



Political Institutions and Democratic Development in Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords: Institutional Accountability, Government Transparency, Electoral Credibility, Public Service Effectiveness, Democratic Participation</i></p> <p><i>Received : 25 February</i> <i>Revised : 25 April</i> <i>Accepted: 25 May</i></p> <p>©2026 Fred, Patimi: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.</p> 	<p>This paper investigated the relationship between political Institutions and Democratic Development in Nigeria. Institutional Accountability, Government Transparency, Electoral Credibility and Public Service Effectiveness were used as a proxy for political institution while democratic participation serves as a proxy for democratic development. The population of the study comprised citizens residing in the selected states in Nigeria (Rivers State, Lagos State, Enugu State, & Kaduna State) with a sample size of one hundred and forty (140). A structured questionnaire titled "Political Institutions and Democratic Participation Questionnaire (PIDPQ)." Was used to elicit information from respondents. A reliability coefficient of 0.76% was achieved using Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the aid of SPSS. The result revealed that institutional accountability, government transparency and public service effectiveness had positive and significant relationship with democratic participation while electoral credibility exhibited a positive but insignificant relationship with democratic participation. It was therefore, concluded that political Institutions had substantial influence on Democratic Development in Nigeria it was recommended amongst other that the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission should strengthen institutional accountability mechanisms by intensifying monitoring, auditing, and prosecution of corrupt public officials. Improving accountability frameworks will enhance citizens' confidence in governance and stimulate greater democratic participation across Nigeria.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Political institutions remain fundamental to the survival, stability, and sustainability of democratic governance across nations of the world. In both developed and developing economies, strong political institutions are essential for promoting accountability, transparency, rule of law, political participation, and effective governance. The quality of political institutions largely determines the extent to which citizens participate in democratic processes and contribute to national development. Consequently, countries with effective political institutions tend to experience stronger democratic consolidation, political stability, and improved socio-economic outcomes. Therefore, political institutions refer to the formal structures, rules, organizations, and processes established to regulate political behavior and governance within a state. According to North (1990), political institutions are the “rules of the game” that shape political and economic interactions in society. Similarly, Fukuyama (2013) defined political institutions as organized systems and governance structures responsible for maintaining accountability, public order, transparency, and state effectiveness. Political institutions include electoral bodies, legislatures, public service agencies, anti-corruption institutions, political parties, judicial systems, and other governance structures established to promote democratic governance and public administration.

In Nigeria, political institutions have undergone several reforms since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999. Democratic governance in Nigeria has witnessed the establishment and strengthening of institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (1998), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (2003), and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (2000) aimed at improving electoral integrity, accountability, and governance transparency. Despite these reforms, democratic development in Nigeria remains relatively weak compared to several emerging democracies. Statistical evidence indicates persistent institutional and democratic challenges in Nigeria. According to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (2024), Nigeria scored 25 out of 100 and ranked among countries with high perceived corruption levels. Similarly, the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (2024) revealed that Nigeria continues to record weak institutional quality, particularly in government effectiveness, accountability, and rule of law. Furthermore, voter turnout in Nigeria’s 2023 presidential election declined significantly to approximately 27% of registered voters according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (2023), reflecting growing political apathy and declining public trust in democratic institutions.

Empirically, several studies have established the relationship between political institutions and democratic development. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (2012) argued that strong and inclusive political institutions are essential for promoting democratic stability, citizen participation, and economic development. Their study emphasized that accountable and transparent institutions enhance political legitimacy and strengthen democratic governance. Similarly, Robert Putnam (1993) found that institutional performance and civic engagement significantly influence democratic development and governance

outcomes. The study established that societies with stronger institutional frameworks experience higher levels of democratic participation and political trust. Despite these institutional reforms and empirical evidence, Nigeria continues to face several challenges affecting democratic development. Corruption, weak accountability mechanisms, poor transparency, electoral irregularities, ineffective public service delivery, and declining trust in governance institutions remain major obstacles to democratic participation. Reports by the Afrobarometer (2023) revealed that a significant proportion of Nigerians expressed dissatisfaction with public institutions and democratic governance due to corruption and poor service delivery. In addition, insecurity, electoral violence, and administrative inefficiencies have weakened citizens' confidence in democratic processes and reduced political participation across many parts of the country.

These institutional weaknesses have negatively affected democratic participation by increasing voter apathy, reducing civic engagement, and weakening democratic legitimacy. For instance, low voter turnout, declining public confidence in electoral outcomes, and widespread dissatisfaction with governance structures indicate persistent institutional deficiencies within Nigeria's democratic system. Although several studies have examined democracy and governance in Nigeria, many existing studies concentrated broadly on governance and economic development with limited attention to how specific dimensions of political institutions such as institutional accountability, government transparency, electoral credibility, and public service effectiveness influence democratic participation across selected states in Nigeria.

It is against this background that this study pursue to address the following questions? The extent institutional accountability influence democratic development (participation) in Nigeria? How has government transparency impact democratic development (participation) in Nigeria? To what extent has electoral effectiveness influence democratic development (participation) in Nigeria? And how has public service effectiveness impacted democratic development (participation) in Nigeria? The rest of the paper after the introduction is structured as, section 2 is literature review, section 3 is methodology, and section 4 is result and discussion while section 5 is conclusion and recommendation

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

Political Institutions

Political institutions constitute the foundational pillars upon which the organization, regulation, and sustainability of political systems are constructed. They embody the formal and informal frameworks through which political authority is exercised, public power is allocated, and governance processes are structured. In both theoretical and practical discourse, political institutions are widely recognized as critical determinants of democratic stability, governmental legitimacy, and state performance. Their strength or fragility significantly influences the trajectory of democratic consolidation, the quality of governance,

and the degree of public trust in political systems. North (1990) defines political institutions as the “humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic, and social interaction.” From his perspective, political institutions are essentially the rules of the game that shape how political actors behave and interact within a society.

Fukuyama (2013) conceptualizes political institutions as organizational systems through which the state exercises authority, maintains law and order, delivers public services, and ensures accountability. His emphasis is on state capacity and institutional effectiveness, arguing that strong political institutions must combine authority with mechanisms of accountability to function effectively. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) define political institutions in terms of the distribution of political power and the rules that govern collective decision-making in society. They distinguish between inclusive political institutions, which distribute power broadly and promote democratic participation and development, and extractive political institutions, which concentrate power in the hands of a few and hinder development. Their interpretation has been widely influential because it directly links the nature of political institutions to economic and democratic outcomes.

Putnam (1993), while not offering a strict definition, conceptualizes political institutions as governance systems embedded within social networks, civic traditions, and levels of social capital. He emphasizes that institutional performance is deeply influenced by civic engagement, trust, and cooperation among citizens. Putnam’s contribution for introducing the role of social capital into institutional analysis and explaining regional differences in governance performance. In addition Ntuk (2017) conceptualizes political institutions in Nigeria as the core structural pillars of democratic governance, encompassing institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the judiciary, political parties, and the public service, which collectively sustain democratic order and governance effectiveness. His analysis underscores that democratic consolidation in Nigeria is fundamentally dependent on the autonomy, credibility, and efficiency of these institutions, while institutional weaknesses significantly undermine democratic stability. Similarly, Akindoyin and Badru (2024) conceptualize political institutions in Nigeria as the structural and procedural framework through which democratic governance is operationalized, emphasizing that credible electoral systems, judicial independence, and effective legislative oversight constitute essential determinants of democratic sustainability and national development. Their study further argues that despite the formal existence of institutional frameworks, Nigeria continues to experience significant implementation deficits that weaken institutional performance and democratic outcomes.

Democratic Development

Democratic development represents one of the most critical dimensions of political progress in modern states, reflecting the extent to which democratic principles such as participation, accountability, transparency, political inclusion, and rule of law are entrenched within a political system. It is not merely the existence of democratic institutions, but the consolidation, deepening, and

effective functioning of those institutions in ways that enhance citizens' political freedoms and governance quality. Huntington (1991) sees democratic development as the "institutionalization of democratic political practices," arguing that democracy becomes consolidated when institutions are stable, valued, and capable of managing political competition effectively. From this perspective, democratic development is measured by the extent to which democratic institutions are able to survive crises and maintain legitimacy over time. Similarly, Linz and Stepan (1996) define democratic development as the process through which democracy becomes "the only game in town," meaning that political actors accept democratic rules as the legitimate framework for political competition. They emphasize behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional dimensions of democracy, arguing that democratic development is achieved when democratic norms are deeply internalized by political elites and citizens.

Accordingly, Diamond (1999) conceptualizes democratic development as the expansion and deepening of democratic governance, where elections are free and fair, civil liberties are protected, and government responsiveness is strengthened. He distinguishes between electoral democracy and liberal democracy, arguing that true democratic development goes beyond elections to include accountability, institutional checks, and protection of rights. Schmitter and Karl (1991) view democratic development as a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable through regular, competitive, and meaningful elections. In addition Aiyede (2015) defines democratic development in Nigeria as the progressive strengthening of electoral institutions, rule of law, and accountability mechanisms that enhance political participation and governance legitimacy. He argues that democratic development in Nigeria is constrained by institutional weaknesses and elite manipulation of democratic processes. Similarly, Ogundiya (2018) defines democratic development as the deepening of democratic governance through improved transparency, political inclusion, and institutional responsiveness, emphasizing that Nigeria's democratic trajectory is shaped by both institutional reforms and persistent governance deficits. More recently, Ibrahim and Bello (2023) argue that democratic development in Nigeria should be understood in terms of citizens' trust in democratic institutions, electoral credibility, and the effectiveness of public service delivery.

Relationship between Political Institutions and Democratic Development

The relationship between political institutions and democratic development in Nigeria is both theoretically significant and empirically observable, as the performance, credibility, and autonomy of political institutions directly shape the depth, quality, and sustainability of democracy in the country. Political institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the judiciary, the legislature, political parties, and anti-corruption agencies play a central role in determining whether democratic principles such as participation, accountability, transparency, and rule of law are effectively realized. In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, evidence shows that improvements in institutional frameworks have been accompanied by gradual but uneven democratic development, while persistent institutional weaknesses have

constrained democratic consolidation. A key institutional pillar influencing democratic development in Nigeria is electoral governance, particularly the role of INEC in organizing elections and managing voter registration processes. Since its establishment under the 1999 Constitution, INEC has introduced several reforms such as the use of biometric voter registration, Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), and digital accreditation systems to enhance electoral credibility and reduce fraud. These reforms have contributed to improvements in electoral transparency and administrative efficiency, thereby strengthening procedural democracy.

However, despite these innovations, electoral outcomes in Nigeria continue to be undermined by irregularities such as vote buying, logistical challenges, delayed result transmission, and declining public confidence in electoral integrity. As noted in recent governance assessments, Nigeria's electoral process has improved technologically but still suffers from weak enforcement of electoral rules and elite manipulation of institutions, which limits the translation of electoral reforms into deeper democratic consolidation (INEC, 2023; Obi & Herbert, 2024; Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership, 2025; ResearchGate Studies, 2024). One of the most visible indicators of democratic development voter turnout further illustrates the relationship between political institutions and democracy in Nigeria. Empirical evidence shows a consistent decline in voter participation, falling from about 34.75% in 2019 to approximately 26.7% in the 2023 general elections (Anyanwu, 2025; Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership, 2025). This declining turnout reflects weakening institutional trust and growing political apathy among citizens, suggesting that institutional deficiencies have direct consequences on democratic engagement. Experts argue that this trend is not merely a reflection of voter indifference but is strongly linked to perceptions of electoral fraud, weak accountability, and poor responsiveness of democratic institutions (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2025; Journal of African Political Science Studies, 2025). The implication is that when political institutions fail to inspire confidence, democratic participation declines, thereby weakening democratic legitimacy.

In addition, governance indicators and democracy indices further demonstrate the institutional-democratic linkage in Nigeria. The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index classified Nigeria as a "hybrid regime," scoring approximately 4.16 out of 10 in 2024 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2024; StatBase Global Governance Data, 2024), indicating limited democratic consolidation despite regular elections. Similarly, global governance assessments continue to rank Nigeria low in areas such as rule of law, government effectiveness, and control of corruption, which are critical institutional components of democracy (World Bank, 2024; Transparency International, 2024). The Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International also consistently places Nigeria among countries with high perceived corruption, reflecting weak accountability structures and institutional inefficiencies. These indicators collectively suggest that democratic development in Nigeria is constrained by persistent institutional weaknesses, particularly in enforcing accountability and ensuring transparency in governance. Furthermore, corruption and weak

institutional autonomy remain central obstacles to democratic deepening in Nigeria. Anti-corruption institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) were established to strengthen accountability and reduce misuse of public resources. While these institutions have recorded some successes, their effectiveness is often limited by political interference, selective enforcement, and weak judicial backing (Transparency International, 2024; World Bank Governance Indicators, 2024). This institutional fragility undermines public trust in government and reduces citizens' belief in the fairness of democratic processes, thereby weakening democratic development over time.

Theoretical Literature

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory was propounded by North in 1990. The study holds that institutions are the "rules of the game" in society and that they consist of both formal rules (such as constitutions, laws, and regulations) and informal constraints (such as norms, conventions, and codes of conduct) that structure political, economic, and social interactions. According to North, these institutions shape human behaviour by reducing uncertainty, providing stability, and establishing predictable patterns of interaction within political systems. The theory further assumes that institutional quality determines the performance of political and economic systems, meaning that development outcomes are largely a function of how effective, credible, and enforceable institutions are. Proponents of the theory argue that strong institutions promote accountability, transparency, rule of law, and efficient governance, which are essential for democratic stability and development. Scholars such as North (1990) and later Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) support the view that inclusive institutions should encourage democratic consolidation and long-term development. They emphasize that when institutions function effectively, they limit arbitrary use of power, reduce corruption, and enhance citizen participation in governance. This perspective has been widely applied in explaining why some countries achieve stable democracies while others remain politically unstable.

On the other hand, critics of theory argue that it is overly deterministic and tends to overemphasize formal rules while underestimating the role of informal political behaviour, elite bargaining, and socio-cultural dynamics. Scholars such as Peters (2012) and other political sociologists argue that institutions do not operate in isolation; rather, they are influenced by power relations, historical inequalities, and economic structures. Critics also contend that institutional change is often slow and path-dependent, making the theory less effective in explaining rapid political transformations or informal political practices common in developing countries like Nigeria. Despite these criticisms, the theory remains highly relevant to the present study on political institutions and democratic development in Nigeria. The theory provides a direct analytical link between the quality of political institutions and the level of democratic development. In Nigeria, institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the judiciary, the legislature, and anti-corruption agencies

are central to democratic governance. However, challenges such as corruption, weak enforcement of laws, political interference, and elite capture have limited their effectiveness.

Modernization Theory

Modernization Theory was propounded by Lipset in 1959. The theory states that democratic development is strongly linked to socio-economic development. Lipset argues that the more economically developed a country is, the more likely it is to sustain democracy. This is because development leads to higher levels of education, increased urbanization, improved income distribution, a larger middle class, and greater political awareness, all of which support democratic stability and participation. In essence, the theory assumes that economic development creates the social conditions necessary for democracy to emerge, survive, and deepen. Proponents of theory argue that socio-economic progress is a prerequisite for democratic consolidation. Scholars such as Lipset (1959) maintain that wealthier societies tend to develop stronger democratic institutions because citizens are more educated, more politically informed, and more capable of demanding accountability from government. Huntington (1991) also supports a modified version of this view, arguing that modernization increases political participation, which in turn requires stronger institutions to manage political demands effectively. From this perspective, democracy is seen as an outcome of broader structural transformation involving industrialization, education expansion, and improved welfare systems.

However, critics of Modernization Theory argue that it is overly deterministic and economically reductionist, as it assumes that economic development automatically leads to democracy. Scholars such as Przeworski et al. (2000) demonstrate that while economic development may sustain democracy, it does not necessarily cause democratization, as some wealthy authoritarian regimes remain non-democratic. Other critics argue that the theory fails to account for historical, institutional, and external factors such as colonial legacies, elite behaviour, and international influences. In developing countries like Nigeria, critics observe that economic growth has not always translated into stronger democratic institutions due to corruption, weak governance structures, and unequal distribution of wealth. Despite these criticisms, the theory remains relevant to the study because it helps explain how socio-economic conditions influence institutional effectiveness and democratic participation. The theory is considered relevant as a supporting framework for this study because it complements Institutional Theory by explaining the broader socio-economic environment within which political institutions operate. While Institutional Theory focuses on the structure and performance of institutions, Modernization Theory explains the socio-economic conditions that shape institutional effectiveness and democratic outcomes.

Empirical Literature

Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2025) examined electoral participation and democratic consolidation in Nigeria using electoral credibility, voter turnout, and institutional trust (independent variables) across the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general

elections. The findings revealed that voter turnout declined from approximately 44% in 2015 to 34.75% in 2019 and about 27% in 2023, indicating weakening democratic participation. The study further found that low institutional trust in INEC, electoral irregularities, and weak enforcement of electoral laws were major determinants of declining participation. It concluded that weak electoral institutions significantly reduce democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Also, Musa, et al (2024) examined electoral integrity using vote buying, enforcement strength of electoral institutions, and political financing regulation. Findings revealed that vote trading was widespread in the 2023 elections, with stronger prevalence in urban political hotspots. Weak enforcement by regulatory institutions allowed electoral malpractice to persist. The study concluded that weak enforcement capacity of political institutions undermines democratic legitimacy.

Ojo and Adeniran (2025) investigated electoral transparency using digital election tools, INEC capacity, and observer monitoring. Findings showed that digital technologies improved transparency but were undermined by operational inefficiencies and manipulation at collation centres. The study concluded that technology alone cannot guarantee democratic integrity without strong institutions. Additionally, Abba and Shija (2025) analyzed democratic governance using elite behaviour, corruption levels, and institutional effectiveness. The study found that elite dominance and weak institutional enforcement mechanisms significantly reduce transparency and accountability in governance. It reported that corruption levels remain high, with institutional checks being ineffective in curbing abuse of power. The study concluded that Nigeria's democratic system remains largely procedural due to weak institutional performance and elite capture of political institutions. Still, Kalu and Okafor (2023) assessed political participation using education level, civic awareness, and institutional responsiveness. Findings revealed that higher education levels increase political participation, but weak institutional responsiveness discourages sustained engagement. The study concluded that citizen engagement depends both on socio-economic and institutional factors.

Madukpe et al. (2025) focused on political participation using human development index (HDI), income level, education, and institutional effectiveness. Findings revealed that regions with higher HDI recorded significantly higher voter turnout and more issue-based voting behaviour. The study also found that institutional effectiveness enhances political awareness and participation, while underdevelopment reduces engagement. It concluded that socio-economic development and institutional quality jointly influence democratic development. Likewise, Sani and Ibrahim (2025) investigated political stability using electoral fairness, institutional effectiveness, and security governance. Findings showed that electoral disputes and weak institutional coordination contribute to political instability, especially during election cycles. The study concluded that stable democracy depends on strong and credible institutions. Equally, Wakili and Abba (2025) investigated voter turnout and political participation (dependent variable) using insecurity, institutional trust, and electoral efficiency. Findings showed that voter turnout in the 2023

presidential election was approximately 27% nationally, with significantly lower participation in conflict-prone regions.

Aliyu and Shehu (2024) examined electoral integrity using electoral management efficiency, security intervention, and corruption in electoral processes. Findings showed that corruption within electoral administration significantly undermines electoral integrity, despite institutional reforms. The study concluded that institutional corruption remains a major barrier to democratic development in Nigeria. Consequently, Bello and Umar (2024) analyzed democratic participation using political awareness, institutional trust, and media freedom. Findings revealed that low institutional trust significantly reduces citizens' willingness to participate in elections, while media exposure positively influences participation. The study concluded that strong institutions and open information systems enhance democratic engagement. Accordingly, Yusuf and Garba (2024) analyzed public trust in government using government transparency, anti-corruption effectiveness, and service delivery quality. Findings revealed that poor transparency and weak anti-corruption enforcement significantly reduce public trust in democratic institutions. The study concluded that institutional accountability is central to democratic legitimacy in Nigeria.

Nwankwo and Chukwu (2023) assessed voter turnout using youth participation, unemployment rate, and electoral trust. Findings revealed that high youth unemployment and distrust in INEC significantly reduce voter turnout, with youth participation below 30% in many regions. The study concluded that economic and institutional weaknesses jointly affect democratic participation. Furthermore, Omoju et al. (2023) examined citizen trust in government and inclusive governance using youth employment policies, institutional coordination, and governance accountability (independent variables). Findings revealed that weak institutional coordination and poor implementation of policies significantly reduce citizen trust in government. The study also found that youth unemployment increases political disengagement. It concluded that strengthening political institutions is necessary for improving democratic inclusion and trust in governance. Similarly, Okeke and Eze (2023) examined electoral credibility using INEC autonomy, electoral technology (BVAS), and political interference. Findings showed that while BVAS improved vote accreditation accuracy, political interference and logistical challenges still weakened electoral credibility. The study concluded that institutional reforms improve elections only when backed by strong enforcement mechanisms. Besides, Odo, Wet al. (2023) analyzed voter apathy and democratic consolidation using elite manipulation, institutional accountability, and governance transparency. Findings revealed that elite control of political institutions and weak accountability mechanisms significantly increase voter apathy.

Emenike (2022) examined rule of law using judicial independence, corruption levels, and political influence. Findings indicated that judicial decisions are often influenced by political elites, weakening the rule of law. The study concluded that weak judiciary independence undermines democratic consolidation in Nigeria. As well Oyoru (2022) examined voter turnout using civic education, electoral violence, institutional trust, and socio-political

awareness as a proxy for the independent variables. Findings revealed that poor civic education and weak institutional credibility significantly contributed to low voter turnout.

Afolabi (2021) examined electoral violence using political competition intensity, institutional enforcement capacity, and security presence. Findings showed that weak enforcement of electoral laws increases the likelihood of electoral violence. The study concluded that strong institutions reduce electoral conflict and enhance democratic stability. Correspondingly, Aboh and Obem (2020) examined electoral integrity and electoral violence using INEC transparency, procedural fairness, and institutional capacity (independent variables). Findings showed that low transparency in electoral processes and weak institutional capacity contribute significantly to election-related conflicts. The study found that electoral disputes often arise due to mistrust in INEC's procedures. It concluded that strengthening institutional autonomy is essential for reducing electoral violence and improving democracy. Finally, Edet (2016) assessed democratic consolidation using INEC independence, electoral management efficiency, and political interference as a surrogate for the independent variables. The findings revealed that INEC's limited independence and political interference by ruling elites weakened electoral credibility between 2007 and 2015. The study also reported frequent administrative inefficiencies in voter registration and election logistics. It concluded that weak electoral institutions undermine democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This paper adopted a survey research design to examine the relationship between political institutions and democratic development in Nigeria. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain first-hand information from respondents concerning their perceptions of institutional accountability, government transparency, electoral credibility, public service effectiveness, and democratic participation. The design also allowed the use of quantitative techniques in analyzing the responses obtained from the field.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in four selected states in Nigeria, namely Rivers State, Lagos State, Enugu State, and Kaduna State. These states were selected to reflect Nigeria's geopolitical and socio-political diversity. Rivers State represented the South-South region, Lagos State represented the South-West region, Enugu State represented the South-East region, while Kaduna State represented the Northern region. The selected states were considered suitable because of their active participation in democratic processes and varying institutional experiences.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised citizens residing in the selected states who possessed adequate knowledge of political institutions and democratic processes in Nigeria. The target population included civil servants, students, community leaders, traders, and other adult residents who were actively involved in civic and political activities.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of one hundred and forty (140) respondents was adopted for the study. Thirty-five (35) respondents were selected from each of the four states. The study employed a purposive and convenience sampling technique in selecting respondents. The purposive sampling technique ensured that only respondents with basic political awareness participated in the study, while convenience sampling enabled easy access to respondents during questionnaire administration.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Political Institutions and Democratic Participation Questionnaire (PIDPQ)." The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A contained demographic information of respondents, while Section B contained items relating to institutional accountability, government transparency, electoral credibility, public service effectiveness, and democratic participation. The questionnaire adopted a four-point Likert scale structured as follows: Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2, and Strongly Disagree 1

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity to ensure that the questionnaire adequately measured the intended variables. Experts in political science and measurement and evaluation examined the questionnaire items to ascertain their appropriateness, clarity, and relevance to the objectives of the study. Corrections and suggestions made by the experts were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability technique. A pilot study was conducted using a small number of respondents outside the selected sample. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.76, indicating that the instrument possessed high internal consistency and was suitable for the study.

Sources of Data

The study relied primarily on primary data. The primary data were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaires to respondents across the selected states. The questionnaire was designed using a four-point Likert scale.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the aid of SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to summarize respondents' opinions. Inferential statistics including Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

The regression model for the study is specified as:

$$DP = \beta_0 + \beta_1IA + \beta_2GTP + \beta_3EC + \beta_4PSE + \mu$$

Where:

DP = Democratic Participation, IA = Institutional Accountability, GTP = Government Transparency, EC = Electoral Credibility, PSE = Public Service Effectiveness, β_0 = Constant term β_1 - β_4 = Parameters of estimation, μ = Error term

Description of Variables in the Model

Democratic Participation (DP): This refers to the extent to which citizens actively engage in democratic and political processes such as voting, civic engagement, political discussions, public consultations, and involvement in governance activities. Democratic participation is used as a surrogate for democratic development.

Institutional Accountability (IA): This refers to the degree to which public officials and government institutions are held responsible for their actions, decisions, and use of public resources. An increase in accountability improves public trust in government institutions, reduces corruption and abuse of power, and encourages citizens to participate more actively in democratic activities such as elections and civic engagements leading to increased democratic participation. Therefore, this paper assumed that Institutional Accountability will be positively related to democratic participation. Institutional Accountability is used to proxy political institution. Hence, $\beta_1 > 0$

Government Transparency (GTP): This refers to the openness of government in providing citizens with access to information regarding policies, budgets, decisions, and administrative activities. It reflects the extent to which governance processes are visible and understandable to the public. An increase in transparency reduces information asymmetry between government and citizens, enhances policy credibility, and strengthens public confidence in governance. Consequently, citizens become more willing to engage in democratic processes and public decision-making. Accordingly, this paper hypothesized that government transparency will be positively related with democratic participation. Government Transparency is used to proxy political institution. Thus, $\beta_2 > 0$

Electoral Credibility (EC): This refers to the degree to which elections are conducted in a free, fair, transparent, and impartial manner, where electoral outcomes genuinely reflect the votes cast by citizens. An increase in electoral

credibility enhances citizens' confidence in the electoral process, reduces voter apathy, and promotes political inclusion. Credible elections therefore motivate citizens to participate actively in voting and other democratic activities. As a result, this paper expect that electoral credibility will have a positive relationship with democratic participation. Electoral credibility is used to proxy political institution Thus, $\beta_3 > 0$

Public Service Effectiveness (PSE): This refers to the ability of government institutions and agencies to efficiently deliver quality public goods and services such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and security to citizens. An increase in effective public service delivery improves citizens' welfare, strengthens trust in government institutions, and reinforces the legitimacy of democratic governance. As citizens experience better governance outcomes, they become more motivated to participate in democratic and civic activities. Therefore, this paper expect that public service effectiveness will have a positive relationship with democratic participation. Public service effectiveness is used to proxy political institution Thus, $\beta_4 > 0$

RESEARCH RESULT

Empirical Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of data collected from respondents concerning political institutions and democratic development in Nigeria. A total of one hundred and forty (140) questionnaires were distributed and one hundred and twenty (120) were successfully retrieved representing 0.86% was used for the analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Research Quotation One: How does institutional accountability influence democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria?

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Std	Remark
1	Government officials are held accountable for their actions and decisions.	3.08	0.63	Agreed
2	Public institutions properly monitor and account for public funds.	3.05	0.71	Agreed
3	Accountability in government encourages citizens to participate in democratic activities	2.99	0.76	Agreed
X	Grand Mean	3.04	0.7	Agreed

Source: Authors Computation, 2026

Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of respondents' perceptions on how institutional accountability influences democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria. The result revealed a grand mean score of 3.04 with a standard deviation of 0.70, indicating that respondents generally agreed that institutional accountability plays a significant role in enhancing democratic participation. The relatively moderate standard deviation further suggests a reasonable level of convergence in respondents' opinions across the sampled states. Specifically, item 1 recorded the highest mean score of 3.08 and a standard deviation of 0.63, implying that accountability mechanisms within public institutions are perceived to moderately strengthen governance efficiency and public confidence in democratic processes. Also, item 2 with a mean score of 3.05

with a standard deviation of 0.71, suggest that prudent management of public resources is considered essential for improving institutional performance and democratic legitimacy. Effective public financial accountability is capable of minimizing resource leakages, reducing corruption-induced inefficiencies, and strengthening public sector credibility. Furthermore, item 3 with a mean score of 2.99 and standard deviation of 0.76 indicates that respondents perceive accountability as a motivating factor for civic engagement, political inclusion, and participatory governance.

Table 2: Research Quotation Two: What effect does government transparency have on democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria?

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Std	Remark
4	Government policies and decisions are openly communicated to citizens.	3.02	0.67	Agreed
5	Citizens have adequate access to government information and activities.	3.20	0.71	Agreed
6	Transparency in governance increases citizens' willingness to participate in democracy.	3.03	0.71	Agreed
X	Grand Mean	3.08	0.70	Agreed

Source: Authors Computation, 2026

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding the effect of government transparency on democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria. The findings revealed a grand mean score of 3.08 with a standard deviation of 0.70, indicating a strong consensus among respondents that transparency in governance significantly enhances democratic participation. The relatively low dispersion in responses further suggests stability and consistency in respondents' views across the sampled states. Consequently, item 4 recorded a mean score of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.71. This implies that access to public information is perceived as a critical institutional mechanism for strengthening civic engagement and participatory governance. Similarly, item 5 recorded a mean score of 3.03 and standard deviation of 0.71, suggesting that transparent governance structures positively influence citizens' political confidence and democratic involvement. Likewise, item 6 recorded a mean score of 3.02 with a standard deviation of 0.67, which indicate that respondents acknowledge the importance of policy openness in strengthening democratic consolidation.

Table 3: Research Quotation Three: To what extent does electoral credibility affect democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria?

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Std	Remark
7	Elections in Nigeria are conducted in a free and fair manner.	2.95	0.68	Agreed
8	Electoral outcomes accurately reflect the votes cast by citizens.	3.02	0.65	Agreed
9	Credible elections encourage greater democratic participation among citizens.	3.01	0.64	Agreed
X	Grand Mean	2.84	0.66	Agreed

Source: Authors Computation, 2026

Table 3 presents the descriptive analysis of respondents' perceptions on the extent to which electoral credibility affects democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria. The result showed a grand mean score of 2.84 with a

standard deviation of 0.66, indicating that respondents generally agreed that electoral credibility exerts a positive influence on democratic participation. Additionally, item 7 recorded a mean score of 3.02 with a standard deviation of 0.65. This implies that respondents perceive vote accuracy and electoral integrity as fundamental determinants of citizens’ confidence in democratic institutions. Similarly, item 8 with a mean score of 3.01 and standard deviation of 0.64, indicates that transparent and credible electoral systems stimulate civic engagement and political inclusion. Furthermore, item 9 recorded a mean score of 2.95 with a standard deviation of 0.68, suggesting moderate public confidence in the electoral process. In governance economics, free and fair elections serve as an institutional mechanism for ensuring accountability, policy responsiveness, and efficient allocation of public resources through legitimate leadership selection.

Table 4: Research Quotation Four: How does public service effectiveness influence democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria?

S/n	Question Items	Mean	Std	Remark
10	Elections in Nigeria are conducted in a free and fair manner.	3.08	0.65	Agreed
11	Electoral outcomes accurately reflect the votes cast by citizens.	3.14	0.67	Agreed
12	Credible elections encourage greater democratic participation among citizens.	3.13	0.65	Agreed
X	Grand Mean	3.12	0.66	Agreed

Source: Authors Computation, 2026

Table 4 presents the descriptive analysis of respondents’ perceptions on how public service effectiveness influences democratic participation across the selected states in Nigeria. The findings revealed a grand mean score of 3.12 with a standard deviation of 0.66, indicating that respondents generally agreed that effective public service delivery significantly promotes democratic participation. The low standard deviation further suggests a strong level of uniformity and stability in respondents’ opinions across the sampled states. Equally, item 10, recorded mean score of 3.14 with a standard deviation of 0.67. This suggests that respondents perceive institutional efficiency and administrative effectiveness as important drivers of electoral confidence and democratic legitimacy. Similarly, item 11 recorded a mean score of 3.13 with a standard deviation of 0.65, imply that effective institutional service delivery creates a conducive political environment for civic engagement and participatory governance. Furthermore, the item 12 recorded a mean score of 3.08 and standard deviation of 0.65, indicating that respondents acknowledged the role of institutional effectiveness in strengthening electoral administration and democratic confidence.

Test of Hypothesis

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Output

Table 5: Coefficient of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the relationship between Political Institution and Democratic Development in Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Stt. Error	t-statistics	Sig
Institutional Accountability	0.182	0.085	2.146	0.034
Government Transparency	0.240	0.089	2.701	0.008

Electoral Credibility	0.149	0.091	1.637	0.104
Public Service Effectiveness	0.305	0.098	3.095	0.002
Adj R² = 0.38, F-stat = 17.27 (0.000)				

Source: Authors Computation from SPSS, 26

The result of the regression analysis presented in Table 5 revealed that political institutions significantly influence democratic participation in Nigeria. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adj. R²) of 0.38 indicates that approximately 38% of the variations in democratic participation were explained by institutional accountability, government transparency, electoral credibility, and public service effectiveness, while the remaining 62% were influenced by other variables outside the model. Furthermore, the F-statistic value of 17.27 with a probability value of 0.000 shows that the overall regression model is statistically significant and possesses strong explanatory power in explaining democratic participation in Nigeria.

The result further showed that institutional accountability (IA) exerted a positive and statistically significant effect on democratic participation (DP) with a coefficient value of 0.182, t-statistic of 2.146, and probability value of 0.034, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that a unit increase in institutional accountability (IA) would lead to approximately 18.2% increase in democratic participation (DP), holding other variables constant. By implication, accountability strengthens governance credibility, reduces corruption and administrative inefficiencies, and enhances citizens' trust in political institutions. Consequently, when public officials are held responsible for their actions and decisions, citizens become more willing to participate in elections, civic engagements, and democratic activities.

Similarly, Government transparency (GTP) was also found to positively and significantly influence democratic participation (DP) with a coefficient value of 0.240, t-statistic of 2.701, and probability value of 0.008. The significance value being less than 0.05 indicates that transparency is a major determinant of democratic participation in Nigeria. Specifically, a unit increase in government transparency (GTP) would result in approximately 24.0% increase in democratic participation. From an institutional economics perspective, transparency reduces information asymmetry between government and citizens, improves policy credibility, and strengthens public confidence in governance processes. Increased openness in government activities therefore encourages greater civic engagement, political inclusion, and participatory governance.

The result equally revealed that electoral credibility (EC) had a positive but statistically insignificant effect on democratic participation (DP) with a coefficient value of 0.149, t-statistic of 1.637, and probability value of 0.104, which exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold. This suggests that although electoral credibility (EC) contributes positively to democratic participation (DP), its effect was not sufficiently strong within the period and scope of the study. Nevertheless, the positive coefficient implies that a unit increase in electoral credibility would increase democratic participation by approximately 14.9%. The insignificance of the variable may reflect persistent public concerns regarding electoral irregularities, voter apathy, and declining trust in electoral institutions

in some parts of Nigeria. Despite this insignificance, credible elections remain essential for political legitimacy, democratic stability, and institutional confidence.

Finally, Public service effectiveness (SPE) emerged as the strongest determinant of democratic participation (DP) with a coefficient value of 0.305, t-statistic of 3.095, and probability value of 0.002. Since the probability value is less than 0.05, the variable is statistically significant. This implies that a unit increase in public service effectiveness would lead to approximately 30.5% increase in democratic participation. This means that efficient public service delivery enhances governance quality, improves welfare outcomes, and strengthens the social contract between government and citizens. When citizens experience effective delivery of public goods and services such as infrastructure, healthcare, education, and security, they are more likely to develop confidence in government institutions and actively participate in democratic processes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This paper investigated the relationship between political Institutions and Democratic Development in Nigeria. The study was conducted in four selected states in Nigeria, namely Rivers State, Lagos State, Enugu State, and Kaduna State. The results revealed that institutional accountability, government transparency and public service effectiveness had positive and significant relationship with democratic participation while electoral credibility exhibited a positive but insignificant relationship with democratic participation. Hence, it was concluded that political Institutions had substantial influence on Democratic Development in Nigeria

Recommendation

- i. The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission should strengthen institutional accountability mechanisms by intensifying monitoring, auditing, and prosecution of corrupt public officials. Improving accountability frameworks will enhance citizens' confidence in governance and stimulate greater democratic participation across Nigeria.
- ii. The National Orientation Agency and the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation should promote transparency through regular public disclosure of government policies, budgets, and institutional activities. Increased openness in governance will reduce information asymmetry, improve public trust, and encourage broader civic engagement in democratic processes.
- iii. The Independent National Electoral Commission should intensify electoral reforms aimed at improving the credibility, fairness, and integrity of elections in Nigeria. Strengthening electronic voting systems, voter education, and election monitoring mechanisms will help improve citizens' trust in democratic institutions and increase political participation.
- iv. Finally, the Federal Civil Service Commission and relevant public sector agencies should prioritize effective and efficient delivery of public services

such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and security. Improved service delivery will strengthen the social contract between government and citizens, enhance governance legitimacy, and promote active participation in democratic activities.

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