that engagement significantly influenced perceived legislative transparency ($\beta = 0.547$, $p < 0.05$). The researchers concluded that engagement with NASS TV's social media improved not only civic political participation but also their perceived legislative transparency. It recommends that NASS TV management should strengthen interaction by applying more citizen-focused content to engage and expand audience reach.



Keywords: Civic learning, Legislative communication, Legislative transparency, Political participation, Social media engagement

Introduction

A democratic society requires strong institutions like those implementing the law, the legislators, and the judiciary. It also involves the fourth estate, the press, as well as the anti-corruption bodies, to function optimally. Participatory representation is highlighted in Contemporary liberal democracy, which changes the governance from a non-democratic system to one that captures the idea of people's participation. And the legislative institution plays a central part in this scheme, which gives concrete form to the principle of representation. The legislature in democratic systems is not only tasked with making the laws, but they also have the role of keeping the executive in check, and protecting civil liberties; all these roles collectively ensure that the rule of law is maintained and the separation of powers is also ensured (Odibo, 2023). According to the Nigerian Constitution, the role of the legislature is well enunciated in Part 2, Section 4 of the amended 1999 Constitution found in Chapter 1, which mentions the National Assembly as two chambers, there and the green chambers, otherwise known as the Senate and the House of Representatives, respectively. These bodies function as platforms for policy construction, deliberations, and legislative checks of the people's will.

On the other hand, social networking platforms like X, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have emerged as life-changing tools with access to governance processes available directly to citizens and enabling voice participation for broader political engagement (Aina&Adedayo, 2021; Oluleye et al, 2023). For instance, during the #EndSARS protests, young Nigerians used these platforms to demand accountability and affect policy conversations, and similar actions were carried out during the #EndBadGovernance protest. Some similarities could be drawn to the phenomenon of the pro-democracy uprisings, otherwise known as the Arab Springs. These digital tools continue to empower young people across the world to bypass traditional barriers to participation, such as geographical limitations, institutional exclusion, and financial constraints Bosch et. al. 2019). Through online resources, the youths are being educated on political issues, giving a voice to underrepresented voices, and creating a more participatory and informed demographic (Ibiloye, 2024).

When the National Assembly TV was set up in 2016, its primary mission was to enhance the visibility of the country's legislative proceedings as well as public engagement and transparency. Promising real-time transmission, the platform is operated mainly on online sites like YouTube, Facebook, and X, where it broadcasts legislative activities and publishes updates on policy matters. This online approach is aimed at bringing the people as well as the government of Nigeria together and also growing a population that is informed and one that can take an active part in governance (Abdulrazaq, 2024; Mergel, 2012)). However, although this page has a significant reach of more than 140 thousand followers on Facebook and twenty-two thousand on YouTube, it is questionable if it is effective in achieving its objectives.

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Participant Theory

Advanced by Dennis McQuail, the Democratic Participant Media Theory (DPMT) in 1987 was formed as a reaction to the centralised and monopolistic nature of traditional media systems. It was developed in the



context of media environments characterised by authoritarian and libertarian models in which media often served the interests of powerful elites. McQuail had the theory to promote more inclusive, decentralised media in which ordinary people could participate in making, consuming, and distributing media content. This theory sought to have the media systems conform to democratic ideals in the sense that the media would not be controlled by a few powerful stakeholders to the detriment or exclusion of a wider public (McQuail, 1987).

The basic premise of the DPMT is that media should be available to everybody, which means they should be able to actively participate in political and social communication. Largely different from the kinds of traditional models of media control, which were top-down, McQuail insisted on the need for decentralised, participatory media environments that would allow citizens to shape their media experiences. According to this theory, the media does not merely serve as a tool for the dissemination of information (Deseriis, 2021) but rather presents an opportunity for public dialogue and involvement in which various voices are encouraged to be represented and involved (McQuail, 2010; Anderson, 2018).

The applicability of the DPMT to the study of the engagement of the National Assembly TV social media in Nigeria is not questionable. The focus of the theory of participatory communication harmoniously relates to the online community, with the aim of improving political transparency and how citizens perceive engagement with the legislative processes. McQuail's model helps consider how the social media channels that are available to the National Assembly can be used to encourage direct interaction between lawmakers and citizens. This interaction may democratise political communication and make the legislature more transparent and responsive to the public's demands. The focus of the theory on decentralisation holds a particular importance when examining the role played by social media platforms as they challenge traditional centralised media systems and offer opportunities for more inclusive political participation (Manojlovic, 2021).

H₀1: Online audience's engagement with National Assembly TV's social media content has no significant influence on perceived transparency of the legislature.

Method

Research Design

The quantitative data design was adopted to assess how enhancing legislative transparency and civic participation can be achieved through interactive national assembly TV online engagement. The quantitative approach enables the measurement of variables across a large sample and supports statistical inference, making it particularly suitable for determining patterns, relationships, and influences within a specified population (Weyant, 2022; Ismail et al., 2024).

Study Location

The location of the study was on the main social media platforms: Facebook, YouTube, and X of the National Assembly TV. The data was drawn with the use of a survey instrument (questionnaire). This survey method was used to collect standardised data from a select sample of social media followers, allowing for statistical analysis, hypothesis testing, and generalisation of findings (Mohajan 2020).

Study Participants

For this research, the population for this study comprised citizens who follow the National Assembly TV's social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, X) 207,838 as at October 2025. Slovin's formula was employed to calculate the minimum sample size required for the study.



A total of 454 participants were sampled for the study. Only 417 instruments (online survey) returned were valid for the test, due to missing data in some questionnaire, some had to be dropped.

Informed Consent

Before proceeding with the study, approval was obtained from the Babcock University Health Research and Ethics Committee (BUHREC), and the participants' permission was obtained.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument to be used was a self-structured questionnaire created by the researchers to get the respondents to talk about the evaluation of the National Assembly's TV social media engagement, perceived Legislative Transparency and political participation by online audience in Nigeria, with closed-ended frequency and scaled questions. The instrument was designed to capture demographic information, level of awareness, frequency, impact, and type of engagement with National Assembly TV content, perceptions of legislative transparency, and levels of political participation. The questionnaire was evaluated with a small number of people first to make sure it was clear and reliable before the purpose of the main study.

A pilot project of 115 respondents online was conducted to test and refine the questions in the survey to make them clear and comprehensible. Out of the responses, only 101 instruments (online survey) returned were valid for the reliability test. Responses were from among followers and subscribers of the National Assembly's social media channels; due to missing data, some questionnaires had to be dropped. A total of 14 were excluded. The pilot had been taken through the "unofficial X, Facebook, and WhatsApp pages of the National Assembly, which were created in October 2014 and have over 915,900 followers. While pilot studies are occasionally quantified at 10% of the study sample, methodological literature suggests that this benchmark may be inadequate for evaluating research instruments and estimating study parameters. Survey tools can be more accurate and reliable with larger pilot samples (Hertzog, 2008; Kunselman, 2024; O'Neill, 2022).

So, a pilot sample of more than 10% was thought to be good enough to test the questionnaire used in this study, as it concerns the online population. This pilot test was necessary for assessing the feasibility, how valid and dependable the research instrument is, before the main study. The pilot results facilitated refinement of data collection procedures, ensured question clarity, and helped estimate the time required for each phase of getting the information. Cronbach's alpha values were computed for each thematic section of the questionnaire, and the results are presented in Table 1. A coefficient value of above 0.70 was deemed to be reflective of reasonable reliability and it showed that the items had satisfactory internal consistency.

Table 1: Summary of Sectional Reliability Analysis of the Instrument

Section	Area of Focus	Items	Cronbach's α	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	Complete Cases (n)	Interpretation
C	Awareness of National Assembly TV's Digital Content	Q12–Q16	0.892	0.027	0.826 – 0.933	96	Excellent internal consistency

Section	Area of Focus	Items	Cronbach's α	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	Complete Cases (n)	Interpretation
D	Public Engagement with National Assembly TV on Social Media	Q17–Q21	0.884	0.022	0.832 – 0.916	96	Excellent internal consistency
E	Perceptions of National Assembly TV Content and Legislative Transparency	Q22–Q27	0.857	0.027	0.799 – 0.901	95	Very good internal consistency
F	Influence of Social Media Engagement on Political Participation	Q28–Q32	0.851	0.028	0.786 – 0.899	99	Very good internal consistency

The coefficients of reliability that were obtained were 0.799-0.933, which shows that all of the instruments were characterized by good and excellent internal consistency. The sections (C, D, E, and F) were over the threshold recommendation of 0.70, which indicates high internal consistency and implies that the items in the sections measured their respective constructs reliably (Saw et. al., 2025; Hu et al, 2024).

Questions were structured using closed-ended formats, frequency, and Likert-scale items to enable quantifiable measurement and statistical analysis across demographic and behavioural groups to avoid ambiguity (Fadele, 2025; Assadpour et al., 2023). A face validity test was conducted and readjusted based on faculty members' feedback (Saw et al., 2025).

Findings

Hypothesis: Online audience's engagement with National Assembly TV's social media content has no significant influence on perceived transparency of the legislature.

Table 2.0: Linear Regression showing Online audience's engagement with National Assembly TV's social media content

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	11.136	.731		15.241	.000



	engagement	.685	.051	.547	13.307	.000
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.547 ^a	.299	.297		5.10969	
a. Predictors: (Constant), engagement						

Source: Field Survey 2026

In Table 2, the online audience engagement with National Assembly TV's social media content indicates a positive and significant influence of perceived transparency of the legislature ($R^2 = 0.299$, $\beta = 0.547$, $t = 13.307$, $p < 0.05$). The model displays that online audience engagement could explain 29.9 percent variation ($R^2 = 0.299$) in perceived transparency of the legislature. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that online audience engagement with National Assembly TV's social media content has no significant influence on perceived transparency of the legislature, was rejected. The model further shows that online audience engagement has a strong positive ($r = 0.547$, $p < 0.05$) significant influence on perceived transparency. This suggests that an increase in online audience engagement will be associated with improved perception of legislative transparency.

Discussion

Respondents moderately agreed (2.53) that National Assembly TV promotes legislative transparency. Transparency is a principle of democracy's accountability; through transparency, citizens can view the processes of decision-making, and make informed opinion, and judge the representatives (Boulianne, 2020). Digital broadcasting democratises access beyond physical attendance, so the parliamentary gallery is also transferred to the online world (Okafor, 2024). Empirical research on the point is supported by Mergel (2022), who states that when information is readily available, timely, and detailed, digital communication by the government increases perceived transparency. Similarly, research on open parliament initiatives suggests that institutional trust is gained through sustained interaction on the platforms (Flew, 2022; Leston-Bandeira, 2016).

The results also show that watching National Assembly TV regularly has a big effect on how people see parliamentary transparency and trust based on the respondents' understanding. Nonetheless, in the absence of citizen feedback, digital transparency may turn out to be a show instead of a change. This is one of the issues that supports work framing as a participatory and communicative process, as opposed to procedural openness (Kaiser, 2019; Moore, 2020). The same study in Nigeria shows that the constant digital communication with the legislature builds trust in the population (Ezeani, 2019; Agbo, 2023). However, is transparency sufficient to ensure participation? The outcome is that the citizens are able to track debates, but that does not necessarily translate to contacting their representatives in both chambers of the assembly and affecting legislation. This is in line with the argument of the democratic divide presented by Norris (2000), that access to information is required but inadequate to achieve participatory equality, and in the light of the Democratic Participant Theory, transparency has to be supplemented by participatory channels (Antila, 2024; Zia, 2024) such as raising awareness on proposals for laws and revisions, parliamentary agenda and schedules, submitting public and expert opinions for parliament and understanding of legislative decisions. Largely different from the kinds of traditional models of media control, which were usually top-down, the basic premise of the DPMT is that media should be available to everyone (Mcquail 1987). However, the online community presents a space where decentralised,



participatory media exists, which means they should be able to participate beyond social communication but politically as well, thereby allowing citizens to shape their media experiences. According to this theory, the online audience is moderately benefiting from the NASS TV platforms' dissemination of information, fair but not extensive. And when legislative actions are seen to be opaque, citizens may feel excluded and passive. When interaction is facilitated among the platforms, it strengthens inclusiveness as well as civic involvement in democratic governance (Asimakopoulou et al. 2025). There remains a significant room for improvement.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the research, this paper found that the social media TV content of the National Assembly is central to achieving legislative transparency and citizen awareness on governance practices in Nigeria. The online presence of the platforms makes citizens watch what happens in parliament, get access to legislative discussions, and get an idea of the decision-making process, which fosters institutional transparency and accountability.

Nevertheless, it is also determined in the study that structural and behavioural factors restrict the shift between information access and participation. The small awareness of the platform hinders the number of active audience, and the prevalence of a couple of platforms limits fair accessibility among various population groups. Moreover, the patterns of involvement are mostly passive, which indicates that the possibility of deliberative democratic communication is not well developed. The results highlighted the importance of transparency, which is not enough to enhance participatory citizenship; interactive communicative elements, such as content accessibility and strategic communication, are needed to transform information consumption into meaningful political action.

Some of the recommendations for better results include institutionalizing digital quality standards. The National Assembly TV needs to implement systematic plenary session schedules, committee schedules, and oversight report schedules to increase civic media access to the houses. Even though perceived credibility and trust appear to be present, the presence of clear standards that regulate the quality of content, the regularity of updates, and the responsiveness to citizen requests may ensure the trust of people and enhance a sense of accountability. Other things to note include continuous training for journalists, content producers, and social media managers. Skilled personnel can ensure credible, professional, and contextually relevant communication, improving audience perception and participation outcomes.

Another area is in promoting legislative transparency. Clear guidelines on broadcast methods and flexible packaging of online forms of video will foster trust among citizens. When information is on time and interaction is sustained, like commenting during live plenary or debates or modifying the discussions online, this would promote transparency and trust. When there is also constant and consistent education of parliamentary rules and other education, this builds trust among citizens and ensures equitable access to legislative information. Constant monitoring and evaluation cannot be overemphasized. National Assembly TV ought to have frequent surveys of the audience, engagement metrics, and impact measurement to inform content strategies and new policy-making decisions. Undertaking evidence-based modifications will make it responsive to the needs of the citizens, lead an active political lifestyle, enhance the effectiveness of platforms, and improve democratic performance. There should be institutional cooperation and openness to achieve that.

Limitation and study implication

One limitation of this study was the absence of formal institutional cooperation for survey distribution, pinned across National Assembly TV platforms, despite being asked to submit a formal request. This precipitated other recruitment methods as sharing the survey links via commentary on YouTube or via



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live plenary broadcast comment sections and related online forums and groups, which allowed access to active online followers.

Empirical:

This study provides one of the few empirical assessments of a parliamentary television institution's social media engagement in Nigeria, filling a notable gap in research on institutional digital communication within a developing democracy. By linking digital engagement directly to political participation, the study offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay between media, governance, and civic behaviour.

Policy and practice:

The findings also demonstrate that social media engagement contributes more strongly to political awareness and information access than to direct offline participation. This finding refines existing theoretical frameworks on media effects by highlighting the differentiated impact of digital platforms on cognitive versus behavioural participation, offering scholars a better understanding of democratic engagement in digital spaces, especially in Nigeria's parliament TV.

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