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Effect of Legislative Turnover on Quality of Law-Making in Nigeria's 8th And 9th Senate.

Musa Peter, Abraham [1]* and Olusola Olugbenga, Folarin[1]

[1] Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State,Nigeria; abraham.peter@fulokoja.edu.ng
[1] Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State,Nigeria; solafolarin77@yahoo.com
* Correspondence: solafolarin77@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between legislative turnover and the quality of law-making in Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates between 2015 and 2023. A quantitative survey design was adopted, with primary data collected in 2025 through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The study population comprised 10,618 entries across the two legislative periods. Using purposive sampling, 800 questionnaires were administered, of which 320 valid responses were retained for analysis. Descriptive statistics, reliability tests and regression analysis were employed to examine the relationships between electoral system, electoral defeat, electoral preferences and party structure, and perceived law-making quality. The findings revealed that electoral system had a positive and statistically significant relationship with perceived law-making quality ($B = 0.532$, $p < .001$). Electoral defeat ($B = 0.045$, $p = .748$) and electoral preferences and party structure ($B = 0.118$, $p = .425$) exhibited positive but statistically insignificant relationships. These findings indicate that respondents' assessments of electoral arrangements were associated with their perceptions of law-making quality, whereas the other electoral factors showed no statistically significant associations. The study highlights the relevance of electoral processes to perceived legislative performance and discusses implications for transparency, accountability and institutional continuity in the Nigerian Senate.

Keywords: Legislature, Legislative turnover, Law-making, Senate

Introduction

The legislature is central to representative democracy, particularly in its responsibility for making laws, scrutinizing public policies, and ensuring that government actions remain subject to institutional accountability. In Nigeria, Sections 4, 58 and 88 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), provide the constitutional basis for legislative powers, law-making procedures, and legislative investigations. However, the effectiveness of the legislature cannot be determined by constitutional authority alone. It also depends on legislators' understanding of parliamentary procedures, their capacity to scrutinize proposed legislation, and the institutional support available for carrying out legislative responsibilities. Squire (2007) distinguished the professionalization of legislative institutions from the career experience of individual members, while Volden and Wiseman (2014) emphasized the importance of

examining how legislators advance legislative proposals through the law-making process. These considerations draw attention to the relationship between legislative experience, institutional capacity, and the quality of parliamentary performance.

One important issue arising from this relationship is legislative turnover. The replacement of elected representatives is a normal feature of democratic governance because periodic elections allow citizens to renew political representation and hold legislators accountable. Nevertheless, frequent membership changes may affect the continuity of legislative activities, particularly where the departure of experienced members results in the loss of procedural knowledge and established working relationships. Legislative experience can be important in committee deliberations, policy scrutiny, negotiations, and the handling of complex legislative proposals. Although newly elected legislators may introduce fresh perspectives and different policy priorities, they may also require time to understand parliamentary procedures and develop the competencies needed for effective participation. The implications of turnover therefore extend beyond the replacement of individual representatives to questions of institutional continuity and legislative capacity (Matland & Studlar, 2004; Moncrief et al., 2004; Crosson et al., 2018).

The relationship between turnover and legislative performance is particularly relevant in political systems where the retention of experienced lawmakers is affected by electoral competition and the organization of political parties. Electoral rules, changes in voter support, and institutional arrangements influence legislative membership stability, while parliamentary professionalization can shape the capacity of legislative institutions to accommodate changes in membership (Matland & Studlar, 2004; Moncrief et al., 2004). The institutional consequences of turnover are therefore not necessarily uniform. Experienced legislators may contribute to continuity in parliamentary business, but the effectiveness of newly elected members also depends on the support structures available to them. Crosson et al. (2018) establish the relevance of experienced legislative staff to law-making effectiveness, suggesting that institutional knowledge can be preserved and transferred through arrangements that extend beyond the tenure of individual legislators.

In Nigeria, legislative turnover has remained an important concern since the restoration of democratic government in 1999. The replacement of serving lawmakers has been associated with electoral defeat, intra-party competition, candidate nomination procedures, and changing political circumstances. These processes influence the retention of experienced legislators and the composition of successive legislative assemblies. Nigerian scholarships have drawn attention to the institutional implications of membership turnover, including its relationship with parliamentary experience, continuity, and legislative performance (Murana et al., 2017; Fashagba & Nwankwor, 2021; Akinola & Mosunmola, 2023). Political party arrangements are also relevant because parties influence electoral recruitment and the political environment within which legislators exercise their responsibilities (Olaniyi, 2023; Dan-Azumi, 2024). Consequently,

understanding legislative turnover in Nigeria requires attention to both the electoral circumstances surrounding membership replacement and the institutional conditions affecting legislative activities.

These concerns are especially relevant to the Nigerian Senate, where law-making involves more than the formal introduction and passage of bills. Legislative quality also raises questions about the adequacy of policy scrutiny, the consideration of competing interests, the clarity of legislative proposals, and the capacity of the institution to sustain informed deliberation. The experience retained within parliamentary committees may contribute to these responsibilities, although experience alone does not establish that legislation will be effective or responsive to public needs. Institutional support and the organization of parliamentary business also influence the conditions under which legislators perform their duties (Crosson et al., 2018; Olaniyi, 2023). Furthermore, assessments of legislative effectiveness require clearly defined indicators because legislative activity, successful advancement of bills, and the substantive outcomes of enacted laws represent related but distinct dimensions of performance (Volden & Wiseman, 2014, 2018). This makes it necessary to distinguish perceived law-making quality from direct assessments of legislative outputs and policy outcomes.

The 8th and 9th Senates offer a relevant institutional setting for investigating these issues. The 8th Senate was inaugurated on 9 June 2015, while the 9th Senate was inaugurated on 11 June 2019, following the general elections that preceded each legislative period (National Assembly, 2015, 2019). Their successive terms provide an opportunity to consider the relationship between electoral processes, legislative continuity, and the performance of the Senate between 2015 and 2023. Although both assemblies operated within the same constitutional framework, the electoral transition involved changes in membership and the political environment within which legislative responsibilities were discharged. The importance of examining these periods lies in understanding how factors associated with legislative replacement relate to assessments of law-making quality, rather than assuming that continuity or turnover necessarily produces a particular level of legislative performance.

Existing scholarships have established important relationships among electoral arrangements, legislative turnover, institutional experience, and parliamentary performance (Matland & Studlar, 2004; Moncrief et al., 2004; Murana et al., 2017; Fashagba & Nwankwor, 2021; Akinola & Mosunmola, 2023). However, the findings of these studies do not eliminate the need to distinguish the electoral factors associated with turnover from actual membership replacement when assessing law-making quality. Electoral system, electoral defeat, and electoral preferences and party structure may influence the circumstances through which legislators emerge or retain office, but they are not direct measures of turnover rates. Similarly, respondents' assessments of law-making quality cannot automatically be treated as evidence of the substantive

effectiveness of enacted legislation. The problem addressed in the present investigation therefore concerned the extent to which these electoral dimensions were associated with perceived law-making quality in Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates.

The investigation assessed the relationship between electoral factors associated with legislative turnover and perceived law-making quality during the 2015–2023 legislative period. Specifically, it considered electoral system, electoral defeat, and electoral preferences and party structure as explanatory variables. The analysis addressed three questions: What relationship existed between electoral system and perceived law-making quality in the 8th and 9th Senates? To what extent was electoral defeat associated with perceived law-making quality? And how were electoral preferences and party structure related to respondents' assessments of law-making quality? Responses obtained through the survey provided the empirical basis for examining these relationships.

The contribution of the study to legislative scholarship lies in its assessment of the electoral factors associated with perceived law-making quality in Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates. By considering electoral system, electoral defeat, and electoral preferences and party structure separately, the analysis provides a more differentiated understanding of their relationships with legislative performance. It also extends existing discussions of legislative turnover by distinguishing the electoral conditions associated with membership replacement from the actual turnover of legislators. This distinction provides a clearer basis for understanding the relationship between electoral processes, institutional continuity, and perceptions of law-making quality within the Nigerian Senate. The remaining sections present the literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, empirical findings, discussion, and conclusions.

Literature Review

Legislative Turnover: Conceptualization and Measurement

Legislative turnover refers to changes in the membership of a legislative institution as serving representatives leave office and are replaced by other members. Such changes commonly occur during electoral transitions, although legislators may also leave office through retirement, resignation, party nomination outcomes, or other circumstances. Turnover is therefore distinct from electoral competition, which concerns the processes through which political candidates seek and obtain public office. While elections create opportunities for membership renewal, the extent of actual replacement depends on the number of incumbents who retain their seats and the number of new or returning representatives who enter the legislature (Matland & Studlar, 2004; Moncrief et al., 2004; Gouglas & Maddens, 2019).

The measurement of turnover requires particular attention because legislative renewal can be understood in different ways. François and Grossman (2015) distinguish between

incoming legislators and first-term members, demonstrating that the selection of a turnover measure can influence empirical conclusions. A returning former legislator, for instance, may be new to the immediately preceding assembly without being inexperienced in legislative affairs. They further show that turnover rates can differ according to whether the unit of analysis is the entire legislature or individual political groups. Their contribution is important for comparative legislative research because a change in party representation does not necessarily correspond to an equivalent change in the experience or composition of the legislature.

At the institutional level, legislative turnover may be expressed as the proportion of seats occupied by members who did not serve in the immediately preceding legislative term. This provides a direct measure of membership replacement, although identifying the source of turnover requires additional information about the circumstances under which incumbents left office. Gouglas and Maddens (2019), examining four Western European legislatures between 1945 and 2015, distinguish entry through electoral competition from entry resulting from candidate-selection processes. Their findings indicate that a substantial share of membership renewal occurs before general elections, demonstrating why electoral defeat alone does not adequately explain legislative turnover.

The distinction between membership replacement and the electoral processes associated with it is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context. Fashagba and Nwankwor (2021), examining the National Assembly between 1999 and 2019, found that the party-primary stage accounted for an important proportion of the exit of incumbent lawmakers. Their evidence suggests that the loss of legislative experience can result from decisions taken before candidates appear in the general-election ballot. Accordingly, electoral system, electoral defeat, and electoral preferences and party structure represent related but conceptually different dimensions of legislative recruitment and retention. They may help explain the circumstances surrounding turnover, but they should not be treated as direct measurements of the turnover rate itself.

Electoral Systems, Legislative Recruitment and Membership Stability

Electoral systems establish rules through which political preferences are translated into legislative representation. They shape electoral competition, influence the opportunities available to political candidates, and determine important conditions under which legislators seek re-election. However, electoral systems operate alongside other political and institutional arrangements, including party nomination procedures, the structure of political careers, and the organization of legislative institutions. The relationship between electoral arrangements and turnover is therefore more complex than a direct association between election outcomes and membership replacement (Matland & Studlar, 2004; Gouglas et al., 2018).

Matland and Studlar (2004), using evidence from 25 industrialized countries, identified election frequency, electoral volatility, institutionalization, and electoral-system characteristics as important determinants of legislative turnover. Their findings established the relevance of electoral institutions to membership stability, but they also demonstrated that turnover cannot be explained by electoral rules alone. Similarly, Moncrief et al. (2004), drawing on American state legislatures, associated membership changes with term limits, legislative professionalization, redistricting, and other institutional conditions. Both investigations demonstrate that the opportunities available to serving legislators are influenced by the broader institutional environment in which elections take place.

Subsequent European research has developed this explanation by giving greater attention to political recruitment and career opportunities. Gouglas et al. (2018), examining eight Western European legislatures over 152 general elections between 1945 and 2015, found that political career opportunities, electoral swings, and party characteristics were important sources of variation in legislative turnover. Their findings also indicated that the substantive influence of electoral-system characteristics was not uniform across the factors investigated. These results qualify explanations that attribute turnover primarily to the formal rules governing elections and reinforce the importance of understanding how parties recruit and retain candidates.

The Nigerian experience introduces additional institutional considerations. Electoral competition takes place within a political environment in which candidate nomination, party leadership, and internal political bargaining influence access to legislative office. Fashagba and Nwankwor (2021) found that incumbent legislators frequently encountered difficulties in retaining party nominations, while Dan-Azumi (2024) identifies internal party democracy, organizational weakness, and changing political allegiances as important features of party politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. These studies point to the importance of examining electoral arrangements together with the political organizations responsible for candidate recruitment.

Although the international and Nigerian studies converge in recognizing the institutional foundations of turnover, they differ in their emphasis. Cross-national investigations explain variations through electoral rules and political career structures, whereas the Nigerian literature gives considerable attention to internal party competition and the conditions surrounding nomination and retention. The difference does not necessarily imply conflicting explanations. Rather, it suggests that the relevance of factors depends on the institutional environment being investigated. For the Nigerian Senate, this makes it necessary to consider electoral arrangements alongside party-political circumstances without necessarily finding out if every electoral factor has the same relationship with legislative performance.

Electoral Defeat, Voter Preferences and Political Party Structures

Electoral defeat occurs when an incumbent legislator contests an election but fails to secure sufficient electoral support to retain office. In representative democracies, this process provides an important mechanism through which citizens can replace elected representatives. Nevertheless, the relationship between electoral defeat and legislative turnover depends on whether incumbents secure nominations, decide to contest elections, and retain the support of their political parties. The replacement of a legislator following an unsuccessful party primary is therefore analytically different from the defeat of an incumbent during a general election (Gouglas & Maddens, 2019; Fashagba & Nwankwor, 2021).

Voter preferences also influence political representation, although electoral choices do not necessarily reflect assessments of legislative performance alone. Krupnikov and Shipan (2020), using evidence from American state legislatures, demonstrate how institutional arrangements and uncertainty about responsibility for government outcomes may influence incumbent retention. Their analysis draws attention to the difficulties voters can encounter when assessing which political institutions or officeholders should be held responsible for particular policy outcomes. Although the institutional setting differs from Nigeria's presidential system, the study contributes to understanding why electoral accountability cannot always be inferred directly from changes in legislative membership.

Political parties introduce another layer into this relationship because they influence the opportunities available to candidates before voters make their choices. In Nigeria, political recruitment is shaped by party organization, internal competition, and relationships among political actors. Dan-Azumi (2024) identifies limitations in internal party democracy and organizational stability within Nigeria's major political parties. Fashagba and Nwankwor (2021) similarly demonstrate that intra-party competition can be decisive in determining whether incumbent lawmakers return to the National Assembly. These findings suggest that the electoral prospects of a legislator may depend on both voter support and the political arrangements governing candidate selection.

Demarest (2022) provides further evidence of the relationship between political parties and legislative representation in Nigeria. Drawing on interviews with members of the 8th National Assembly and quantitative information concerning re-election, legislative initiatives, and constituency development funds, the study examined the incentives shaping relationships between legislators, party organizations, and constituents. Its findings indicate that political career incentives may encourage legislators to priorities relationships with party elites and politically influential networks rather than generalized constituency service. This perspective strengthens the argument that electoral

accountability is mediated by political-party arrangements and cannot be understood exclusively through voter preferences.

Party affiliation may also influence legislative activity after candidates have entered parliament. Olaniyi (2023), examining the 7th and 8th National Assemblies, investigated the relationship between party affiliation, executive-legislative relations, and the performance of legislative responsibilities. The study draws attention to the role of partisan interests in shaping legislative processes, including the consideration of bills and other parliamentary activities. Together with Demarest (2022), this indicates that political parties influence both access to legislative office and the circumstances under which elected members perform their responsibilities.

These contributions establish a distinction between electoral defeat, voter preferences, and political party structures. Electoral defeat concerns an outcome of political competition, voter preferences reflect choices made by the electorate, while party structures govern important aspects of political recruitment and legislative organization. Although these dimensions are related, the literature does not establish that they necessarily influence legislative performance through identical processes. Treating them as analytically distinct provides a more careful basis for investigating their relationships with perceived law-making quality.

Legislative Turnover, Institutional Memory and Legislative Capacity

Institutional memory refers to the knowledge and experience accumulated within an organization through its established procedures, decisions, and working relationships. In a legislature, such knowledge may include familiarity with parliamentary rules, committee practices, legislative drafting, policy deliberations, and the management of parliamentary business. Institutional memory is therefore not confined to individual elected representatives. It may also be retained through permanent parliamentary staff, committee secretariats, legislative records, and administrative arrangements that support continuity when membership changes (Squire, 2007; Crosson et al., 2018).

Frequent membership replacement raises concerns where legislative institutions depend heavily on the experience of serving representatives. Newly elected legislators may need time to understand procedural requirements, develop working relationships, and participate effectively in specialized committee activities. The departure of experienced members may also affect the continuity of legislative initiatives, particularly where the institutional arrangements for preserving information and transferring responsibilities are limited. However, these possible consequences depend on how the legislature is organized and the resources available to incoming members, rather than on turnover alone (Moncrief et al., 2004; Akinola & Mosunmola, 2023).

Squire (2007) provides an important conceptual distinction between legislative professionalism and individual career experience. Legislative professionalism concerns institutional features such as the resources available to lawmakers and the organizational capacity of legislative bodies. It should not be confused with the length of service of representatives. This distinction is relevant because the legislature may retain substantial organizational capacity even when its membership changes, provided that its procedures, staffing arrangements, and institutional resources support the performance of legislative duties.

Evidence from legislative staffing research reinforces this argument. Crosson et al. (2018), examining staff allocations in the United States House of Representatives between 1994 and 2013, found that experienced legislative staff contributed to lawmaker's ability to advance legislation. The benefits were particularly relevant to committee chairs and relatively inexperienced legislators. Their findings indicate that the knowledge accumulated by professional staff can complement the experience of elected members. Legislative continuity, therefore, involves more than retaining individual officeholders; it also depends on the ability of the institution to preserve and transfer expertise.

Nigerian research has generally emphasized the difficulties associated with repeated membership changes. Murana et al. (2017), using primary and secondary data from the Kogi State House of Assembly between 1999 and 2015, reported that high legislative turnover adversely affected the performance of law-making responsibilities. Okibe (2018), examining legislative tenure and capacity building in the Enugu State House of Assembly, similarly identified political arrangements associated with intermittent membership replacement and their implications for legislative experience. Although these investigations concern state legislatures, they raise questions about the ability of parliamentary institutions to retain knowledge across electoral periods.

At the national level, Akinola and Mosunmola (2023) discuss the implications of legislative turnover for institutional efficiency in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Tafawa Balewa and Musa (2025), using a desk-based analysis of turnover trends between 1999 and 2023, also associate repeated membership replacement with concerns about institutional memory, legislative continuity, and parliamentary capacity. Their analysis provides a broad account of the challenges identified in the Nigerian literature, although the documentary approach does not independently establish the size of a causal effect of turnover on law-making quality.

These studies are broadly consistent in recognizing the importance of legislative experience, but they also indicate that experience and institutional capacity should not be treated as interchangeable. Nigerian investigations tend to emphasize the risks associated with frequent replacement, while research on legislative professionalism and staffing

demonstrates how institutional arrangements may preserve expertise despite changes in elected membership (Squire, 2007; Murana et al., 2017; Crosson et al., 2018; Akinola & Mosunmola, 2023). The relationship between turnover and legislative performance is consequently better understood as dependent on the conditions under which knowledge is accumulated, retained, and transferred.

Legislative Performance and the Quality of Law-Making

Legislative performance encompasses the activities through which the legislature fulfils its constitutional responsibilities. These include law-making, representation, oversight, and other functions assigned to the institution. Law-making, more specifically, involves the consideration of legislative proposals, committee scrutiny, deliberation, amendment, and the passage of bills through established legislative procedures. Although these activities are related, they provide different forms of evidence about legislative performance. A legislature's ability to introduce or pass legislation does not, by itself, establish the substantive quality or effectiveness of the laws produced (Volden & Wiseman, 2014, 2018).

The measurement of legislative effectiveness has received considerable attention in literature. Volden and Wiseman (2014) developed an approach that considers the advancement of legislative proposals through successive stages of the law-making process rather than relying exclusively on the number of bills sponsored. Their subsequent investigation of the United States Senate extended the measurement of legislative effectiveness to senators, demonstrating that differences in legislative contributions can be assessed through observable legislative activities (Volden & Wiseman, 2018). These studies provide useful methodological guidance, although their indicators were developed within the institutional setting of the United States Congress and cannot be adopted uncritically in Nigeria.

Legislative productivity and the quality of law-making are related but conceptually distinct. Volden and Wiseman (2014) demonstrate that legislative effectiveness cannot be adequately assessed by counting bills alone, emphasizing the progression and significance of legislative proposals. While productivity concerns the volume and advancement of legislative business, law-making quality raises broader questions about the scrutiny of proposals, legislative clarity, responsiveness to public interests, and the substantive effectiveness of enacted laws. These dimensions may require different forms of evidence, including legislative records, documentary analysis, and assessments of policy implementation. For the present study, law-making quality is understood in terms of respondents' perceptions of legislative performance rather than independently verified legislative outputs or the substantive outcomes of enacted legislation. This distinction establishes the conceptual boundaries within which the empirical findings are interpreted.

Within the Nigerian context, the relationship between legislative organization and performance has been examined from different perspectives. Murana et al. (2017) investigated turnover and law-making effectiveness in the Kogi State House of Assembly, while Olaniyi (2023) explored how party affiliation and executive-legislative relationships shaped legislative efficiency in successive National Assemblies. Akinola and Mosunmola (2023) also considered the institutional implications of legislative turnover. These contributions identify several circumstances associated with parliamentary performance, but their different research designs and definitions of performance do not permit their findings to be treated as directly equivalent.

A particularly relevant contribution is that of Okereke (2025), which focused explicitly on legislative turnover and performance in Nigeria's 8th and 9th National Assembly. Drawing on documentary evidence, observations, and interviews, the study discussed legislative membership changes in relation to institutional memory, legislative capacity, law-making activities, and oversight. The author reported that substantial turnover was associated with difficulties in sustaining legislative experience and performance. Although this investigation directly overlaps with the institutional periods considered in the present research, its reliance on documentary and qualitative evidence differs from the survey-based assessment of electoral factors and perceived law-making quality adopted here.

The existence of research on the same legislative periods is important for identifying the contribution of the present analysis accurately. The comparison of the 8th and 9th Senates cannot, by itself, be regarded as an unexplored area of scholarship. Rather, the analytical contribution depends on the variables, evidence, and relationships investigated. Okereke (2025) provides a broader assessment of institutional performance, while the present analysis focuses on respondents' evaluations of electoral system, electoral defeat, and electoral preferences and party structure in relation to perceived law-making quality.

A further measurement issue arises when law-making quality is assessed through questionnaires. Survey responses can capture how informed participants evaluate parliamentary activities, the electoral environment, and institutional performance. However, they do not necessarily establish the objective quality of legislation or the outcomes of its implementation. Perception-based evidence should therefore be distinguished from documentary indicators, legislative records, and substantive assessments of enacted laws. The distinction is consistent with the wider literature on legislative effectiveness, which emphasizes the importance of defining the dimension of legislative performance being measured (Volden & Wiseman, 2014, 2018).

For Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates, this distinction has direct implications for interpreting the evidence. The explanatory variables concern the electoral processes associated with legislative recruitment and replacement, whereas the dependent variable reflects the

survey-based assessment of law-making quality. The analysis can therefore establish relationships among respondents' assessments of these constructs, subject to the validity of the questionnaire and statistical model. It cannot, without additional evidence, demonstrate that changes in actual membership turnover caused changes in the substantive quality of legislation.

Synthesis of the Literature and Research Gap

The literature establishes that legislative turnover is shaped by a combination of electoral, political, and institutional conditions. Cross-national research identifies electoral arrangements, political career opportunities, and party-related factors as important influences on membership change (Matland & Studlar, 2004; Moncrief et al., 2004; Gouglas et al., 2018). Nigerian evidence gives greater attention to candidate selection and the role of political parties, particularly the significance of party primaries in determining whether incumbents return to the National Assembly (Fashagba & Nwankwor, 2021; Demarest, 2022; Dan-Azumi, 2024). These findings converge in showing that legislative turnover cannot be explained adequately through general-election outcomes alone.

The institutional consequences of turnover are less straightforward. Nigerian studies have associated frequent membership replacement with difficulties in preserving institutional memory and sustaining legislative performance (Murana et al., 2017; Akinola & Mosunmola, 2023; Tafawa Balewa & Musa, 2025; Okereke, 2025). However, research on legislative professionalism and staffing indicates that institutional resources can help preserve expertise even when legislators change (Squire, 2007; Crosson et al., 2018). Literature consequently supports a more qualified interpretation: membership continuity may contribute to legislative experience, but legislative effectiveness also depends on institutional arrangements and the support available to elected representatives.

Previous investigations have also employed different approaches to understanding turnover and performance. Fashagba and Nwankwor (2021) used electoral and documentary evidence to identify the stages at which incumbents exited the National Assembly. Murana et al. (2017) combined primary and secondary evidence with descriptive analysis of state legislature, while Demarest (2022) used interviews and quantitative evidence to investigate party incentives and representation. Okereke (2025) examined turnover and institutional performance during the 8th and 9th National Assembly through documentary and qualitative evidence. These studies have substantially advanced understanding of legislative turnover in Nigeria, but their different measurements and research objectives also demonstrate the importance of defining what a subsequent investigation adds.

The gap addressed in the present analysis is therefore more specific than the general absence of research on legislative turnover on the 8th and 9th Senates. It concerns the

assessment of three electoral dimensions electoral system, electoral defeat, and electoral preferences and party structure within a common survey-based framework for examining perceived law-making quality. Rather than treating these dimensions as interchangeable explanations of legislative performance, the investigation considers their relationships separately. It also distinguishes the electoral conditions associated with legislative recruitment and replacement from actual membership turnover, and perceived law-making quality from independently measured legislative outcomes.

This focus provides a basis for examining the reported associations between electoral processes and assessments of law-making quality within the institutional context of Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates. It does not, by itself, establish that the two Senates differed significantly or that membership turnover caused changes in legislative quality. Such conclusions would require comparative observations or direct measures of turnover and legislative outcomes. The theoretical framework that follows explains the possible relationships among electoral accountability, political representation, institutional experience, and legislative performance through the application of Principal-Agent Theory.

Theoretical Framework

Principal-Agent Theory and Its Application to Legislative Turnover and Law-Making

Principal-Agent Theory explains the relationship between individuals or institutions that delegate authority and those entrusted with exercising it. The theory recognizes that differences in interests, access to information, and incentives may affect how delegated responsibilities are performed (Mitnick, 1975; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Applied to representative democracy, citizens are the principals who elect legislators to represent their interests and perform constitutional responsibilities, including law-making and oversight. However, elected representatives exercise considerable discretion, while citizens may lack adequate information to assess their performance. Elections consequently provide opportunities for accountability, although their effectiveness depends partly on the information available to voters and their ability to evaluate representatives (Ferejohn, 1986; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998).

The theory is particularly relevant to legislative turnover because electoral replacement involves both democratic accountability and institutional continuity. Through elections, citizens may retain or replace legislators based on their preferences and assessments of performance. Nevertheless, frequent membership changes may result in the loss of legislative experience, procedural knowledge, and established working relationships. The consequences depend partly on the institutional support available to incoming legislators, particularly experienced parliamentary staff capable of preserving legislative knowledge

(Crosson et al., 2018). In Nigeria, membership replacement is also influenced by political party nomination processes, which may prevent experienced legislators from returning to office even before general elections are conducted (Fashagba & Nwankwor, 2021).

Political party structures further complicate the principal-agent relationship. Although legislators derive their electoral mandate from citizens, their political careers may depend on party leaders and other influential actors whose interests do not always coincide with those of constituents. Demarest (2022) demonstrates how political career incentives and party relationships can shape legislator's responsiveness to voters in Nigeria. Such arrangements may create competing obligations affecting representation, electoral accountability, and the discharge of legislative responsibilities.

Within this framework, the study's three explanatory variables reflect different dimensions of electoral accountability and political recruitment. Electoral system (ES) relates to the institutional arrangements through which representatives emerge and are held accountable; electoral defeat (ED) reflects the replacement of incumbents through electoral competition; while electoral preferences and party structure (EP) concern voter choices, political recruitment, and competing political incentives. The dependent variable, law-making quality (DV), represents respondents' assessments of how legislative responsibilities are performed. These relationships provide the theoretical basis for investigating associations between electoral processes and perceived law-making quality in Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates.

The Principal-Agent Theory thus explains how representation, information asymmetry, accountability, and institutional experience may connect electoral processes with legislative performance. However, the survey variables measure perceptions of electoral factors and law-making rather than actual turnover rates or the substantive quality of enacted legislation. Accordingly, the theory provides an interpretative foundation for the empirical analysis without establishing that legislative turnover directly caused changes in law-making quality.

Methodology

- **Research Design**

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between electoral factors associated with legislative turnover and perceived law-making quality in Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates. The investigation covered the 2015–2023 legislative period, while questionnaire data were collected in 2025. The survey approach enabled the study to obtain structured assessments from senators, legislative aides and parliamentary personnel familiar with electoral processes and legislative work. Respondents were asked about the same explanatory dimensions, allowing the association between those dimensions and law-making assessments to be examined

systematically. This use of a clearly defined survey population, consistent questions and documented recruitment procedures accord with established reporting standards for survey research (American Association for Public Opinion Research [AAPOR], 2021). The investigation was retrospective because both Senate periods had ended before the questionnaires were administered. It assessed respondents' views of legislative performance, rather than directly measuring the legal quality or implementation outcomes of enacted laws. Its observational design supported the analysis of associations, not causal effects of actual legislative turnover.

- **Population of the Study**

The study population comprised senators, legislative aides, National Assembly staff and former senators associated with the two legislative periods. These groups were selected for their institutional experience and familiarity with parliamentary procedures, electoral conditions and law-making activities. The original population schedule recorded 5,309 entries for each Senate, yielding 10,618 period-specific entries across the 8th and 9th Senates (National Secretariat of Nigerian Legislature, 2023, as identified in the study records).

Table 1

Population Distribution by Respondent Category

Respondent category	**8th Senate**	**9th Senate**	**Total**
Senators	109	109	218
Legislative aides	2,344	2,344	4,688
National Assembly staff	2,817	2,817	5,634
Former senators	39	39	78
Total	5,309	5,309	10,618

Source: National Secretariat of Nigerian Legislature, 2023

Sample Size Determination and Sampling Technique

The adequacy of the sample size was assessed using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations. The calculation was based on a population of 5,309 associated with each Senate and a precision parameter of 0.05 (5%). The formula was expressed as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where n represents the estimated sample size, N denotes the population for each Senate (5,309), and it represents the precision parameter (0.05).

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{5{,}309}{1 + 5{,}309(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{5{,}309}{14.2725} = 371.97 \approx 372$$

The calculation yielded an estimated sample of 372 respondents per Senate. This was adopted for each legislative period, giving a total of 744 questionnaires administered across the 8th and 9th Senates.

Purposive sampling was employed to select senators, legislative aides, National Assembly staff and former senators with relevant knowledge of electoral processes, legislative turnover and law-making activities. Proportional allocation was subsequently used to distribute the questionnaires among these four respondent categories according to their population sizes. The allocation was calculated as follows:

$$n_h = \frac{N_h \times n}{N}$$

Where n_h represents the number of questionnaires allocated to a respondent category, N_h denotes the population of that category, N represents the population for each Senate (5,309), and n is the adopted sample of 400 questionnaires per Senate.

The distribution of questionnaires and valid responses is presented in Table 2

Table 2

Distribution of Questionnaires and Valid Responses

Respondent category	**8th Senate**	**9th Senate**	**Total**
Senators	7	7	14
Legislative aides	141	141	282
National Assembly staff	170	170	340
Former senators	2	2	4
Questionnaires administered	372	372	744

Valid questionnaires retained	320	320	640
Questionnaire retention rate (%)	86.0	86.0	86.0

Note. Figures for the respondent categories represent the proportional allocation of questionnaires, while valid responses are reported by legislative period. Source: Authors' field survey (2025).

Of the 744 questionnaires administered, 640 valid responses were retained, comprising 320 respondents from the 8th Senate and 320 from the 9th Senate. This represented a questionnaire retention rate of 86% for each Senate and for the overall study. The 640 retained questionnaires constituted the reported survey sample, providing two group of respondents examining the relationship between electoral factors associated with legislative turnover and perceived law-making quality. Although Yamane's formula informed the sample-size determination, respondents were selected purposively. Consequently, the precision parameter did not represent an achieved statistical margin of error.

Research Instrument and Operationalization of Variables

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert-type response format. The explanatory variables were electoral system (ES), electoral defeat (ED), and electoral preferences and party structure (EP). The dependent variable was perceived law-making quality (LM).

Electoral system referred to respondents' assessments of arrangements influencing candidate selection and legislative retention. Electoral defeat concerned perceptions of the displacement of incumbent legislators through electoral competition. Electoral preferences and party structure addressed voter choices and political-party arrangements affecting recruitment and continuity.

Law-making quality represented respondents' assessments of the Senate's performance of its law-making responsibilities. It was therefore a perception-based measure, distinct from independent records of bill progression, legislative amendments, the legal content of enacted laws or their implementation. The original manuscript identified the four variables but did not reproduce the questionnaire items, response anchors or scoring procedure. The operational discussion was consequently limited to the constructs established by the available research records.

- **Reliability and Validity of the Instrument**

The reliability of the questionnaire measures was assessed using Cronbach's alpha in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .749 and a standardized alpha coefficient of .781, based on the four

items included in the reliability test. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) explain that Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of items intended to assess a common construct. The reported coefficients provided information about the consistency of the measures included in the analysis.

The questionnaire addressed four principal constructs: electoral system (ES), electoral defeat (ED), electoral preferences and party structure (EP), and perceived law-making quality (LM). Since these represented distinct dimensions of the investigation, the overall reliability coefficients were not treated as separate estimates of internal consistency for each construct. Furthermore, although the questionnaire covered the variables identified in the research objectives, Cronbach's alpha alone did not establish its content or construct validity. The interpretation of the instrument therefore distinguished between the reported reliability evidence and the broader validity of the measures employed.

- **Model Specification and Method of Data Analysis**

The study employed regression analysis to examine the relationships between factors associated with legislative turnover and the perceived quality of law-making in Nigeria's 8th and 9th Senates. Data obtained through the structured questionnaire were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The explanatory variables comprised electoral system (ES), electoral defeat (ED), and electoral preferences and party structure (EP), while perceived law-making quality (LM) constituted the dependent variable.

The functional relationship was specified as:

$LM = f(ES, ED, EP)$

The corresponding regression model was expressed as:

$LM_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ES_i + \beta_2 ED_i + \beta_3 EP_i + \varepsilon_i$

Where:

LM_i = Perceived law-making quality for respondent i;

ES_i = Electoral system;

ED_i = Electoral defeat;

EP_i = Electoral preferences and party structure;

β_0 = Constant term;

β_1–β_3 = Regression coefficients; and

ε_i = Error term.

Descriptive statistics was used to summarize respondents' assessments, while regression analysis examined the direction and statistical significance of the relationships between the explanatory variables and perceived law-making quality. The estimated coefficients provided the basis for testing the study's three hypotheses. Given the survey-based nature of the data, the estimated relationships were interpreted as statistical associations rather than direct causal effects of legislative turnover on the quality of enacted laws.

- **Comparative Scope and Study Limitations**

The investigation covered the 8th Senate (2015–2019) and 9th Senate (2019–2023), with 320 retained respondents associated with each legislative period. This provided the basis for examining perceptions of electoral processes and law-making performance across the two Senates. However, the reported regression results did not separately estimate the relationships for each Senate, limiting direct statistical comparisons between the periods. Furthermore, the retrospective nature of the survey, purposive sampling technique, and reliance on respondents' perceptions constituted limitations in assessing legislative performance and generalizing the findings.

Data Presentation and Discussions of Findings

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Standardized	N of Items
.749	.781	4

Output from SPSS, 2026

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test statistics (table 3) indicates a value of 0.749 which means that the dependent variables and the independent variables of high legislative turnover and quality of law-making are reliable for the purposes of statistical analysis. This absolute figure of 0.749 means that the variables had over 74% reliability and therefore the data collected from field survey can be subjected to statistical analysis.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
DV	320	3.3800	.77620	9.069	.136	127.217	.272
ES	320	3.5025	.52974	.438	.136	-.220	.272

ED	320	3.8789	.54207	-.237	.136	.025	.272
EP	320	3.8883	.52761	-.053	.136	-.473	.272

Output from SPSS, 2026

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics. The mean of the dependent variable is 3.38 while the standard deviation is 0.776 which means that there was a wide dispersion between the mean and the standard deviation implying that the variables that affect turnover and law-making of Senators are different factors which do not have close association with one another. Likewise, the mean of the independent variable is 3.40 while the standard deviation is 0.776 which means that there was a wide dispersion between the mean and the standard deviation implying also that the variables that affect turnover and law-making of Senators are different factors which do not have close association with one another

Table 5: Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
DV	.175	320	.000	.524	320	.000
ES	.138	320	.000	.966	320	.000
ED	.163	320	.000	.962	320	.000
EP	.153	320	.000	.959	320	.000

Output from SPSS, 2026

Since this study's sample size is more than 100, the tests of normality were done using Kolmogorov-Smirnov (as shown by table 5) which shows that all the variables are less than 5%. This significance of the variables shows that they are not normally distributed which means ordinal regression is preferred to linear regression.

Table 6: Goodness of Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	2763.908	1663	.000
Deviance	719.035	1663	1.000

Output from SPSS, 2026

The Pearson test of goodness of fit (table 6) measures the strength of the explanatory variables of electoral system, electoral defeat and electoral preferences of voters on the target variable law-making. The probability value (p=0.00) indicates that the independent variables of electoral system, electoral defeat and electoral preferences of voters jointly explain what causes changes or variation in the target variable, law-making. It means that electoral system, electoral defeat and electoral preferences of voters are determinants of quality law-making in the Nigerian Senate.

Discussion of Findings

Table 7: Ordinal Regression Results

Variables		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	P
1	(Constant)	.881	.325		2.709	.007
	ES	.532	.087	.363	6.115	.000
	ED	.045	.141	.032	.321	.748
	EP	.118	.148	.080	.799	.425

Output from SPSS, 2026

Table 7 shows the unstandardized coefficient which measures the size and sign of the independent variables in a linear regression analysis. The signs of the three independent variables of electoral system, electoral defeat and electoral preferences of voters are all positive. This gives an ordinal regression equation:

DV = 0.881 + 0.532ES + 0.045ED + 0.118EP

This means that a unit change in electoral system will result in 0.532 increase in the quality of law making which infers that good electoral system will result in the election of high grade Senators, leading to a better law making in the red chamber of the National Assembly. Also, a unit increase in electoral defeat will lead to 0.118 increase in the quality of laws being made by the National Assembly Senators. This might not be unconnected with the fact that Senators who survived the elections will want to proof their mettle by promoting and sponsoring members' bills that would deliver the dividends of democracy to their constituents. Also, a unit increase in electoral preferences by voters will result to a 0.11 increase in the quality of laws delivered by Senators and this can be explained by the fact that voters will vote out Senators that lack capacity to make laws in

the previous Assembly and elect knowledgeable and experienced ones that will help increase the tone of law making.

Hypotheses Testing

Results from table 7 indicates the following regarding the hypotheses stated in the introduction

H_{01}: Electoral system has no significant effect on Law-Making in the 8th and 9th Senate

The electoral system and quality of law-making with a probability value of (0.532, P=0.00) shows that electoral system has a positive significant relationship with the quality of law-making. This means that a better electoral system has a positive impact on the quality of law-making in the Nigerian Senate.

H_{02}: Electoral defeat has no significant effect on Law-Making in the 8th and 9th Senate

Conversely, the effect of electoral defeat on the quality of law-making (0.118, P= 0.748) shows a positive insignificant effect. This means the loss of seats have no great impact on law-making as green horns without prior knowledge of the internal workings of the Senate as an institution can also be elected without adding any value to the quality of law-making.

H_{01}: Electoral preferences and party structure has no significant effect on Law-Making in the 8th and 9th Senate

Likewise, the effect of electoral preference and party structure on the quality of Law-making also shows a positive and insignificant (0.11, P= 0.425) relationship.

The electoral system with a probability value of (0.532, P=0.00) in table 7 shows that electoral system has a positive significant relationship with the quality of law-making. These findings support the positions of previous researches by Okoye (2021); Matland and Studlar (2004); Okibe (2018); Moncrief et al (2004). This means that a better electoral system has a positive impact on the quality of law-making in the Nigerian Senate. This aligns with past studies on electoral systems, party dynamics, and legislative procedures which stressed the importance of institutional memory and stability in fostering effective governance by ensuring that the turnover of legislators are low.

Conversely, electoral defeat values in table 7 (0.118, P= 0.748) with a positive insignificant effect on the quality of law-making means the loss of seats by members of the Senate has no great impact on law-making as green horns without prior knowledge of the internal workings of the Senate as an institution can also be elected without any value

loss to the quality of law-making and this supports the positions in the Nigeria context by Okereke (2024); Akinola and Mosunmola (2023); Murana et al (2017); Crosson et al. (2018) whose studies concluded that judicial interventions in post-electoral disputes reflect broader issues of electoral malpractice and judicial activism, highlighting the need for institutional reforms to ensure electoral integrity and reduce turnover volatility due to electoral defeat occasioned by human factors and interventions.

Likewise, electoral preference of voters and party structure shows a positive and insignificant relationship (0.11, P= 0.425) in table 7 with the quality of law-making. This aligns with the findings of Eze et al. (2023); Chukwuma and Ibezim (2022); Adebayo et al., 2021 whose studies found that the dominance of party elites in candidate selection often leads to a lack of internal democracy, resulting in high turnover when incumbents fail to secure party nominations. This position is also shared by findings from Ghana, where competitive party primaries frequently lead to the replacement of incumbents (Osei & Bukari, 2026)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the result of the probability F-Statistics, electoral system was found to have a positive and significant relationship with law-making, meaning that a healthy electoral system promotes quality law-making in the Senate as qualified and competent Senators will emanate from such electoral process. This, by extension connotes that an electoral system devoid of malpractices such as vote buying, godfatherism, money politics, crooked electoral officials and unhealthy internal democracy will result in the retention of legislators with the competence that promotes quality law-making. Also, electoral defeat (ED) and electoral preferences and party structure (EP) have a positive but insignificant effect on the quality of law making. However, the study establishes that the three factors, when taken together, can jointly impact the quality of law making.

Based on these research findings, the following recommendations are made:

i. The fact that electoral system has a positive significant relationship with the quality of law-making means that a better electoral system will improve the quality of law-making in the Nigerian Senate. This study therefore recommends the strengthening of the electoral system through electoral reforms and electoral laws aimed at empowering the Independent Electoral Commission to conduct an electronic free and fair election that will reduce cases of electoral litigations and loss of office by legislators through court judgements rather than through the ballot.

ii. The electoral defeat of Senators has no great impact on the quality law-making in the Senate as about 3% of Senators lost their seats when the 8th Assembly is compared to the 9th Assembly. The study therefore recommends that improving

the internal democracy of political parties can reduce legislative turnover which will aid quality law making as ranking Senators with institutional memory of the workings of the Senate will return to help with quality law-making.

iii. Electoral preference of voters and party structure do not affect the quality of law-making in the Nigerian Senate, as such cannot lead to the turnover of Senators. Therefore, this study recommends that voter education by the National Orientation Agency and the Independent National Electoral Commission be intensified during off election seasons for citizens to understand the need to avoid money politics that prevent the emergence credible candidates, thereby compromising the quality of candidates elected and by extension, the quality of law-making.

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