

Electoral Reforms and Political Participation in Democratic Governance in Nigeria (2015-2025)

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
This paper examined Electoral reforms and political participation in democratic governance in Nigeria. The objectives of the paper were to; examine how electoral reforms influenced the level of political participation in democratic governance, investigate the extent political participation contributed to the promotion of good governance and identify the challenges that hinders the effectiveness of electoral reforms in promoting political participation and good governance. The paper adopted Institutional Theory as it theoretical framework which was developed as a major analytical framework for understanding how structures, rules, and norms shape behaviour within societies. Both primary and secondary data was used in the paper. The primary data was an oral interview from key informant, while the secondary data was the use of existing literature. The findings revealed that electoral reforms have influenced political participation to a considerable extent, though not uniformly. Political participation contributes to the promotion of good governance, particularly through increased accountability and responsiveness of public officials.it identified several challenges hindering the effectiveness of electoral reforms in promoting political participation and good governance. The paper recommended that Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should strengthen the implementation of electoral reforms by ensuring adequate funding, improving logistics, and maintaining technological systems such as biometric registration and electronic result transmission. National Assembly and civil society organizations should create and support platforms for citizen engagement beyond elections, including public hearings, civic forums, and community monitoring initiatives. Ministry of Justice and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) should enforce electoral laws strictly and prosecute offenders promptly to deter malpractice. KEYWORDS: Electoral Reforms, Political Participation, Democratic Governance, Legitimacy, Voter Intimidation.	Published On: 22 September 2026 Available on: https://ijiissh.com/

INTRODUCTION

Electoral reform, political participation and good governance are core aspects of democratic processes. Elections are the main instrument by which citizens take their political rights and choose the government in democratic societies. The legitimacy of governments and citizens' trust in democratic institutions to a large extent depend on the credibility and transparency of electoral processes. In the countries where electoral procedures are still credible and transparent, citizens are developing their trust in governance procedures and actively participate in political activities. Where elections, however, are marred by irregularities, manipulation and weak institutions, citizens tend to abstain from being politically active, which undermines democracy. Thus, the reform of the electoral system has become an important tool for bolstering democratic institutions and effective governance.

Electoral reform involves deliberate intervention to contribute to the improvement of electoral laws, processes and institutions with a view of making them fair, transparent and accountable in the conduct of elections. Electoral malpractices, lack of administrative capacity, voter intimidation and inadequate transparency in result management all pose a problem, and many countries have periodically introduced reforms to tackle these issues. The reforms typically include changes to electoral laws, the enhancement of electoral management institutions, the application of technology for voter accreditation and result transmission and the improvement of processes for the resolution of electoral disputes. Ojo (2020) argues that electoral reform is a key component of improving the

credibility of elections and the legitimacy of election results. When reforms are successful in ensuring the strength of electoral processes, citizens are more confident in democratic institutions, and more likely to engage in political activity.

Another vital aspect of a democratic government is political participation. It is about the different forms of participation in politics: being a voter at elections, being a member of a political party, attending political meetings, and civic involvement, including in the debate on governance. Participation gives government legitimacy as it is a reflection of the consent of the governed. In general, high rates of political involvement go hand-in-hand with robust democracies because they make the leaders accountable to the citizens from whom they came. It has long been argued that high levels of political involvement strengthen democracy by making its leaders accountable to the citizens who elected them. Active citizen engagement leads to a more responsive government, and to government leaders adopting policies for the public good (Fung, 2015).

In most developing democracies, however, political participation is quite limited, as people are not satisfied with the electoral system. Election fraud, purchase of votes, violence and manipulation of results discourage citizens from voting. In Nigeria, for example, there have been several elections since the country's transition to democracy in 1999 that have been tainted by irregularities that have compromised the credibility of results, thus undermining the electoral process. A flawed election undermines democratic institutions as "leaders" elected by manipulated elections may not be legitimate, and thus held few accountable to the electorate" (Hasen, 2020). This has led to the need for electoral reforms to regain the public trust in the electoral process and to promote wider participation in elections.

Good governance is the overall goal which democratic processes are aiming for. It is about the responsible handling of public resources and the adoption of policies that encourage accountability, transparency, and rule of law and the equitable distribution of resources. In good governance, government institutions are effective and responsive to citizens. Norris (2017) states that governance is enhanced when political leaders are selected in a credible electoral process which truly represents the will of the people. Popular support for the leaders' authority is likely to make them more inclined to adopt social welfare and national development policies. Electoral reform, political participation and good governance are therefore interrelated. Electoral reform increases the credibility of the elections, which leads to more political participation among citizens. Greater engagement improves democratic accountability, since elected officials know their political lives are dependent on their constituents. By contrast, weak electoral institutions are likely to generate leaders who are dependent on electoral manipulation and not popular support, which can affect the transparency of governance and accountability.

Nigeria has a long history of identifying the need for electoral reforms as an essential measure for advancing democratic consolidation. Over the years, several reform measures have been taken to enhance the credibility of the elections and restore the public's trust in the electoral system. Technological innovations like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and provisions for electronic transmission of election results were introduced in the Electoral Act of 2022 to improve transparency and mitigate electoral malpractices. While these reforms brought hope to citizens and civil society groups, the impact of these reforms on enhancing political participation and good governance remains a topic of discussion.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Election

The election is a paramount civic activity that characterises every liberal and competitive political system. Mugoša (2022) defined an election as the procedure through which eligible members of an organisation or group select their officials or representatives. An election is an institutionalised mechanism through which a country's inhabitants pick political officeholders. In other words, it enables voters to choose representatives for diverse roles within governmental institutions. Ekerette, (2023), contended that an election constitutes the process by which most of the populace within any political system selects its elites. The author asserts that elections provide citizens with the opportunity to replace a government that has failed to meet expectations or has broken their confidence. Lindberg (2017) defined an election as the mechanism by which a collective selects one or a limited number of persons from a larger pool to occupy one or more authority position this selection procedure generally involves regulations and principles designed to ensure a specific degree of equity and impartiality for all stakeholders. This is the most current methodology for recruiting individuals for public roles. An election is defined as a procedure in which legally eligible individuals select officials or render legally binding decisions regarding policy. The fundamental objective of elections is to enable the electorate to select their leaders and the policies and programmes they wish to enact. As a democratic procedure, an election encompasses various activities, primarily campaigning and voting. A campaign is a complex series of acts executed by politicians and parties to garner public support. The act of articulating one's opinions on the ballot is voting, which represents the conclusion of an election.

In the context of countries, elections are the process by which citizens of a country choose the leaders who occupy government positions and offices. Elections are a basic hallmark or requirement of a democratic system of government, and all those who are qualified to vote in elections make up the electorate. Democratic government is government by "consent of the governed"; election gives practical meaning to this notion of "consent". According to Schumpeter (1942) Election is the very heart of democracy. He goes on to state that it is an "institutional arrangement" as a means of filling public offices by a competitive struggle for the people's vote. According to Przeworski, Rivero, & Xi (2015), Elections are the mechanisms for selecting people into public offices or other

private positions. In the view of Gahlawat, & Gauba, (2016), an election is the process by which the members of a community or organisation choose one or more persons to exercise authority on their behalf. The provision of elections in a democracy is intended to ensure that the government will exercise its powers with the consent of the governed. In other words, election lends legitimacy to the authority of the government. Election is therefore a process through which members of a group, club, society, community or organisation choose some of their members to hold offices at regular intervals.

Functions of Election

Wojtasik, (2013) explained that there are two contrasting views of the functions of competitive elections. The conventional view is that elections are mechanism through which politicians can be called to account and forced to introduce policies somehow reflect public opinion. This emphasizes the bottom – up functions of elections on the other hand, Van Aelst, & Walgrave, (2016) portrays the functions of election as the means through which the government and political elites can exercise control over their population, making them more quiescent, malleable and ultimately governable. This view emphasis top – bottom functions. In reality, elections have no single character, they are neither simply mechanism of public accountability nor a means of ensuring political control. Like all channels of political communication, elections are “two – way streets” that provides the government and the people, the elites and the masses, with the opportunity to influence one another.

The central functions of elections include the following: -

- 1. Recruiting Politicians:** - In democratic states such as Nigeria, India, U.S.A, elections are the principal sources of political recruitment, taking account also of the process through which parties nominate candidates. Politicians thus tend to possess talents and skill that are related to electioneering, such as charisma, oratorical skills and good looks not necessarily those that suit them to carry out constituency duties, serving on committees, running government departments and so on.
- 2. Making government:** - Elections make governments in states in which the political executive is directly elected. In the more common parliamentary systems, election influences the formations of governments most common strongly when the electoral system tends to give a single party a clear parliamentary majority. The use of proportional representation may mean that governments are formed through post – election deals and that government can be made and unmade without the need for election.
- 3. Providing Representation:** - When they are free, fair and competitive elections are a means through which demands are channeled from the public to the government. Short of the use of initiatives and recall, however the electorate has no effective means of ensuring that mandates are carried out apart from its capacity to inflict punishment at the next election. Moreover, elected governments nowhere constitute a microcosm of the larger society.
- 4. Influencing Policy:** - Elections certainly deter governments from pursuing radicals and deeply unpopular policies, but only in exceptional cases, when a single issue dominates the election campaign, can they be said to influences policy directly. It can also be argued that the range of policy options outlined in election is typically so narrow that the result can be of only marginal policy significance.
- 5. Educating Voters:** - The process of campaigning provides the electorate with an abundance of information, about parties candidates, policies, the current government’s records, the political system etc. However, this leads to education only if the information that is provided and the way it is provided, engages public interest and stimulates debate as opposed to apathy and alienation. As candidates and parties seek to persuade rather than educate, they also have strong incentive to provide incomplete and distorted information.
- 6. Building Legitimacy:** - One reason why even authoritarians regimes bother to hold elections, even if they are non-competitive, is that elections help to foster legitimacy by providing justification for a system of rule. This happens because the ritual involved in campaigning somehow centers on an election.
- 7. Ceremonial status and importance.** Most importantly, by encouraging citizens to participate in politics even in the limited form of voting elections mobilize active consent.
- 8. Strengthening Elites:** Elections can also be a vehicle through which elites can manipulate and control the masses. Political discontent and opposition can be neutralized by election that channel them in a constitutional direction and allow governments to come and go while the regime itself survives. Elections are particularly effective in this respect because at the same time they give citizens the impression that they are exercising power over the government.

Electoral reform

Electoral reform is a term used to describe changes in electoral law or electoral processes over a certain period and usually with the aim of improving the electoral process. It is an intentional and conscious effort of the state to remove the loopholes and weaknesses of electoral process (Ukekwe, 2018). For Attah, & Odiji, (2020), electoral reform connotes changes of the electoral system which leads to efficiency and effectiveness in the electoral management process. Electoral reform, according to Katz, (2005) can be broken down into three categories: Political electoral reform, Administrative electoral reform and Legal electoral reform. Several state and non-state stakeholders have been identified to be working hand-in-hand with the EMBs in the electoral reform process.

Electoral reforms also refers to the solution to the problem of election fraud. It is a change to the electoral process or system designed to improve the voice of the voters in elections. These desired improvements foster significant ideas and activities that can

enhance the welfare of the public by facilitating free and fair elections and ensuring that perpetrators of election cheating are held accountable. The electoral process refers to the full path of an election from delimiting electoral boundaries to voter registration, election notification, candidate nomination, campaigning, the polling event, to collation and announcement of results. Yahaya (2018) argue that electoral reform is sacrosanct for the growth and development of electoral processes, institutions and the attainment of democratic stability. This is so because electoral reforms offer a window to enhance electoral process and advance electoral rights of citizens.

Political Participation

Concepts of political participation, election and voting behaviour are closely interrelated as they are mutually reinforcing because they all revolve around the concept of democracy which upholds citizens' engagement in public affairs. Without political participation, the need for elections and voting will not arise in a democratic system. Political participation describes the voluntary or non-coercive involvement of citizens in the political affairs of their country. This definition points to the fact that political participation does not entail the use of force. In the same vein, Marsh, & Akram, (2019) sees political participation as political engagement. Riley, Griffin and Morey (2010) noted that political participation is thought of as a set of rights and duties that involve formally organized civic and political activities. Together, the above definitions emphasize the praxis, not the teleology of participation.

Fayomi, & Adebayo, (2017) had earlier noted that "Political Participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take". In the same vein, Van Deth, (2014), characterized political participation as an activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action –either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy, or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies.

Governance

According to Mamedu (2016), Governance is the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization. Good corporate governance is the key to the health and the success of an organization and it is therefore high on the agenda in all sectors of the public, private and voluntary organizations. Good corporate governance principles have been enunciated by Mugarura, (2019). Naturally, successfully managed SMEs are expected to out-perform others. Four key themes which enable top company out-performs are: clear focus on what is important and potent; decisiveness – a preparedness to act; results orientation- a restless search for super-returns and repayment; robust and regular communication within the board and within the executive team.

Ford, & Ihrke, (2019) perceives governance as the way organizations are directed and controlled to ensure that they are effective in achieving their objectives. They argue that whatever governance arrangements are in place in any complaint-handlings scheme, it is vital that they support and promote the integrity of the scheme and office holder and, above all, protect the independence of the office holder, especially from those over whom the scheme has a coverage and jurisdiction. Patil, Singh, & Scholar, (2019), explains that governance to mean the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights. He argues that the quality of governance is an issue of increasing concern in the countries around the world both developed and developing. According to Johnson, and Omodero, (2021) inadequate governance may limit the degree of tax revenue mobilization, and tax compliance will suffer as a result.

Good Governance

the concept of good governance "could be used to invite judgment about how the country... concerned was being governed: it enabled the raising of evaluative question about proper procedures, transparency, the quality and process of decision making, and other such matters". In fact, "it helps to differentiate the professed or actual self- understanding of the ruling groups from their real causal contribution to the prosperity or misery of their subjects (Furner, 2017). For Brinkerhoff, (2017), good governance means accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy, which all constitute a challenge to democratic regimes (Chukwueme, 2026). Moreover, good governance has been closely linked to 'the extent which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities; and equitable in its conduct" (Rotberg, 2014).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Democratic Participatory Theory

This paper adopted Democratic Participatory Theory as the theoretical Framework. The theory was developed mainly by Carole Pateman (1970) is appropriate for the analysis of electoral reforms and political participation in the democratic government of Nigeria. The theory focuses on the need to extend democracy beyond the selection of representatives at regular intervals to the active and ongoing involvement of citizens in political decision making. Pateman's participatory approach also highlights the link between

participation and political efficacy, and indicates that participation fosters confidence and capacity of citizens in democratic engagement.

The theory is important for electoral reforms because the aim of electoral reforms is to strengthen the institutions, laws, procedures and processes by which citizens participate in politics. Political reforms in Nigeria concerning the registration of voters, electoral administration, election technology, political competition, political campaign regulation and electoral dispute resolution may either increase or reduce citizens' opportunities for meaningful participation. Electoral governance is about the design, operation and enforcement of the rules that define electoral competition – and credible and inclusive reforms are essential to enhancing political participation and democratic legitimacy. This is because the electoral reforms, political participation, and democratic governance are all central variables in this paper and all relate to citizen involvement. The theory gives an analytical framework for determining whether electoral reforms have fostered an environment conducive to citizens' registration, voting, political discussion, election observation, political party membership, and other democratic processes. It also details how participation helps to increase accountability, by driving greater responsiveness of both political actors and electoral institutions to citizens' preferences and demands.

The theory is thus applicable in this paper as it can explain how effective electoral reforms can foster wider and deeper political participation in Nigeria. Electoral institutions that are transparent, credible, inclusive and trusted will promote citizen engagement in political processes. Electoral malpractice, violence, distrust and institutional weaknesses can on the other hand act as disincentives to participation and undermine the quality of democratic governance. Therefore, the Democratic Participatory Theory is a good tool for examining the effect of electoral reforms on deepening citizen involvement, improving electoral legitimacy and strengthening the consolidation of democratic governance in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a qualitative research design with methods such as in-depth interviews. The Interviews was organized with electoral officials, policymakers, and civil society actors who offered firsthand insights into how reforms are designed and implemented, while document analysis of electoral laws, policy reports, and institutional records helps to triangulate findings. This aligns with Creswell (2014), who emphasizes that qualitative design is appropriate when exploring processes, meanings, and institutional practices. The location of the paper is Abuja because it provides a strategic setting for examining electoral reform, political participation, and good governance due to its central role in national political activities. The population of this paper comprises key stakeholders involved in electoral processes and governance within Abuja, Nigeria. The targeted population includes officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), staff of relevant government ministries such as the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of civil society organizations, political party representatives, and eligible voters residing AMAC in the Federal Capital Territory. These groups were selected because they play direct and indirect roles in the design, implementation, and experience of electoral reforms and political participation. The paper adopts a sample size of 10 respondents. This sample size is considered appropriate within a qualitative research framework, where emphasis is placed on depth rather than breadth of data. The sample size of 10 was determined by the need to reach data saturation around the research objectives as well as the research topic. The analysis was based on the following research questions;

- a. How have electoral reforms influenced the level of political participation in democratic governance?
- b. To what extent has political participation contributed to the promotion of good governance?
- c. What are the challenges that hinders the effectiveness of electoral reforms in promoting political participation and good governance?

ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL REFORM, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

5.1 How electoral reforms influenced the level of political participation in democratic governance (oral interview, 2026)

Majority of the respondents across the selected groups reported that electoral reforms have significantly influenced the level of political participation in democratic governance, although a few expressed reservations about their overall effectiveness. Officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) largely stated that reforms such as the introduction of biometric voter registration and electronic transmission of results improved transparency and boosted voter confidence. According to one of the respondents:

These measures reduced electoral fraud and encouraged more citizens to participate in elections. Logistical challenges and technical failures in certain areas limited the full impact of these reforms.

Staff of the Ministry of Justice generally indicated that legal reforms, including stricter electoral laws and penalties for malpractice, strengthened the credibility of the electoral process. One of the respondents noted that;

Clearer legal frameworks increased public trust and motivated participation. While weak enforcement of these laws still discourages some citizens from engaging actively in elections.

Respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that Nigeria's commitment to electoral reforms has improved its democratic image internationally, which indirectly encourages domestic participation. One of the respondent explained that;

Increased global scrutiny and partnerships have pressured institutions to uphold standards. But international perception does not necessarily translate into higher voter turnout at the grassroots level.

Civil society organizations overwhelmingly reported that voter education campaigns and advocacy driven by reforms have enhanced political awareness and participation. One of the respondent stressed that;

Reforms created more space for civic engagement and election monitoring. However voter apathy remains high due to distrust in political actors despite these efforts.

Political party representatives mostly agreed that electoral reforms have improved the fairness of competition, thereby encouraging party supporters to participate more actively. One of them observed that;

Transparent processes increased confidence in electoral outcomes. However internal party issues and irregularities still discourage full participation among party members.

Most of the eligible voters generally expressed that reforms, particularly technological innovations, made the voting process more accessible and credible, leading to increased willingness to vote. One of the voters noted that;

Improvements in voter registration and result transparency. However, persistent challenges such as electoral violence, delays, and lack of trust in institutions as factors that continue to limit their participation.

5.2 The extent political participation contributed to the promotion of good governance (Oral Interview, 2026)

Majority of the respondents indicated that political participation has contributed to the promotion of good governance to a considerable extent, particularly through enhanced accountability, transparency, and responsiveness of public officials. However, a number of respondents expressed contrary views, arguing that participation has not always translated into improved governance outcomes.

Officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) largely reported that increased voter turnout and citizen engagement during elections have compelled political leaders to act more responsibly. One of the respondent explained that;

When citizens actively participate, elected officials become more conscious of public scrutiny and are pressured to deliver on campaign promises. Nevertheless, participation alone does not guarantee good governance, especially where institutions remain weak.

Staff of the Ministry of Justice generally stated that political participation strengthens the rule of law by encouraging citizens to demand accountability and challenge electoral irregularities through legal means. One of the respondent observed that;

Active civic engagement has led to more electoral petitions and judicial interventions, which help to uphold democratic principles. However, excessive political interference and delays in the judicial process reduce the effectiveness of such participation.

Respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that active political participation enhances Nigeria's democratic image internationally, which in turn promotes good governance practices. One of the respondent explained that;

Governments are more likely to adhere to democratic norms when citizens are actively involved. However, international recognition does not necessarily reflect actual governance quality within the country.

Civil society organizations overwhelmingly stated that political participation plays a vital role in promoting good governance through advocacy, voter education, and election monitoring. One of the respondent emphasized that;

Citizen involvement increases transparency and reduces opportunities for corruption. Despite this, nevertheless, participation has been undermined by voter apathy and limited trust in political institutions.

Political party representatives mostly agreed that participation strengthens internal party democracy and encourages leaders to be more accountable to their supporters. One of the respondent noted that;

Active engagement from party members often influences policy direction and leadership decisions. However, internal party conflicts and lack of transparency weaken the impact of participation on governance.

Eligible voters generally expressed that their participation in elections gives them a sense of ownership in governance and enables them to hold leaders accountable. One of them noted that;

Voting and civic engagement create pressure for better service delivery. Conversely, despite participating in elections, governance outcomes have not significantly improved, citing issues such as corruption and unfulfilled promises.

5.3 The challenges that hinders the effectiveness of electoral reforms in promoting political participation and good governance (oral interview, 2026).

Majority of the respondents reported that significant challenges continue to hinder the effectiveness of electoral reforms in promoting political participation and good governance. One of the respondent expressed the view that;

Although reforms have been introduced to improve the credibility of elections, their impact has been limited due to persistent institutional, political, and socio-economic constraints. Officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) explained that logistical inefficiencies, inadequate funding, and technical challenges remain major obstacles. One of the respondents stated that;

Delays in the deployment of electoral materials, malfunctioning of electronic devices, and insufficient training of ad hoc staff often disrupt the voting process and discourage citizen participation. Political interference sometimes undermines the independence of the commission, weakening public confidence in electoral outcomes.

Staff of the Ministry of Justice reported that weak enforcement of electoral laws poses a serious challenge. One of the respondent observed that;

Although legal frameworks exist to punish electoral offences, the slow pace of prosecution and lack of accountability reduce their deterrent effect. Political influence over judicial processes occasionally limits the effectiveness of legal mechanisms designed to support electoral reforms.

Respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that external pressures and international expectations do not always align with domestic realities. One of the respondent explained that;

While Nigeria adopts reforms to meet global democratic standards, internal issues such as insecurity, economic hardship, and political instability often hinder their successful implementation. These factors, they noted, reduce citizens' willingness to participate actively in elections.

Civil society organizations highlighted voter apathy, lack of trust in political institutions, and inadequate civic education as critical challenges. One of the respondent stated that;

Many citizens feel their votes do not count, leading to low turnout despite reforms. Limited access to information, especially in rural areas, constrains effective participation and weakens the link between reforms and governance outcomes.

Political party representatives pointed to internal party issues such as lack of internal democracy, imposition of candidates, and electoral malpractice. One of the respondent noted that;

These practices discourage party members and supporters from engaging fully in the political process. Intense political competition often leads to electoral violence, which further discourages participation.

Most of the eligible voters reported that insecurity, poverty, and distrust in government institutions remain key barriers. One of them explained that;

Fear of violence during elections, financial constraints, and dissatisfaction with past governance outcomes reduce their motivation to participate. The complexity of certain electoral procedures creates additional difficulties for voters.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that electoral reforms have influenced political participation to a considerable extent, though not uniformly. The finding shows that reforms such as biometric voter registration, improved voter education, and result transparency enhanced public confidence and encouraged greater voter turnout. This aligns with Arshad et al. (2025) and Shankar Prasad (2025), who observed that credible electoral systems stimulate citizen engagement. However, some respondents, particularly voters and party representatives, argued that persistent challenges such as technical failures, electoral violence, and distrust in institutions continue to discourage participation.

More so the findings revealed that political participation contributes to the promotion of good governance, particularly through increased accountability and responsiveness of public officials. The finding indicated that when citizens actively engage in elections and civic processes, leaders are more likely to act in the public interest and deliver on their mandates. This collaborated with Arshad et al. (2025), who linked participation with transparency and improved governance outcomes. Civil society respondents emphasized that participation strengthens oversight and reduces opportunities for corruption.

Lastly the findings identified several challenges hindering the effectiveness of electoral reforms in promoting political participation and good governance. Majority of respondents pointed to weak institutional capacity, poor enforcement of electoral laws, political interference, and logistical inefficiencies as major obstacles. The finding emphasized that lack of accountability and slow judicial processes weaken the impact of reforms. Additionally, respondents highlighted voter apathy, insecurity, and socio-economic constraints as factors reducing citizen engagement. These findings are consistent with Shankar Prasad (2025), who identified structural and socio-economic barriers to participation, and Arshad et al. (2025), who stressed enforcement gaps in electoral laws. The paper concludes that electoral reform, political participation, and good governance are deeply interconnected elements within the democratic process. Electoral reforms have shown the potential to enhance political participation by improving the credibility, transparency, and accessibility of electoral processes. Where such reforms are effectively implemented, citizens demonstrate greater willingness to engage in democratic activities, particularly voting. However, the paper establishes that the mere introduction of reforms does not automatically guarantee increased participation, as structural and institutional weaknesses continue to limit their full impact. Political participation remains a critical driver of good governance. Active citizen involvement strengthens accountability, encourages responsiveness from political leaders, and promotes transparency in public administration. Despite this, participation alone cannot ensure good governance in the absence of strong institutions, effective legal enforcement, and genuine political will. Nevertheless, persistent challenges, such as weak institutional capacity, political interference, insecurity, and voter

apathy, significantly undermine the effectiveness of electoral reforms. These challenges restrict both participation and governance outcomes. Therefore, achieving meaningful democratic progress requires not only continuous electoral reforms but also institutional strengthening, enforcement of electoral laws, and efforts to rebuild public trust in the political system.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that electoral reform, political participation, and good governance are deeply interconnected elements within the democratic process. Electoral reforms have shown the potential to enhance political participation by improving the credibility, transparency, and accessibility of electoral processes. Where such reforms are effectively implemented, citizens demonstrate greater willingness to engage in democratic activities, particularly voting. However, the study establishes that the mere introduction of reforms does not automatically guarantee increased participation, as structural and institutional weaknesses continue to limit their full impact. Political participation remains a critical driver of good governance. Active citizen involvement strengthens accountability, encourages responsiveness from political leaders, and promotes transparency in public administration. Despite this, participation alone cannot ensure good governance in the absence of strong institutions, effective legal enforcement, and genuine political will.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should strengthen the implementation of electoral reforms by ensuring adequate funding, improving logistics, and maintaining technological systems such as biometric registration and electronic result transmission.
- b. National Assembly and civil society organizations should create and support platforms for citizen engagement beyond elections, including public hearings, civic forums, and community monitoring initiatives.
- c. Ministry of Justice and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) should enforce electoral laws strictly and prosecute offenders promptly to deter malpractice.

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