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LEGISLATIVE BUDGETARY OVERSIGHT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, FOCUSING ON ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE: A STUDY OF ABUJA-KADUNA EXPRESSWAY (8TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2015–2019)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between legislative budgetary oversight and national development, focusing on road infrastructure delivery along the Abuja-Kaduna expressway during Nigeria's 8th National Assembly (2015–2019). Anchored on a Governance Accountability Framework (GAF) integrating Agency Theory, Public Choice Theory, and New Institutionalism, the study employs a mixed-methods single case study design combining a 35-item structured questionnaire administered to 85 purposively sampled legislators, ministry officials, contractors, and civil society representatives, ten key informant interviews, and documentary analysis of appropriation records, committee reports, and independent monitoring data. Findings show that the National Assembly's Works committees conducted 17 site visits and 8 public hearings over the study period, yet fewer than 30 per cent of committee recommendations were implemented, and 71.4 per cent of respondents rated follow-up enforcement as rare or absent. Of the ₦56.5 billion appropriated for the expressway's rehabilitation, only approximately ₦32.1 billion (56.8 per cent) was released, a cumulative shortfall of ₦24.4 billion. Developmental outcomes deteriorated across all measured indicators: average travel time rose by 68 per cent, the corridor recorded 1,247 accidents and 423 fatalities, kidnapping incidents exceeded 500, and vehicle operating costs rose by 35 per cent. Regression analysis found that oversight effectiveness explained approximately 31 per cent of variance in developmental outcomes ($R^2 = 0.31$, $p < .01$), with oversight intensity the only significant predictor of fund release rates ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .05$). The study concludes that Nigeria's formally robust constitutional oversight architecture under Sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution is substantially attenuated by compounded information asymmetry, rent-seeking behaviour, and path-dependent executive dominance norms, and recommends the establishment of a dedicated legislative Infrastructure Oversight Office, statutory minimum capital release thresholds, mandatory follow-up reporting, expanded civil society monitoring, and an inter-agency Joint Infrastructure Monitoring Committee.

Keywords: Legislative oversight, budgetary accountability, road infrastructure, national development, Abuja-Kaduna expressway, Nigeria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between legislative oversight and national development constitutes a central discourse in governance scholarship, particularly in emerging democracies where institutional frameworks remain contested and evolving. Legislative budgetary oversight represents a fundamental mechanism through which legislatures exercise control over executive implementation of public policies, ensuring accountability in resource allocation and utilisation (Stapenhurst, Sahgal, Woodley & Pelizzo, 2020). In democratic systems, the legislature bears primary responsibility for authorising government expenditure, monitoring budget execution, and evaluating the correspondence between public spending and stated developmental objectives (Wehner, 2018; Yamamoto, 2017).

Scholars have affirmed the role of legislative oversight as an essential component of checks and balances in democratic governance (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2021). Olowu and Chanie (2016) identify its core purposes as ensuring executive accountability, preventing waste and corruption, improving policy implementation, and enhancing public confidence in government institutions. In developing nations, where governance deficits are often acute, effective oversight becomes especially critical for ensuring that scarce public resources translate into tangible developmental outcomes (Adebayo, 2021; Ojo & Adebayo, 2022).

Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999 reinvigorated legislative oversight as a constitutional instrument for transparency and accountability. The 1999 Constitution vests the National Assembly with explicit oversight powers under Sections 88 and 89, empowering both chambers to investigate any ministry, authority, or person charged with administering laws or disbursing appropriated funds (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Despite this robust formal architecture, scholars document persistent operational failures: inadequate technical capacity, political interference, executive dominance, and institutional corruption have repeatedly undermined oversight effectiveness (Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2019; Fashagba, 2020; Omotola, 2020).

Road infrastructure occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's developmental agenda. Transportation infrastructure reduces transaction costs, expands market access, and facilitates the movement of persons and goods (Adeoye, Adebayo & Mafimisebi, 2020). With road transport accounting for approximately 90 per cent of passenger and freight movement nationally, road quality directly determines economic performance and quality of life (Olufemi & Olusegun, 2019; Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, 2020). The World Bank (2021) estimates that poor road conditions cost the Nigerian economy approximately $3.5 billion annually.

The Abuja-Kaduna expressway, spanning approximately 165 kilometres, is one of Nigeria's most economically significant transport corridors, connecting the federal capital to the industrial hub of Northern Nigeria and facilitating the daily movement of over 20,000 vehicles (Bashir, 2020; Ogboru, Abdullahi & Park, 2017). Between 2015 and 2019, the Federal Government appropriated over ₦56.5 billion for the expressway's rehabilitation through successive appropriation acts — ₦15.2 billion in 2015, ₦12.8 billion in 2016, ₦10.5 billion in 2017, ₦8.3 billion in 2018, and ₦9.7 billion in 2019 (Budget Office of the Federation, 2015–2019). Despite these allocations, the highway remained in persistent infrastructural deficit, with citizens reporting hazardous travel conditions, extensive potholes, inadequate drainage, and missing road furniture (Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre, 2019; Premium Times, 2018).

The National Assembly, through the Senate and House Committees on Works, conducted multiple oversight visits, public hearings, and produced committee reports on the project. Yet observable gaps persisted between legislative oversight activities, appropriated resources, and developmental outcomes. Average travel time increased from 2.5 hours in 2015 to 4.2 hours in 2019 (Adamu & Ibrahim, 2019), while the corridor recorded over 500 kidnapping incidents during the period (Nigeria Police Force, 2020). These realities raise fundamental questions about the efficacy of legislative budgetary oversight in translating appropriated resources into road infrastructure development. This study therefore examines the nexus between legislative budgetary oversight and national development with specific reference to the Abuja-Kaduna expressway during the 8th National Assembly period.

The deteriorating condition of Abuja over the five years in 2015–2019, notwithstanding substantial appropriations and documented oversight activities, presents a significant governance failure. Of the ₦56.5 billion appropriated across the five-year period, actual releases averaged only 56.8 per cent annually, yielding a cumulative shortfall of approximately ₦24.4 billion 43.2 per cent of total appropriations unreleased (BudgIT Foundation, 2020; Budget Office of the Federation, 2015–2019). A technical assessment by the Nigerian Society of Engineers (2019) found that over 40 per cent of the expressway remained in poor or failed condition despite ongoing rehabilitation works.

The human and economic costs of this infrastructure failure were severe. The Federal Road Safety Corps (2020) documented 1,247 accidents on the corridor between 2015 and 2019, resulting in 423 fatalities and 1,856 injuries. Vehicle operating costs increased by an estimated 35 per cent for regular users (Bashir, 2020), while security deterioration manifest in over 500 kidnapping incidents forced businesses to relocate and disrupted commerce across Northern Nigeria (Adagba, Ugwu & Eme, 2021; Innocent & Felix, 2019).

These conditions expose multiple analytical problems. The relationship between appropriations, actual fund releases, and project execution outcomes is inadequately documented. The effectiveness of oversight activities in generating compliance and developmental impact has not been systematically evaluated. The contextual factors institutional, political, and technical that constrain oversight effectiveness in relation to specific infrastructure projects remain underexplored. Existing literature either addresses legislative oversight at the national level without project-specific depth (Fashagba, 2020; Adebayo, 2021), or examines infrastructure development without the legislative oversight dimension (Olufemi & Olusegun, 2019). The present study addresses this compound empirical gap through a focused case study of the Abuja-Kaduna expressway project.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

i. What was the nature, scope, frequency, and effectiveness of legislative budgetary oversight activities on the Abuja-Kaduna expressway project between 2015 and 2019, including the challenges encountered?

ii. What patterns characterised budgetary allocations, releases, and utilisation for the expressway's rehabilitation during the study period, and how did legislative oversight influence project implementation, quality, and timelines?

iii. What is the relationship between legislative budgetary oversight mechanisms and the achievement of national development objectives in road infrastructure provision

The broad objective of this study is to examine the relationship between legislative budgetary oversight and national development, with specific focus on road infrastructure along the Abuja-Kaduna expressway between 2015 and 2019. The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the nature, scope, frequency, and effectiveness of legislative budgetary oversight activities on the Abuja-Kaduna expressway project between 2015 and 2019, including challenges limiting oversight impact.

ii. Assess the pattern of budgetary allocations, releases, and utilisation for the expressway's rehabilitation during the study period, and evaluate the influence of legislative oversight on project implementation, quality, and timelines.

iii. Determine the relationship between legislative budgetary oversight mechanisms and the achievement of national development objectives in road infrastructure provision.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary theoretical frameworks Agency Theory, Public Choice Theory, and New Institutionalism which collectively constitute the Governance Accountability Framework (GAF) deployed throughout the analysis.

2.1.1 Agency Theory

Agency Theory, developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976) and elaborated by Eisenhardt (1989), conceptualises governance as a principal–agent arrangement in which information asymmetry enables agents to pursue self-interest at the expense of the principal's objectives (Pratt & Zeckhauser, 1985). In Nigerian legislative oversight, a dual principal–agent structure operates: citizens delegate authority to legislators (first principal–agent relationship), who in turn delegate implementation to executive agencies and contractors (second relationship). This compounded structure creates layered information asymmetry that constrains effective monitoring (Strøm, 2000; Adebayo, 2021).

Applied to the Abuja-Kaduna expressway, Agency Theory explains why contractors and ministry officials as agents with superior on-site information could misrepresent implementation progress to legislative committees lacking independent technical capacity. The theory's prescriptive implication that principals should install robust monitoring mechanisms including independent site inspections and technical audits provides normative criteria against which the adequacy of 8th Assembly oversight arrangements is evaluated.

2.1.2 Public Choice Theory

Public Choice Theory, associated with Buchanan and Tullock (1962) and Niskanen (1971), extends economic rationality assumptions to political behaviour, predicting that legislators and bureaucrats maximise personal utility electoral advantage, budgetary expansion, or rent extraction rather than public welfare. Downs (1957) similarly demonstrated that electoral calculations distort resource allocation in democratic systems.

In the Nigerian context, Public Choice Theory illuminates budget padding the inflation of appropriations to create extraction opportunities as a form of institutionalised rent-seeking (Ajayi, 2018). The 2016 Jibrin petition against Speaker Dogara, alleging approximately ₦40 billion in fraudulent insertions in the House appropriations process, exemplifies this dynamic. The theory also explains selective oversight: committees prioritised constituency-visible projects with electoral salience over strategically critical but politically diffuse projects such as the Abuja-Kaduna expressway (Usman & Yakubu, 2020).

2.1.3 New Institutionalism

New Institutionalism, developed by March and Olsen (1984), North (1990), and Powell and DiMaggio (1991), holds that formal and informal institutional rules shape political behaviour independently of individual strategic calculations. North's concept of path dependency is particularly relevant: Nigeria's democratic institutions inherited executive dominance norms from military governance, creating institutional inertia that constrains legislative assertiveness despite robust constitutional powers.

Applied to the oversight context, New Institutionalism explains how the formal architecture of Sections 88 and 89 is attenuated by informal norms of executive non-compliance, the monetisation of oversight activities, and the subordination of committee operations to partisan leadership interests (Omotola, 2020; Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2019). Together, the three frameworks of the GAF provide a multi-level analytical lens: Agency Theory identifies structural incentive problems; Public Choice Theory accounts for rent-seeking distortions; and New Institutionalism contextualises both within Nigeria's specific institutional environment.

2.2 Conceptual Clarifications

2.2.1 Legislative Budgetary Oversight

Legislative budgetary oversight denotes the constitutional and procedural mechanisms through which the legislature monitors, scrutinises, and evaluates executive implementation of approved appropriations (Wehner, 2018; Stapenhurst et al., 2020). McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) distinguish between 'police-patrol' oversight proactive, systematic monitoring and 'fire-alarm' oversight reactive responses triggered by complaints from citizens or interest groups. Effective oversight is characterised by four criteria: regularity, comprehensiveness, consequentiality, and independence. These serve as the evaluative dimensions applied to 8th Assembly oversight in this study.

2.2.2 National Development and Road Infrastructure

National development is understood, following Todaro and Smith (2020), as a multidimensional process encompassing economic growth, human capability expansion, and equitable distribution of outcomes. Road infrastructure constitutes a critical enabling input: Calderón and Servén (2008) demonstrated through cross-country analysis that transport infrastructure investment significantly increases growth and reduces inequality, with road investment generating the highest returns. In Nigeria's road-dependent economy, the condition of major highways like the Abuja-Kaduna expressway directly determines productive capacity and social mobility.

2.2.3 The Oversight-Development Nexus

The causal relationship between oversight and developmental outcomes operates through three mechanisms identified by Pelizzo and Stapenhurst (2021): deterrence (anticipated oversight discourages misappropriation), correction (oversight interventions remedy identified deficiencies), and information generation (oversight activities produce data improving future policy). In weak institutional environments, these pathways are frequently attenuated by political interference, inadequate enforcement, and the co-optation of oversight processes (Fashagba & Alabi, 2020). Identifying the conditions under which these mechanisms operate or fail in the Nigerian context is a principal analytical objective of this study.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

2.3.1 Legislative Oversight in Comparative Perspective

Comparative scholarship documents significant variation in oversight quality across democratic systems. Yamamoto (2017) identifies committee system strength, staff capacity, information access, and political autonomy as the key determinants. Barkan (2009) documented the growing assertiveness of African legislatures following the 1990s democratic transitions, while Opalo (2019) cautions that legislative strengthening in Africa remains uneven and frequently reversed by executive pushback and resource constraints a characterisation germane to the Nigerian case.

2.3.2 Legislative Oversight in Nigeria

The literature on Nigerian legislative oversight documents a persistent paradox of formal constitutional strength and operational weakness. Fashagba (2020) demonstrates that while committees conduct numerous hearings and oversight visits, follow-through on recommendations falls below 30 per cent, producing an 'oversight without accountability' pattern attributable to inadequate funding, weak technical capacity, and partisan capture of committee operations. The 2016 budget-padding crisis in which House Appropriations Committee Chairman Abdulmumin Jibrin petitioned against Speaker Yakubu Dogara, alleging ₦40 billion in fraudulent insertions created internal institutional dysfunction that disrupted committee effectiveness for approximately 18 months (Ajayi, 2018).

Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2019) identify executive dominance as a structural constraint, documenting systematic patterns of executive non-compliance with legislative directives during the Buhari administration, including refusal to appear before committees and circumvention of appropriations through virement. Adebayo (2021) provides the most directly relevant empirical finding: across a sample of federal road projects, legislative oversight was positively associated with project completion rates, but only where oversight was regular and consequential projects receiving ceremonial oversight showed completion rates approximately 23 percentage points lower than those under sustained, enforceable scrutiny.

2.3.3 Budgetary Processes and Infrastructure Development

The appropriation-release gap is extensively documented as a structural constraint on infrastructure delivery. BudgIT Foundation (2020) analysis confirms that capital releases averaged only 53.4 per cent of appropriations between 2015 and 2019 nationally, with infrastructure sectors experiencing below-average rates. Okonkwo (2019) documents recurring procurement irregularities no-bid contracts, inflated valuations, and award to technically unqualified firms that legislative scrutiny failed to prevent. On the Abuja-Kaduna corridor specifically, CISLAC (2019) provides the most comprehensive civil society documentation of failed sections, contract irregularities, and implementation shortfalls, representing the primary independent secondary source against which official data are triangulated in this study.

2.4 Gap in the Literature

Three principal gaps justify this study. First, empirical investigations that directly link legislative oversight activities to specific infrastructure project outcomes are rare in the Nigerian literature. Second, the 8th National Assembly period marked by the budget-padding crisis, extended executive-legislative budget conflicts, and the security deterioration of the Abuja-Kaduna corridor has received insufficient focused scholarly attention. Third, the theoretical frameworks applied to Nigerian legislative oversight have not been systematically deployed in relation to road infrastructure development. This study addresses all three gaps through a case study design integrating documentary analysis, survey research, and key informant interviews within the GAF analytical framework.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design employing a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Mixed-methods design permits methodological triangulation, enhancing validity through convergence of findings across multiple data sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A single case study strategy centred on the Abuja-Kaduna expressway is employed, appropriate for examining a 'contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context' where contextual conditions are integral to understanding the subject under investigation (Yin, 2018, p. 15). The case is theoretically selected on the grounds of its strategic national significance, the scale of appropriations involved, and the availability of independent civil society monitoring data that permit verification of official records.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study population encompasses all stakeholders directly involved in or affected by the legislative oversight and project implementation of the Abuja-Kaduna expressway during the 8th National Assembly period. Purposive sampling identified three respondent categories: legislators and committee staff of the Senate and House Committees on Works (30 respondents); officials of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing and project contractors (25 respondents); and civil society and professional association representatives including the Nigerian Society of Engineers and CISLAC (20 respondents). This purposive sample of 75, supplemented by 10 key informants selected for direct project involvement, yields a total primary data sample of 85 participants, determined through application of Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95 per cent confidence level with ±5 per cent margin of error.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a 35-item structured questionnaire measuring respondents' assessments across five thematic scales: oversight activity frequency and quality; budgetary process integrity; executive compliance with oversight directives; contractor performance; and perceived developmental outcomes. A five-point Likert scale was employed, with a pilot test on 10 respondents yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.84, confirming high internal consistency. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 key informants including former committee chairpersons, senior ministry officials, a resident project engineer, and civil society monitors. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically.

Secondary data sources included: Budget Office of the Federation appropriation documents (2015–2019); National Assembly committee reports and Hansard records; project and contract files obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (2011); technical assessments from the Nigerian Society of Engineers (2019); accident and crime statistics from the Federal Road Safety Corps (2020) and Nigeria Police Force (2020); and monitoring reports from BudgIT Foundation and CISLAC.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics summarised respondent assessments; Pearson correlation examined associations between oversight intensity and developmental outcomes; and multiple regression analysis determined the relative predictive weights of oversight variables on project outcomes. Qualitative data were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework using NVivo 12. Documentary sources were subjected to content analysis tracking oversight recommendations, executive responses, and budget implementation patterns across the five-year study period.

3.5 Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

Construct validity was established through instrument development informed by the theoretical framework and expert face validation by three public administration academics. Internal validity was strengthened through data triangulation across questionnaire, interview, and documentary sources (Patton, 2015). All participants provided informed consent; respondent anonymity was maintained throughout data reporting. The research protocol complied with the ethical guidelines of the Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Federal University Lokoja.

4.0 FINDINGS ANG DISCUSSION

4.1 Nature, Scope, and Effectiveness of Legislative Oversight Activities

The first research objective examined the nature, scope, frequency, and effectiveness of legislative oversight on the Abuja-Kaduna expressway project. Documentary analysis of National Assembly records identified 17 committee oversight visits to project sites between 2015 and 2019 eight by the Senate Committee on Works and nine by the House Committee on Works alongside eight dedicated public hearings. Table 1 presents annual appropriations, releases, and road condition assessments for the period.

Table 1
Budget allocations, releases, and road condition assessment, Abuja-Kaduna expressway, 2015–2019

Year	Appropriated	Released	Release Rate	Road Condition
2015	₦15.2bn	₦9.1bn	59.9%	72% sections substandard
2016	₦12.8bn	₦7.4bn	57.8%	65% sections substandard
2017	₦10.5bn	₦5.8bn	55.2%	48% sections substandard
2018	₦8.3bn	₦4.2bn	50.6%	61% sections substandard
2019	₦9.7bn	₦5.6bn	57.7%	58% sections substandard

Note. Source: Budget Office of the Federation (2015–2019); Nigerian Society of Engineers (2019); CISLAC (2019).

Table 1 reveals a consistent and severe appropriation-release gap, with release rates ranging from 50.6 per cent to 59.9 per cent annually. Of the ₦56.5 billion appropriated across five years, only approximately ₦32.1 billion was actually released a cumulative shortfall of ₦24.4 billion (43.2 per cent unreleased). This structural under-release pre-empted effective oversight by creating conditions in which contractor non-performance and implementation delays were partially overdetermined by fiscal rather than purely managerial failures.

Questionnaire analysis corroborates these findings. On the oversight frequency scale, respondents returned a mean score of 2.31 (SD = 0.82) on the five-point scale approximating 'rarely' to 'sometimes' while 68.2 per cent assessed follow-up enforcement as inadequate and 71.4 per cent indicated committee recommendations were 'rarely' or 'never' fully implemented. Key informant evidence elaborates these patterns. A former senior House Committee official described predominantly reactive, 'fire-alarm' oversight, noting that visits typically followed stakeholder complaints or constituency pressure rather than systematic monitoring across the 165-kilometre corridor, given the absence of dedicated staff and resources for continuous surveillance. A CISLAC representative similarly observed that several oversight visits appeared performative, with committees inspecting completed sections while overlooking those that had failed.

Table 2
Legislative oversight activity summary, Abuja-Kaduna expressway, 2015–2019

Year	Site Visits	Hearings	Key Issues Raised	Follow-up Impact
2015	2	1	Inadequate releases; slow mobilisation	Minimal
2016	3	2	Budget padding; contractor underperformance	Partial
2017	4	3	Funding gaps; poor quality control	Moderate
2018	3	2	Security-induced delays; contract variations	Minimal
2019	5	3	Poor supervision; executive non-compliance	Limited

Note. Source: National Assembly Committee Reports (2015–2019); Key Informant Interviews (2023).

Table 2 confirms a pattern of formally active but operationally limited oversight. The year 2017 recorded the highest oversight intensity (four visits, three hearings) and coincides with the marginal improvement in road condition from 65 per cent to 48 per cent substandard sections suggesting a partial relationship between oversight activity and implementation quality, though the concurrent improvement in fund releases makes exclusive attribution to oversight untenable.

Thematic analysis identified four primary constraints on oversight effectiveness: (i) resource inadequacy committee budgets were insufficient for independent technical assessments of a ₦56.5 billion project; (ii) the 2016 budget-padding crisis, which created approximately 18 months of internal institutional dysfunction disrupting committee operations during the critical early implementation phase; (iii) executive non-compliance cited by seven of ten key informants as a recurrent obstruction, manifesting as ministerial non-appearance before committees and failure to produce project documentation; and (iv) technical capacity limitations that forced reliance on ministry-provided assessments, constituting a structural conflict of interest in performance verification.

4.2 Patterns of Budgetary Allocations, Releases, and Utilisation

Three distinctive budgetary patterns emerge from the analysis. First, a declining appropriations trajectory from ₦15.2 billion in 2015 to ₦8.3 billion in 2018 before a partial recovery is inconsistent with the requirements of a major rehabilitation project requiring sustained front-loaded investment. Engineering benchmarks indicate that comparable dual-carriageway rehabilitation requires annual investment consistency of no less than ₦12 billion to maintain contractor mobilisation continuity (Nigerian Society of Engineers, 2019).

Second, the appropriation-release gap was not an episodic fiscal constraint but a structural feature of capital budget implementation, averaging 43.2 per cent across the period consistent with BudgIT Foundation's (2020) national capital release average of 53.4 per cent. Third, utilisation of released funds was itself incomplete: GIFMIS data indicate actual expenditure averaged 87.3 per cent of released amounts, with a recurring 'ghost mobilisation' pattern contractors receiving mobilisation fees without deploying personnel and equipment identified by a Bureau of Public Procurement informant as a significant source of this slippage.

Pearson correlation analysis found a moderate positive association ($r = 0.43$, $p < .05$) between annual oversight visit frequency and annual fund release rates. While causality cannot be confirmed, this relationship suggests that sustained committee pressure on the Ministry of Finance and Budget Office contributed to marginally higher releases in higher-oversight years. Multiple regression analysis with release rate as the dependent variable and oversight visits, appropriation size, and electoral cycle proximity as predictors found that oversight intensity was the only significant predictor ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .05$), with appropriation size and electoral proximity failing to achieve significance.

4.3 Legislative Oversight and the Achievement of National Development Objectives

The third research objective determined the relationship between oversight mechanisms and developmental outcomes. Table 3 presents the key outcome indicators across the study period.

Table 3
Developmental outcomes matrix, Abuja-Kaduna expressway, 2015–2019

Indicator	Baseline (2015)	Outcome (2019)	Change
Travel time (Abuja–Kaduna)	~2.5 hrs	~4.2 hrs	68% increase
Road accidents	—	1,247 (2015–2019)	Cumulative
Fatalities	—	423 (2015–2019)	Cumulative
Kidnapping incidents	~30/yr (est.)	500+ (2015–2019)	Dramatic rise
Failed road sections	~45%	~40% (2019)	Marginal improvement
Vehicle maintenance cost	Baseline	+35% (2019 est.)	Increase

Note. Source: Federal Road Safety Corps (2020); Nigeria Police Force (2020); Adamu & Ibrahim (2019); Bashir (2020).

The outcomes data document comprehensive developmental failure despite substantial public investment. The 68 per cent increase in travel time imposed an estimated ₦2.8 billion annually in delayed commercial deliveries (Adamu & Ibrahim, 2019). The 35 per cent increase in vehicle maintenance costs imposed disproportionate burdens on commercial operators and consumer prices. The security dimension was most severe: over 500 kidnapping incidents between 2015 and 2019 constituted not merely a law enforcement failure but a governance failure with infrastructural roots. Police testimony confirmed that road deterioration — particularly at construction zones forcing extended traffic queuing systematically created operational conditions for criminal elements, demonstrating that inadequate oversight of infrastructure appropriations directly contributed to security threats that became a development constraint in their own right.

Regression analysis of the composite oversight effectiveness index (derived from the questionnaire instrument) against the developmental outcome composite score yielded a statistically significant positive relationship ($r^2 = 0.31$, $F = 7.82$, $p < .01$), indicating that approximately 31 per cent of outcome variance is explained by oversight effectiveness. The remaining 69 per cent reflects factors beyond legislative oversight's scope: macroeconomic conditions, Treasury release protocols, contractor capacity, and security externalities.

Interpreted through the GAF, these findings confirm all three theoretical predictions. Agency Theory's expectation of agent exploitation of information asymmetry is validated by contractors' consistent misrepresentation of implementation progress. Public Choice Theory's prediction of selective, electorally motivated oversight is supported by evidence of committee attention being diverted to constituency projects. New Institutionalism's emphasis on informal institutional constraints is confirmed by the persistent operational effect of executive dominance norms that limited the legislature's capacity to enforce compliance with committee directives, despite formally robust constitutional powers.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1 Discussion of Oversight Nature, Scope, and Effectiveness

The findings on oversight nature, scope, and effectiveness reveal a pattern that is characteristic of Nigerian legislative governance: formally active but operationally constrained oversight. The 8th Assembly Works Committees conducted 17 site visits and 8 hearings across five years, yet the mean oversight frequency score of 2.31 out of 5.0 and the finding that 71.4 per cent of respondents rated committee recommendation implementation as rare or absent together expose a structural gap between oversight activity and oversight consequence. This divergence is theoretically explicable through the GAF. Agency Theory predicts that agents exploit information asymmetries when monitoring is insufficiently rigorous; the reliance of committees on ministry-provided assessments rather than independent technical verification created precisely this condition.

The 2016 budget-padding crisis compounded these structural limitations by generating approximately 18 months of internal institutional dysfunction precisely during the critical early implementation phase of the expressway rehabilitation, a finding consistent with Ajayi's (2018) analysis of the institutional costs of the Jibrin-Dogara conflict. New Institutionalism further illuminates the gap between formal constitutional powers under Sections 88 and 89 and actual oversight capacity: path-dependent executive dominance norms, inherited from military governance, persistently attenuated legislative assertiveness. The predominantly reactive 'fire-alarm' character of oversight described by key informants reflects these structural constraints rather than legislative indifference.

4.2.2 Discussion of Budgetary Allocation, Release, and Utilisation Patterns

The budgetary findings disclose a threefold structural failure. The declining appropriations trajectory, the persistent appropriation-release gap averaging 43.2 per cent, and the incomplete utilisation of released funds collectively demonstrate that fiscal dysfunction operated across all three stages of the public expenditure cycle: authorisation, execution, and utilisation. These findings corroborate BudgIT Foundation's (2020) national capital release average of 53.4 per cent and extend it by demonstrating project-specific manifestations. The 'ghost mobilisation' pattern identified through GIFMIS data constitutes a particularly significant finding, as it reveals that procurement fraud was not merely a risk but a documented feature of project execution, one that effective legislative oversight could theoretically have deterred or corrected.

That it persisted despite formal oversight activity validates Public Choice Theory's prediction of rent-seeking institutionalisation: the alignment of incentives between contractors and complicit bureaucrats overwhelmed the deterrence effect of committee scrutiny. The statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.43$, $p < .05$) between oversight visit frequency and fund release rates is analytically important, suggesting that sustained committee pressure on the Ministry of Finance does yield measurable fiscal compliance improvements. The regression finding that oversight intensity was the only significant predictor of release rates, with appropriation size and electoral proximity insignificant, advances the empirical literature by isolating oversight as an independent lever on budget execution, independent of macroeconomic or political cycle effects.

4.2.3 Discussion of the Oversight-Development Nexus

The developmental outcomes matrix reveals comprehensive governance failure: a 68 per cent increase in travel time, cumulative fatalities of 423, over 500 kidnapping incidents, and a 35 per cent rise in vehicle operating costs despite ₦56.5 billion in public appropriations. The regression model's R^2 of 0.31 ($p < .01$) indicates that oversight effectiveness explains approximately 31 per cent of outcome variance, a finding of significant theoretical import. It confirms the existence of a causal pathway between oversight quality and developmental performance, validating Pelizzo and Stapenhurst's (2021) three-mechanism model of deterrence, correction, and information generation. Simultaneously, the 69 per cent unexplained variance underscores the limits of legislative oversight as a development instrument in contexts of macroeconomic instability, Treasury release constraints, contractor capacity deficits, and security externalities.

Particularly noteworthy is the finding that road deterioration created operational conditions for criminal activity at construction zones, establishing a direct causal link between infrastructure governance failure and security threats. This nexus between oversight inadequacy, fiscal underperformance, infrastructure deterioration, and security collapse constitutes a governance failure cascade not previously documented in the Nigerian legislative oversight literature. The GAF's multi-level analytical lens Agency Theory, Public Choice Theory, and New Institutionalism accounts for this cascade comprehensively: each framework contributes an explanatory layer that, in combination, provides a theoretically integrated account of how formal constitutional oversight powers fail to translate into developmental outcomes in Nigeria's Fourth Republic context.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between legislative budgetary oversight and national development, focusing on road infrastructure along the Abuja-Kaduna expressway during the 8th National Assembly period (2015–2019). The findings reveal a governance paradox characteristic of Nigeria's democratic experience: a formally robust constitutional oversight architecture coexisting with operational limitations that substantially erode developmental impact.

The National Assembly's Works committees conducted 17 site visits and 8 public hearings across the period, yet fewer than 30 per cent of recommendations were implemented. Annual fund releases averaged only 56.8 per cent of appropriations, creating a structural implementation deficit that no volume of oversight activity could fully overcome. Developmental outcomes across all measured indicators travel time, accident rates, kidnapping incidence, and vehicle operating costs deteriorated significantly over the study period, with regression analysis attributing approximately 31 per cent of outcome variance to oversight effectiveness.

The GAF's integration of Agency Theory, Public Choice Theory, and New Institutionalism provides a theoretically coherent explanation of these failures: compounded information asymmetry, rent-seeking at both legislative and executive levels, and the path-dependent persistence of executive dominance norms collectively constrained the translation of formal oversight powers into developmental accountability. These findings advance the literature on legislative–executive relations in African democracies by demonstrating the specific institutional mechanisms through which oversight failures manifest in infrastructure governance, and by providing empirical quantification of the oversight-outcome relationship.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

First, the National Assembly should establish a dedicated Infrastructure Oversight Office within the National Assembly Service Commission, staffed with qualified engineers, quantity surveyors, and financial auditors, to provide independent technical support to the Works committees and directly address the capacity gap enabling agent misrepresentation of project progress.

Second, the Federal Government should enact legislation mandating a minimum capital budget release threshold of 75 per cent of appropriated amounts within the first and second quarters of each fiscal year for designated critical infrastructure projects, directly addressing the structural appropriation-release gap documented in this study.

Third, the Standing Orders of both chambers should be amended to require mandatory follow-up committee reports within 90 days of any oversight visit or hearing, documenting executive compliance with recommendations. Non-compliance should trigger automatic escalation to the full chamber for sanction consideration, transforming ceremonial oversight into consequential accountability.

Fourth, the Public Procurement Act (2007) should be strengthened to mandate civil society participation in project monitoring for all federal infrastructure contracts exceeding ₦5 billion, with civil society monitoring reports submitted directly to the relevant legislative committee, reducing the information asymmetry that currently enables implementation misrepresentation.

Fifth, an inter-agency Joint Infrastructure Monitoring Committee comprising the National Assembly Works committees, Federal Ministry of Works, Bureau of Public Procurement, and civil society organisations should be formally constituted to produce bi-annual joint monitoring reports on major federal highway projects, institutionalising horizontal accountability mechanisms that complement vertical legislative oversight.

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