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CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF TARABA STATE FEDERAL LEGISLATORS (2013 – 2019)

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the representation of Federal legislators in Nigeria using Taraba Federal Legislative Constituencies as the area of study. The objective was to establish coherence between the actions and functions of the federal legislators in Nigeria and their constituents. Guided by the Principal-Agent Theory, the paper assessed the identified indicators of representation: law-making process and opinion of the constituents, presence in the constituency, and accessibility to the constituents, etc and finds out that, the members of the House of Representatives from Taraba state are not effectively representing their constituents in the performance of their duties as legislators. Again, that hiding under the cover of the identified encumbrances in communication with the people, the Taraba State Federal House of Representative legislators as agents of their constituents have congenially built on the two agency problems of moral hazard (hidden action), which has always made it possible through the electoral ills for many of them to have the chance of re-emerging and retaining their seats in the House despite the obvious poor representations. Second is the adverse selection (hidden knowledge) which is usually an advantage to many agents. Through this advantage, they have and will always continue doing their wishes in the affairs that ordinarily should be a public matter. The paper recommends a constitutional insertion that would compel legislators (as a matter of process) to consult with their constituents in matters of formulating new policies that would affect the people's life.

Introduction

Modern governments, especially democratic governments are made up of three arms. They are the legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The legislature is a unique institution in a democratic setting, composed of elected representatives of the people. It occupies a prominent position in modern democracies. The legislative arm of government bears the responsibility not only to make a law which is its primary function but also to perform other important functions which include the following: enacts laws, represents the interests of the people, oversee the activities of the executive, safeguards public finance and provides an avenue for redressing public grievances. These roles could be summarized in three basic functions: lawmaking, representation and oversight. The importance of the legislature is indeed not unconnected with the fact that good governance today is extensively measured by the quality of laws made by government institutions. Thus, effective legislature contributes to effective governance by performing functions necessary to sustain democracy in complex and diverse societies (Johnson & Nakamura, 1992: 2).

Looking at Nigerian Legislators, several things strike a probing mind. The issue of the quality of the legislators easily comes up. Quite a good number of the legislators have good credentials (good training, good practices, and good background) (as required by the 1999 Constitution as amended). Yet again, looking at the nature and rots in the electoral system in Nigeria there are tendencies that a sizable number might have emerged from the faulty processes. Again is the monstrous impact of corruption in the working of the various Houses of Parliament in the country (see Olufemi, Akinwumi & Ugonna, 2018; Alabi & Fashagba, 2010; Joshua & Oni, 2014; Arowolo, 2010). Yet again, we get consoled by the fact that despite that there are quite a sizable number of relatively good and upright legislators at all levels even in the face of the widespread nature of corruption across the entire governmental system. Those few good ones have in unimaginable measure constituted a fetter to the legalization of corruption at the various levels of legislative houses. This could probably establish the makeup of the legislative houses in Nigeria.

Measuring the performance of the legislators and the legislature in Nigeria has also been a subject of critical and emotive debates among academics and public analysts. The legislative functions of lawmaking have always been assessed through the nature of debates that takes place in the various houses (and in the committees), and more so, in the quality and quantity of bills that come out of the Houses, especially in their relevance with the opinions and wishes of the constituents (see Nwanegbo & Udoh, 2017).

Their oversight functions can be assessed in the reports of the visits and interactions, supervision and monitoring of agencies of government and bodies that operate in Nigeria by the legislators at all levels. Expectedly, the outcome ought to manifest in the regulation and responsibility of the Executive and Judicial institutions in the country. Put differently, it should reflect in (good) governance, otherwise, it should be noticed in the efforts to correct misconduct.

The third and most important under the representative democracy is the quality of representation by the legislators in the conduct of their legislative duties. Perhaps, the legislators, through their conduct appear not to understand their duties as representatives of the people, their constituents, that is, those that supposedly elected them. This is shown in the dearth of consultation and feedback between the people and their representatives in the parliamentary houses (Ikejiani-Clerk and Nwanegbo, 2010).

Two basic functions are fundamental in the assessment of the legislator. They are the legislation and representation and as Akzin (1936) explained the function of legislating is performed authoritatively by the legislature because they act as representatives of the people. He argues further, 'if, by representation, the legislators participate in legislation, and the represented accept legislative decisions as authoritative', (then) legislation and representation are therefore closely related. Hence, representation is uniquely fundamental to the function of the legislatures or even the behaviour of the legislators.

Interestingly, Wahike (1962, p. 7) explained that the basic functions of the legislature are four. They do perform decisional, legitimizing, representative and other functions. Using the functional pattern in the British House of Commons, Stewart (1955) stressed that the parliament has four definable functions.

1. To make law

2. To watch and criticize the government (policies)

3. To hold debates, which will focus attention on politics and make clear to the people what are the questions; which they will have to decide

4. The control of the raising and spending of money (Stewart, 1955:106)

Considering the earlier stated and these four functions of the British House of Commons, it could be deduced that the bulk of the activities of the legislators is performed in their capacity as a representative of the people. With this in mind, and considering the earlier research reports in South Western Nigeria by Lefenwa (2006), Nwanegbo and Obiora (2008), Ikejiani-Clerk and Nwanegbo (2010), Nwanegbo and Udoh (2017) and others, this study seeks to assess the extent the Taraba legislators in the Federal House of Representatives has represented the people with a particular focus on the activities of the Members through the identified activities and processes, visible existence within the constituency, accessibilities to the constituents, interface with the constituents, etc. The period (2013-2019) is good because it falls within two legislative periods and it covers the period that Taraba state presented legislators from different political parties' backgrounds to the House. The time may look short but it is enough to indicate what a representative can do in terms of developing and sustaining contact with constituents.

Representation: Conceptual and Operational Overview

There seems to be a consensus among scholars that difficulties in accommodation or limitations of participation of all in policymaking

processes in society form the bases for the use of the principle of representation (Schumpeter, 1942; Medearis, 2001; Verba, 1999; Roust & Shvetsova, 2007; Kateb & College, 1979; Svensson, 2007). Since its adoption especially in the modern government, the concept of representation appears germane in democratic practices as it creates a link between the people and leaders who represents the entire people. Representation can be mainly viewed as an intrinsic aspect of what makes democracy possible and functionally responsive. In this regard, Veit (2008) explains that it is through representation that policymaking becomes a political process in which professional policymakers balance competing and sometimes contradictory interests. For Riggs (1967, p.13), the representational activity of the legislator could come about in various ways;

i. Expressive function: This involves expressing the minds of the people on matters of public concern. This bothers on "interest articulation". It posits that consistent, vigorous articulation of constituency needs will produce policy from those who have policy-making powers.
ii. Intermediary between the citizens and government officials.

Similarly, Castiglione and Warren (2006:1) viewed democratic representation as having three key characteristics. For them, representation in a democratic setting could be characterized as:

• Representation invokes a principal-agent relationship (the representatives "stood for" and "acted on behalf of" the represented), mainly though not exclusively on a territorial and formal basis, so that governments could be said to be responsive to the interests and opinions of the people.

• Representation identifies a place for political power to be exercised responsibly and with a degree of accountability, in large part by enabling citizens to have some influence upon and exercise some control over it.

• The right to vote for representatives provides a simple means and measure of political equality.

Following from the above, it could be asserted that representation embodies enormous tasks and practices that place the onerous duty of projecting and balancing the constituency demands and interests with other competing interests in the policy-making process. Thus, a representative of the people advocates for them, and lobbies colleagues, bureaucrats and agencies of the state in solving the constituency needs. For Veit (2008, p. 11), representation is the heart of a positive cyclical policy process linking citizens to government. In representative democracies, good governance is a virtuous relationship between active citizens and strong government based on the representation of people's needs and aspirations in policy-making and implementation processes. Hence, accountability and responsiveness are the building blocks of representation from which good government and good governance follow. Such building processes could be represented as follows:

Figure 1: Accountability and Responsiveness are the Building Blocks of Representation
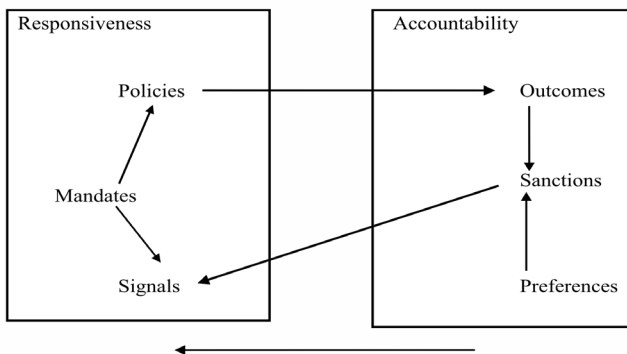
Source: Ribot 2006 adopted from Veit (2008:11)

Effective legislative representation, therefore, can be described as the successful execution of legislative functions that are expected of legislators as representatives of constituencies. Most scholars agree that to ensure effective representation, it is important for the political system in place needs to provide for a parliament that is socially and politically representative. Legislators often represent diverse and sometimes competing interests that

may be defined by ethnicity, religion, political identification, gender, or other characteristics, and these interests must be balanced.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), legislators represent all parts of their society or constituents – including men and women, minorities and marginalized groups and therefore, effective representation implies "articulating and mediating between the competing interests of these groups" as well as, guaranteeing equal rights for all parliamentarians, particularly those belonging to the minority party within a legislative assembly. Effective representation can also mean that legislators possess or acquire the resources, skills and characteristics that they need to execute their representative duties and consistently apply them in delivering service to their constituents (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre [PLAC] (2016).

Thus, "a government is 'responsive' if it adopts policies that are signalled as preferred by citizens and governments are accountable if citizens can sanction them appropriately. In the policy process, preferences expressed through voice and various signals (regarding citizen views, perspectives, interests, and needs) become mandates and are translated by government officials into policies and then outcomes that generate a new set of citizen preferences (Veit, 2008). This further explains the fact that an institutionalised form of representation encourages active participation and seems to be the most effective means of bringing citizens' input into policy processes.

In her view, Pitkin (1967) sees political representation as a social relationship, constituted in part by shared meanings. Looking at the concept from two contending perspectives, she drew a line between "formalistic" and "substantive" understandings of political representation. For her, formalistic understandings and theories focus on the presence of the formal features of authorization (by the "principal") and/or accountability (of the "agent"). And the substantive theories, instead, are concerned with how the relationship works. She further divided substantive approaches between those that understand representation as "standing for" someone or something else, and others that conceive it as "acting for" someone else (or

a collectivity). The former she further distinguished between "descriptive" and "symbolic" ways of "standing for". The latter she treated as a single group, though recognising that there are different ways in which one can "act for" someone else (Pitkin 1967:18).

Indeed, the relevance of representation lies mostly in its strength of consultative engagement of the people before formulating policies that affect their lives. And also the extent the representative carries out the duty and the extent it translates to the general will of the people makes representation potently useful. Representation could therefore be seen as the principal function of the legislature.

Most public and private organisations are organised hierarchically. The key relationship in a hierarchy is the one between a subordinate employee (agent) and his or her superior (principal). The assumption of Principal Agent Theory is predicated on the existence of a relationship involving two parties; the principal (who proposes the contract) and the follower (the party who just has to accept or reject the contract) called the Agent. An agency relationship is created when an individual or party who acts as a principal, instructs or deputizes to another person who acts as the agent, with the authority to act on his or her behalf (Moe, 1984; Rees, 1985a; Williamson, 2000 in Roach, 2016). The agent will be expected to behave in a manner that is consistent with the desires of the principal (Moe, 1984). The agent on the other hand can be defined as the person recruited by the principal to accomplish the latter's goals and objectives (Rees, 1985a; Rees, 1985b; Williamson, 2000 in Roach, 2016).

The principal can be an individual, party or body who acts consistently or cohesively (e.g. government agencies or public officials in the same), to recruit an agent or agents (e.g. contingent/contract employees) to achieve the expected results of the former. Generally, a principal will select an agent (s) to execute tasks that may vary in specialized skills, task complexity, the scope of the task and other requirements. In a world of politics based upon perfect and symmetric information, an imaginary world of politics along Downs' 1957 well-known model of two-party system competition

in a presidential type regime, the demos as principal would contract with the correct politicians as agents, promising the making of the policies that majority group in the principal favours. Politicians would be paid a decent salary, somehow above their fixed reservation price. But there would be no need for rents or quasi-rents. Politicians who performed better in terms of a goal like for instance affluence or GDP growth would be favoured ahead of politicians who performed badly, the re-election mechanism doing the selection of agents for the demos. Given perfect knowledge, voters would pick political agents based on the proximity rule, minimising the policy distance between their political preferences and those of the politicians in government and the legislature.

The theory makes two assumptions: that goal conflict exists between principals and agents and that agents have more information than their principals, which results in an information asymmetry between them (Waterman and Meier, 1998). And that agency problem occurs when cooperating parties have different goals, information, and division of labour (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Specifically, principal-agent theory concentrates on the ubiquitous agency relationship, "in which one party (the principal) delegates work to another (the agent), who performs that work on behalf of the principal" (Eisenhardt, 1989). And principal-agent theory seeks to portray this relationship using the metaphor of a contract (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

As a consequence, the central dilemma explored by principal-agent theorists is how to stimulate the employee or contractor (agent) to behave in the best interests of the principal (the employer) when the employee or contractor has an informational advantage over the principal and has different interests from the principal. From the agency perspective, "most organizations are simply legal fictions which serve as a nexus for a set of contracting relationships among individuals" (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). The basic premise of the theory is that "if both parties to the relationship are utility maximisers, there is good reason to believe that the agent will not always act in the best interests of the principal" (Jensen and Meckling, 1976).

In determining the most efficient contract, principal-agent theory brings up certain hypotheses about people, organizations and information. It assumes that agents and principals will act in their self-interest to maximize their welfare. Agents possess more information than their principals possess. As a result, it identifies two impediments to effective contractual performance: moral hazard and adverse selection. Moral hazard refers to the agent doesn't put agreed-upon efforts into the tasks. That is, the agent is shirking. An adverse selection which refers to "the misrepresentation of ability by the agent" (Eisenhardt, 1989), arises because the principal cannot completely verify these skills, experiences, or capabilities either at the time of recruitment or while the agent is working (Eisenhardt, 1989). Some other conditions also do affect the agent which has to be noted. If a legislator is working in the house from the minority position, he is somewhat encumbered, as equality which is required in the environment of representation will be lacking.

In this circumstance, the principal is the group of the electorate who decides to recruit through election (choosing) from among several (applicants) candidates requesting and flaunting their various acquired knowledge, qualifications, aptitudes, abilities and other characteristics given the complexities of the job; representation. The agent (s) is required to execute the tasks within certain periods (four years in the House) and return for the renewal of the contract. As it is applied to legislative politics, we should focus on the position of the constituents as principals who engages the services of the chosen representatives through an election, requiring their representation in a manner that would make them the determinants of the policy choice through the output of legislation (advocate for them, lobby colleagues, bureaucrats, agencies of the state in solving the constituency's need. Determining the actual value of representation has a lot to do with some of the earlier identified variables which indicate the closeness of the agent (legislator) to the principal (constituents). However too, it is bedevilled with agency problems as it is with the government problems of choice of agents who will handle the provision of services and moving then to the choice of the electorate of political agents with different policy preferences. This is essential because given asymmetric information—hidden actions and

hidden knowledge; one has to face suboptimal solutions. In non-democratic politics, the rulers monopolize the benefits in politics, sometimes reducing the population to a form of political slavery (Burma), but always restrict the choice of the electorate, to make looting easier. Between these two extreme solutions, exploitation by the principal versus looting by the agents, one finds all kinds of varying solutions concerning both the value produced and the division of the mutual gains from the interaction.

The incentive for principal-agent theory is to highlight the importance of divergent objectives, asymmetric information, incentives and penalties, recruitment and salaries etc. A lack of information, for example, makes it difficult for the principal to monitor the agent's actions and hold the agent accountable. The theory has been used to construct micro-economic explanations of corruption and relevant institutional reforms.

The Legislators and Constituency Representation in Taraba State: The Problems

Determination of what makes representation is always a difficult one. This is essentially a result of the difficulties in deciphering even what the public wants. In the views of Elekwa (2006), several publics exist in the political society and this is because opinions of individuals, socio-cultural and political groups differ and virtually all see their standpoints as right while condemning others. When therefore issues come up, they tend to see them from their advantaged position.

For representatives to actively respond to their constituents' views they clearly must both be motivated to ascertain what those views are and be able to ascertain these views correctly. However, as Broockman and Skovron (2013, p. 6) rightly observed, the relationship between public opinion and politicians' perceptions of it remains murky at best.

The weak connection between public opinion and public policy remains an important concern for students of democratic politics. As

Fiorina and Abrams (2009), and Bafumi and Herron (2010) found out, many politicians appear to routinely support policies that a majority of their constituents do not. As disturbing as that may be to the health of democratic representation, Broockman and Skovron (2013) conclude unfortunately that the possibilities of improving the slim relationship between them are very bleak, and this is not unconnected with the already established position that the representatives in Nigeria have acted more as principals and less as agents of their constituents. Walter Lippmann (1922) famously observed that, although the public wields ultimate political authority in democracies, "the world that [the public] deal[s]with politically is out of reach, out of sight" and "Man is no Aristotelian god (capable of) contemplating all existence at one glance". Hence, giving room to the manipulation occasioned by the asymmetrical information which characterises the general and specific application of principal-agent arrangements created by the two agency problems of moral hazard (hidden action) and selection (hidden knowledge).

Taraba state is one of the six (6) North East states of Nigeria, but geographically it lies along the Benue valley where Middle-Belt communities inhabit. Created on 27 August 1991 from the old Gongola state, Taraba covers a total area of 21,032sqm with an estimated population of over 2,688,944 (NPC, 2005). Bounded by six Nigerian states (Nasarawa, Benue, Plateau, Bauchi, Gombe and Adamawa) and situated on an International boundary with Cameroon, it is a multi-ethnic state with a majority of the population being involved in farming and has one of the most fertile agricultural lands in the country (Taraba State Official Diary, 2017). Taraba is made up of sixteen (16) Local Government Areas, with six (6) Federal Constituencies evenly distributed among the three (3) senatorial zones in the state (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Taraba Federal Constituency

Senatorial Zones	Federal Constituencies
North	Jalingo/Yorro/Zing
	Lau/Lamido/Ardo-Kola
Central	Gashaka/Kurmi/Sardauna
	Bali/Gassol
South	Ibi/Wukari
	Donga/Ussa/Takum/Special Areas

Until the 2015 general elections when the number of other political parties increased with more members of the Senate and Federal House of Representatives emerging from All Progressive Congress (APC) and All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has dominated the representation of the state since 1999. This made the analysis of representation more balanced as the majority of the legislators have worked under the condition that made them representatives under the party in government (when PDP was in majority in the House) and is still not disadvantaged now under APC majority in the House as some of them are also representing their constituencies from the platform of APC. More so too, the makeup of the House now did not show any character of creating undue disadvantage to members based on their political party affiliation as the House is near balance in the number of the members and they appear to be collaborating among themselves across political parties line.

Law-making processes and opinions of constituents

Traditionally, law-making remains the exclusive preserve and concern of the legislature. In contemporary societies, many ministries, and institutions that are not part of the legislature get to perform some very important functions in the law-making process and observe the practices and procedures in doing this. The outcome of this is that many issues emanating outside the legislature, play a vital role in shaping, determining and forming what is generally seen as legislative output or what is simply called an act of the parliament. Thus, the theory of separation of power between the executive

and legislature tends to give way to the practice whereby the executive or the government takes a considerably large initiative in introducing, initiating and drafting proposed bills to the legislature and sometimes gives impetus to unbearable executive influences. A bill is a draft or proposal law waiting for consideration by the legislators. A new bill or bill tends to repeal, change or make new law, if considered and assented to.

Thus, sections 58 and 100 of the 1999 constitution (as amended) state that the exercise of legislative powers is using bills passed into law by the legislature (be it the State or National legislature) and assented to by the chief executive (president or governor). Legislative practices have shown that legislative bills can be initiated through three principal sources. According to Udoh (2009), the three principal sources are the executive, the legislators themselves, and interest, professional groups or private individuals. He further stated:

(a) Executive: the president or in the case of a State, the governor, can initiate in the House what is known as a government or executive bill. The contents of such bills are formulated by heads of parastatals, ministries and corporations, assisted by civil servants (in some cases) and are usually deliberated and approved by the cabinet before they are presented or forwarded to the legislature.

(b) Members of the legislature: any member of the legislature acting alone or in conjunction with a number of his or her colleagues can come up with a private member bill. The bill, which may seek to make a new law, amend or out-rightly repeal an existing one, may arise from sundry sources including campaign promises made during elections and the observation of lapses in the application of the existing laws.

(c) Interest or pressure groups associations who feel concerned with the making or amendment of a particular law can initiate a bill through a member of the House who would sponsor it (Udoh, 2009: 36-37).

In the practice here, the bills that come to the House of Representatives (just like in the Senate too) have both inputs of the executive and private members. While some come as government bills, many others also come from private members (which should ordinarily represent the opinions of groups in the society and the various constituencies represented in the House). Looking at the impact of governance in Taraba state, it does not appear as if the Taraba Federal Legislator (especially House of Representative members) has done much with legislation for their people. Looking at the hollow nature of the contact line with the people as explained earlier, one may safely infer that even the few efforts that might come from them to the floor of the House would not have been done with the full participation and knowledge of the constituents.

The very reason for representation seems to be defeated in a situation where constituents are not consulted for laws purportedly meant for them. A true representation is not only expressed by the presence of someone but by the degree to which the representative carries along the opinions and aspirations of his/her constituents. Democratic representation according to Urbinati (2006: 42) "… is fair or just representation insofar as it involves issues of advocacy and representativity; issues of a meaningful presence, not simply presence alone, in the game of discord and agreement that is democracy". Representatives mostly do not rely on the opinions of their constituents owing to the absence of broad-based consultation. People are either not consulted, not informed of the importance of the policy or the policy seems to be different from the priority needs of the people. Even when some levels of contacts are claimed, it is with a section of the constituents, those usually classified in Nigerian political parlance as 'stakeholders'. Such undermines the essence of the constituency, representation and representative governance in Taraba state and Nigeria in general. It does not provide a broad platform for representation, enough to serve all. Indeed, representation raises the question of equal opportunity among citizens of a political community, by providing access and chance for peoples' aspirations, not some.

Presence in the Constituencies

The other considerable factor, which increases the chances of adequate representation, is the presence of the legislator within the constituency. The legislator staying among the constituents will enhance his knowledge of the wishes and desires of the constituents. He would properly understand them and be able to generate inputs from them at all times. These virtuous practices are impeded, especially in this part of the world by the difficulties in operating from the localities to attend parliamentary businesses due to the high cost of transportation in Nigeria (which from places like Taraba state) has to be by air transport, poor transportation system that even if one decides to spend all he has on transport, he will still not be able to coordinate such movements and meet up with plenary sessions of the House. This is in addition to the fact that legislative business involves committee work and oversight duties. All these combined to make their presence difficult as would be required to make the desired impact.

The other way of covering up on this, which could be to make regular visits to the constituencies is also facing some challenges as the level of financial and other personal demands from the constituents on the legislator (as a result of the palpable poverty state of the constituent) scare the legislator away from the constituencies. The option left for them is to maintain contact with a few members of the constituency if they so wish and where necessary consult with them. This indeed makes it difficult for them to operate as it hinders their capacity to give broad-based representation. There seems to be consensus in the literature that democratic representation requires representatives who share experiences, understand issues from the perspective of disadvantaged groups, and can constitute a representative "voice" within deliberations and decision-making (Williams, 1998).

Accessibility to the constituents

There are other measures open to the legislator to cover for the obvious challenges of closeness to the constituents and getting inputs from them without necessarily being personally present at the constituency. The most established approach is maintaining a functional constituency office in

the constituency. The constituency office is a functional contact office with the legislator which should be staffed with some persons of the constituency who should be receiving inputs, transmitting such and disseminating vital information from the legislator to the constituent on a regular albeit daily basis. Just like any other functional government office, it should be opened and functional daily. To help the legislator to maintain this contact, the government builds the cost of running such office into the finances of the legislator and therefore, is mandatory for a legislator to have that structure put in place.

A look at the constituency offices in Taraba states how most of these offices merely exist but not are functional. As is the situation, the offices would come alive during elections as campaign coordinating offices of the legislator. Hence, the benefits derivable from the existence of such an office are swallowed by its non-functionality and thereby leave the people still with no good medium of contact, making a contribution and taking information from the legislators. The legislator can interface with the constituents through meeting/receiving constituents at the House as they do not come to the constituency offices to do that but the distance and difficulties in making such a trip make it not a good and workable measure.

Another means could be through having regular constituency and or town hall meetings. Beyond the selective nature of such meetings, there are also very limited records of such meetings in Taraba state. This is not unconnected with the earlier explained challenges the legislator encounters in coming to the constituency.

The world of ICT has revolutionalised every aspect of human endeavour thereby making it easy for a legislator that wants to interface with the people to do that. A legislator can be in very functional contact with the people by opening up a dedicated and assessable e-mail, Facebook accounts, WhatsApp and Twitter handle, phone lines, etc. These do not exist among the contact platform of the Federal legislators from Taraba state.

Findings and Conclusion

From our analysis, two conclusions can be arrived at. First is that the House of Representatives members from Taraba state are not effectively representing their constituents in the performance of their duties as legislators. This has nothing to do with their being vibrant in the debates on the floor of the House and or in their making personal gains or prudent in ensuring that the constituency projects fund is used prudently. This study did not look at that though. The concern of the study is on the representativeness of their actions. Even the determination of what is selected as the constituency project ought not to be left to the whims and caprices of the legislators as is the case in 2018. Several factors have been identified as making this exclusiveness imminent and possible and those factors have simply strengthened the conclusion that indeed the legislators are less representative in their conduct and that reduces the values attached to the office of a legislator as an agent of the people.

Secondly, hiding under the cover of the identified encumbrances, the Taraba state Federal House of representative legislators as agents of their constituents have congenially created the two agency problems of moral hazard (hidden action), which is made possible by the electoral ills and still would have the capacity to re-emerge and retain their seats in the House and selection (hidden knowledge) which they have and will always capitalise on to continue doing their wishes in the affairs that ordinarily should be a public matter.

Conventionally, and in line with the workings of the Principal-Agent theory, one would expect this nature of performance to attract negative rewards during elections. Unfortunately, the setting of local politics in Taraba is likely to bear more on the electoral choice during the 2019 general election as it has always done in the past. The factor of zoning, religion, ethnic considerations and money would naturally make more impact in the coming election in Taraba than the ordinarily expected factor of performance as envisaged by the architects of the Principal-Agent theory encapsulated in its basics. This is aligned with the common practices in Nigerian elections,

which also could make someone with no positive political value be returned elected through election to represent the constituency he/she failed to effectively represent. That is one basic weakness of the principal-Agent theory in its application in this study as this inordinate pattern of rewards and punishment associated with the Principal-Agent theory did not envisage the position of developing democracies like Nigeria in the theorising practice.

From our analysis, it needs to be stated that this study does not intend to discredit the performance of Taraba State legislators in the House of representative, rather it has simply revealed the inefficiencies that characterized legislative representations which are anchored in the ills associated with the principal-agent relationship in politics. Again, it explains the effects of poor representation and the consequences of neglecting peoples' views by the representatives in policy inputs on the value and quality of legislation. Such is also attributable to electoral pitfalls that have not only been monetized but preclude the people from speaking through the ballot box, therefore creating an adverse selection problem (misrepresentation of the ability of the agent). It has created exclusivity in legislative activity, ousting the great number of constituents on the pretence of difficulties in collating majority opinions.

Based on the above, we recommend that there should be a section in the constitution (law) where the legislators should in a referendum inform, and consult their constituencies in matters of formulating new policies that affect people's life.

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