

**ELECTORAL MALPRACTICE AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION
IN NIGERIA: EXAMINING CAUSES, EFFECTS AND REFORMS**

BY

Dorcas ALAGBA

SSC2105654

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY,**

NOVEMBER, 2025.

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**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY
OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
(B.SC. HONS.) DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE.**

NOVEMBER, 2025.

DECLARATION

I, **ALAGBA DORCAS** with matriculation number **SSC2105654**, hereby declare that this project is entirely my work and composition. The work embodied in this project has not been previously submitted for award of any degree elsewhere. All references made to works of other persons have been duly acknowledged.

Dorcas ALAGBA

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study is an original research essay and was carried out by **Dorcas ALAGBA** with matriculation number **SSC2105654**, and that the research work is sufficient in scope and content in partial fulfillment of the award of a Bachelor of Political Science, University of Benin, Benin City.

Prof. E.I Akpomera
Project Supervisor

Date: _____

Dr. G.O Igiebor
Ag. Head of Department

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated first and foremost to Almighty God for the grace, guidance, and opportunity to pursue this vision. It is also dedicated, with all my love, to my entire family, the foundation of my life, whose encouragement and patience sustained me throughout this journey.

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Abstract

The paper examines the connection between electoral malpractice and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, the reasons, consequences, and remedies to improve the electoral integrity. The study through mixed-methods approach also looks at the impacts of different types of electoral malpractices such as vote buying, electoral violence, and result manipulation on the trust that the citizens have in the electoral process, and the erosion of democratic values. Based on the information gathered through a sample of 250 eligible citizens in Nigeria through stratified random sampling, the research will examine how such practices affect the stability of a democracy and the legitimacy of elected administrations. As the findings suggest, electoral malpractice has been still a constant problem, especially with the interference of politics, poor institutions, and the inability to enforce the existing laws, regardless of the numerous reforms, including the introduction of the Electoral Act 2022. The paper points out how political elites can manipulate elections and how the media and the civil society can play a great role in ensuring that there is transparency and accountability in elections. In addition it indicates that the electoral violence still obstructs voter turn up and breeds a culture of political indifference and this also undercuts democratic consolidation. Finally, the study notes that more effective implementation of electoral laws, a more effective enforcement of the independence of the judiciary and strengthening of institutional structures are necessary in preventing malpractice. It further reinforces the relevance of civic education and media participation in creating a better informed and active citizen voter.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Electoral malpractice has been deemed as one of the most glaring issues of democracy consolidation in Nigeria. Irrespective of the attempts of electoral system reforms and the adoption of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill, the electoral process in the country still has a number of serious problems like rigging, altering the vote or using violence, which poses threat to the confidence of the citizens in the democratic process. Electoral reforms play an important role to promote credible, free and fair elections and it has been one of the burned issues of discussion amongst civil society organizations and political stakeholders (Onwuharaonye et al., 2024).

The persistence of electoral malpractice continues to thwart Nigeria's path toward democratic consolidation, highlighting the detrimental effects these malpractices have on public trust and the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Despite various electoral reforms, including the introduction of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill, malpractices such as vote rigging and political violence remain entrenched, hindering the realization of a fully functional democracy. These practices erode

citizens' faith in the electoral system and contribute to an ongoing cycle of electoral fraud, leading to the disenfranchisement of many voters (Aluaigba, 2016).

In a similar vein, despite significant efforts to reform the electoral system under the leadership of Muhammadu Buhari, the continued presence of electoral fraud and irregularities has weakened the democratic process. These reforms, though promising, have not been fully effective in eliminating corruption within the electoral system. The study advocates for more effective and robust reforms, including the strengthening of the electoral body and the active participation of civil society organizations in pushing for greater accountability and transparency (Amaechina and Chukwuma, 2024).

In 2015, there was a first transfer of power in the country when a ruling party gave way through peaceful means to opposition which was a milestone that projected potential credible elections in the country. In as much as the 2015 elections were a sign of improvement compared with the past elections the new elections were characterized by irregularities. This was confirmed during the 2011 and 2015 elections as several areas of electoral reforms were identified and between 2016 and 2018 four sets of Electoral Act Amendment Bill have been presented in the National Assembly. Nonetheless, the refusal of President Muhammadu Buhari to approve the bill in December 2018 postponed the most essential reforms (Adaje, 2021).

The historical background of the electoral management bodies such as electoral commissions, the challenges and development of institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is brought out in the analysis of commissions as carried out by Pamela Ogwuzor Momah as regards to Nigeria. Since the pre-independence Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN), Nigeria has seen transformation of various electoral commissions; however, each new commission was faced with the challenge of addressing similar factors contributing to electoral fraud, violence, and manipulation. Credible electoral management bodies can hardly be overemphasized because they are vital in ensuring electoral management that can be trusted by the population (Momah, 2016).

Introducing the 2022 Electoral Act is a considerable step in the right direction towards these systemic issues. The law tries to make the elections transparent and accessible with provisions such as the possibility to transmit election results electronically, give early payments to INEC and enhance the neutrality of the electoral officers. Reforms are also applying to such aspects as voter registration and transparency of the results, which has been a hotbed of corruption (Justice & Eze, 2023).

Nevertheless, one area that remained critiqued over the years, as shown by Momah (2016) is how the elections were not transparent, and the political godfathers suppressed results so that a particular candidate won. Such political leaders have

been influential and most of them have acted broke the integrity of the elect oral process by coercion, violence and vote rigging. In the 2010 Anambra state governorship election, despite all attempts by INEC, citizens still needed to safeguard their votes out of malpractices. Such occurrences have contributed to a long-term influence in the Nigerian political life with a common and commonplace shaken faith by its citizens in elections (Momah, 2016).

Electoral Act Amendment Bill, however, is expected to curb this red tape with the help of more strict rules. Significantly, the act introduces severer punishment to the electoral crimes, caps the spending by the parties in campaigns, and tightens the provisions of the law that governs the administration of elections. Among the most promising reforms is the strengthening of the powers of INEC to review results announced in conditions of duress and to intervene with the corrupt practices (Justice & Eze, 2023).

Although these reforms have a lot of potential, they will require political will by the Nigerian government and the involvement of citizens in civil society organizations to push the reforms through. Adaje (2021) emphasizes that the enactment of the Electoral Act Bill plays a pivotal role in restoring the faith of citizens in Nigeria in the democracy. Equally, a historical breakdown of electoral commissions by Momah reveals that the process of elections is likely to be manipulated except there are institutional reforms to prevent such an occurrence.

The Electoral Act 2022 through the prioritization of major reforms that includes implementation of electronic voting and transmission of results will reduce the malpractice during carries opted to electoral process in the forthcoming 2023 general elections. However, credible elections are still difficult to achieve. Such changes may be opposed by political elites that have traditionally enjoyed the electoral malpractices. There is accordingly an urgent need to have INEC, the Nigerian government and civil societies collaborate so that the provisions of the Electoral Act are implemented fully (Justice & Eze, 2023).

To sum up, although the Electoral Act Amendment Bill has introduced a platform through which credible elections will be achieved, its effectiveness in eradicating electoral malpractices and encouraging democratic consolidation in Nigeria will rely heavily on the level of commitment by the political leaders, the judiciary and the electorate to adhere to the rule of law and shun resistances to reforms. In the second part of this paper, one will take a deeper look at the particulars of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill in question, looking at its provisions and how it might affect Nigerian elections in the future.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Nigeria, electoral malpractice, including vote rigging, electoral violence, and vote-buying, has been a pervasive challenge, compromising the integrity of the electoral process. These practices have contributed to widespread distrust in the

democratic system, causing citizens to question the legitimacy of elected officials and undermining the principles of free and fair elections. Despite several electoral reforms and the introduction of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill, there is a persistent failure to fully address these malpractices, and the existing measures have not yielded significant improvements. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of political will among key stakeholders, including government officials, electoral bodies, and political elites, who often benefit from the existing corrupt system. This gap in the enforcement of electoral reforms and the failure to tackle the root causes of electoral malpractice necessitate this study. The research aims to examine the factors contributing to these ongoing issues, evaluate the effectiveness of past reforms, and explore ways to bridge the gap in the implementation of electoral integrity measures. By addressing these issues, this study will provide insights into how electoral reforms can be strengthened to ensure democratic consolidation and restore public trust in the electoral process.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. The study will analyze Nigeria's reasons for and main forms of electoral malpractice.
2. The study investigates how these actions contribute to shaping democratic consolidation, mainly by assessing public trust and the legitimacy of institutions.

3. The research examines solutions so far proffered to avoid these in Nigeria Electoral malpractices.
4. The research will offer suggestions to increase election trust and continue stability in Nigeria's democracy, which, in turn, supports its democratic institutions and makes all electoral steps fairer for everyone.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the primary causes of electoral malpractices in Nigeria?
2. How do electoral malpractices impact democratic consolidation in Nigeria?
3. What electoral reforms have been implemented to address malpractices?
4. To what extent have these reforms been effective in promoting credible elections?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it deepens the understanding of how electoral integrity affects democratic stability in Nigeria. By analyzing the causes and effects of electoral malpractices, the research provides valuable insights for policymakers, electoral bodies, and civil society organizations involved in the democratic process. It aims to inform and guide the design and implementation of future electoral reforms to promote credible, transparent, and inclusive elections. Additionally, the study seeks to raise public awareness about the critical role of free and fair

elections in sustaining democratic governance, strengthening institutions, and enhancing citizen participation. Ultimately, the findings can contribute to building a more resilient democracy in Nigeria.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on Nigeria's Fourth Republic, covering the period from 2015 - 2023. It examines electoral processes at both the national and state levels to provide a comprehensive understanding of electoral malpractices across different contexts. The research also analyzes various electoral reforms implemented within this timeframe, assessing their effectiveness and challenges. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be considered to ensure a balanced and in-depth analysis of the issues affecting electoral integrity and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study faces several limitations that may affect the comprehensiveness and generalizability of its findings. First, there is a potential for bias in secondary data sources, as some reports and analyses may reflect the perspectives or interests of particular stakeholders, which could influence the objectivity of the information used. Additionally, accessing comprehensive and up-to-date electoral data can be challenging due to the inconsistent availability of official records and the sensitivity surrounding election-related information in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of electoral reforms varies significantly across Nigeria's diverse regions, which makes it difficult to apply uniform conclusions to the entire country. These regional differences in political dynamics, institutional capacities, and socio-economic factors may limit the ability of this study to capture all nuances related to electoral malpractices and democratic consolidation comprehensively.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter shows a literature review on the available literature on the electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It also discusses the academic view on the ideas, factors, and effects of electoral malpractices, their impact on the process of democratic formation. The review also notes the irregularities in the process like vote rigging, electoral violence and manipulation of the results have remained a major way in eroding the credibility of the election and eroding the trust of the people in the democratic institutions. This chapter is very insightful and offers a holistic perspective of the relationship between electoral integrity and democratic consolidation by undertaking pertinent conceptual definitions, theoretical underpinnings, and empirical investigations. It also determines existing gaps in research, especially on the effectiveness of electoral reforms, and the part played by such institutions as INEC in limiting malpractice. The discussion is organized into four major sections which include conceptual framework, theoretical framework, empirical review and literature summary.

2.2 Concept of Election and Democracy

Democratic government involves the use of elections as one of its key elements, which is the main way in which citizens decide their leaders and hold them responsible. Joseph Schumpeter argues that democracy is an institutional structure of making political decisions whereby citizens gain power to make decisions through competitive battle towards securing the votes of the people. This school of thought emphasizes elections as the heart of democracy practice in which leadership legitimacy is rooted in the prerogative of the governed. Robert Dahl also underlines that the true democracy must be characterized not only by the competitive elections but by the security of civil liberties and inclusiveness as well as a proper engagement of all citizens in the political process. All these make elections significant and represent the will of the people in an election as opposed to proceduralism.

Elections play a number of important roles in a democracy. They ensure peaceful changing of power, a platform of political participation, and increase accountability of the government. In the perfect democracies, election legitimizes political powers and gives a feeling of collective responsibility between the state and the subjects. Elections when fair and free, empower the political institutions, enhance their faith in the populace, and bring about national stability. Nevertheless, where such irregularities like fraud, vote buying, intimidation mar the elections, they damage

the trust in the governance and the legitimacy of democracy. Therefore, democracy consolidation and maintenance directly depends on the quality of elections.

This is especially important in the case of election and democratic consolidation in emerging democracies such as Nigeria whose post authoritarian political framework is still weak. Democratic consolidation is a process where the norms, institutional and behavioral condition of democracy have gained deep root and acceptance in a society. This can only occur by having elections that are seen to be credible, transparent and of the will of the people. Conversely, electoral malpractice undermines institutional trust, creates political apathy and continues to foster instability. As a result, election integrity becomes a criterion on which the quality of democracy and efficiency of governance systems can be evaluated to create accountability, equity, and representation (Beckett, 2019).

2.3 Concept of Electoral Malpractice

Electoral malpractice is a planned action that bends or erodes the integrity of the electoral procedure thus depriving it of having free, fair and credible elections. It refers to a broad scope of unethical or illegal practices with the aim of altering results in favor of specific people or even political parties. It is usually conducted in the forms of vote rigging, ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, results manipulation, vote buying and legal state resource abuse during elections. These practices undermine the basic tenets of democracy of fair competition, transparency, and

equality of participation and erodes the trust of citizens in the government. Electoral malpractice is therefore one of the greatest challenges to democratic consolidation by virtue of the fact that it distorts the desire of the electorate and the legitimacy of elected governments (Idowu, 2022).

In Nigeria, electoral malpractices occur in different forms in the different parts of the electoral cycle; pre-elective, election-day and post-election. The malpractices in the pre-election phase include misconducting of party primaries, disqualification of the rivals both in legal and administrative processes, as well as, use of financial favors to win nominations. This stage is often dominated by political godfatherism and patronage systems at the expense of internal party democracy and reducing political competition. During election days, the malpractices are more direct and observable such as ballot box snatching, multiple voting, falsification of results, and intimidation of the electorate and the election officials by political thugs or security agents. Post-election malpractices, conversely, are usually associated with the manipulation of results in the collation stage, interruption in the judicial procedures, and the violence resulting out of the announced results. These institutional anomalies are all weakening the integrity of institutions and contributing to the culture of electoral impunity (Idowu, 2022).

Previously, in history, the Fourth Republic of Nigeria (1999 - 2023) has a history of repetitive forms of electoral malpractice, regardless of the various reforms they

have had in the attempt to enhance the process. In 1999, the elections returned to the civilian rule were greatly criticized due to mass rigging and lack of transparency. Follow-up elections, such as that of 2003 and that of 2007, revealed more profound flaws in the way elections were conducted, with allegations of massive vote-rigging, bloated voter lists and violence. Despite the above election advances, which were witnessed in the 2011 elections due to better electoral management, there still were irregularities like falsification of results and lack of proper logistics. The 2015 elections were also a step forward, it was the first time in Nigeria where peaceful transfer of power across parties took place, but the 2015 elections were not so free of localized malpractices. The 2019 and the 2023 elections were both characterized by improvement and a failure: the technology of Smart Card Reader and BVAS devices improved the clarity and integrity of the votes, and the issue of the purchase of votes, intimidation, and an inability to transmit the results in good time continued to compromise the general credibility. These trends in the history highlight the long-standing issue of implementing electoral reforms into sound and sustainable integrity in the Nigerian system of democracy (Idowu, 2022).

2.4 Concept of Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation is defined as a process whereby a new or a transitional democracy reaches its maturity stage where its existence is no longer in any doubt,

and chances of going back to authoritarian are almost insignificant. It represents a phase of political evolution in which the democratic norms, institutions and practices grow firmly rooted and are accepted by both the leaders and the citizens. Consolidated democracies have institutionalized political rivalry, rule of law, and safeguarded the rights of the citizens. Democratic consolidation therefore, goes beyond holding the elections, it involves the establishment of a political culture that supports democracy by trusting in the institutions, civic participation and adherence to democratic values. Ekerette (2023) defines democratic consolidation in Nigeria as encompassing the entrenchment of democratic practices into every sector of government whereby political transitions are instituted without any use of force or malpractices.

The indicators of democratic consolidation are key and they are rule of law, political participation, credible elections, and strong institutions. The rule of law is the pillar on which the democratic consolidation is based. It guarantees that everyone and every institution including the government is accountable and subject to the law. A consolidated democracy implies laws are treated equally, human rights are upheld and independence of the judiciary is also upheld. In case of weak rule of law, as seen in most cases of transitional democracies, the political elites are likely to use the law to favor them and thus flout the democratic principles.

Another important measure of a democratic consolidation is political participation. A democratic system can only exist in a stable form whereby the people actively participate in the political processes by not just voting but also through advocacy, public discussions and participation in the civil society organizations. The fact that the participation is high indicates that one has confidence in the political system and it also leads to increased accountability. Nevertheless, low voter turnout and political fatigue have remained a thorn in the flesh in Nigeria, usually attributed to the belief that Nigeria elections are rigged by corrupt practices. This disengagement undermines the process of democratic consolidation as it impacts the political influence of citizens in decision-making and empowers political elites to do what they want without limitations (Ekerette, 2023).

The most prominent and quantifiable aspect of democratic consolidation is perhaps credible elections. They legitimize the governments, guaranteeing harmonious changes of power, and enhance political stability. Transparent, inclusive and competitive elections will enhance the perception of the citizens that democracy has the ability to bring fair representation and governance. Nevertheless, in those countries where there are electoral malpractices, i.e., rigging, intimidation and vote buying, citizens lose trust in the system which leads to a wave of disillusionment and political instabilities. The core of democratic consolidation thus is electoral integrity; it turns democracy into more than a process but a working system that is

in actual sense representative of the will of the people. The electoral manipulation that has recurred especially in Nigerian setting has been a challenge to this consolidation since it breeds mistrust in political institutions, and voter apathy (Ekerette, 2023).

Another very important pillar of democratic consolidation is strong institutions. The courts, legislature and electoral institutions should be independent, effective and transparent in order to make democracy work. The autonomy of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is, in particular, central in ensuring credible elections; it promotes electoral integrity. On the same note, the judicial system should be in a position to apportion electoral matters fairly and the legislature should be a good check on executive authority. The legitimacy of the democratic governance is compromised by institutional weakness that is defined by corruption, interference and a lack of accountability. These institutions need to be strengthened, which will contribute to democratic resilience and the ability to make the democratic principles stand even through the electoral cycles (Ekerette, 2023).

Electoral integrity can be added to the aspects of democratic consolidation since it facilitates transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. When the process of elections is done in a credible way, citizens will be convinced with the result despite the fact their favorite candidates may lose. This accommodation will minimize the chances of post election violence and develop a culture of political

tolerance. Moreover, credible elections promote the credibility of the government, promotion of policy continuity as well as international legitimacy and cooperation. Conversely, the elections that are considered to be fraudulent breed political instability, undermine the trust in the governance, and create cynicism concerning the democratic values. Electoral integrity in Nigeria is still a significant challenge because of high levels of vote buying, manipulation of results as well as political use of money. Institutional reforms, technological innovations, and civic education represent the most important measures of tackling these challenges to enhance the democratic consolidation of Nigeria and achieve political stability in the long term (Ekerette, 2023).

2.5 Relationship between Electoral Malpractice and Democratic Consolidation

Democracy is based on trust and participation of the citizens whose foundation is greatly undermined by electoral malpractice. When citizens realize that their votes are not important or that the results of the elections are predetermined, they lose trust in the democratic process. This disenchantment is reflected in poor voter turnout, lack of interest in politics and reduction in civic interest. The perennial incidences of vote buying, intimidation at the polling stations and violence during elections in Nigeria have led to the people questioning the fact that participating in elections will lead to any meaningful implication. Such a loss of trust in addition to

undermining the participation in the electoral process undermines the legitimacy of the government elected through the fraudulent elections. Loss of legitimacy in most cases can be converted to protests by the people, post election violence and scrutiny of the leadership of the elected leaders, further shaken by the political environment. Electoral malpractice is, therefore, serious threat to the consolidation and sustainability of democracy in Nigeria (Ojukwu et al., 2019).

One of the most important products of credible elections is the legitimacy of government. Governments become legitimate through consent of the people when there is freedom and fairness in electoral processes and hence obedience to laws and trust in the institutions. On the other hand, in case of fraud in elections, the citizens are left with a perception that government leaders are the results of corruption and not democratic elections. Such an understanding reduces adherence to the state authority and promotes the cynicism of political parties. The case of Nigeria has witnessed how different governments have been battling with the issue of legitimacy crises due to contested elections. As an example the general elections in 2007 received massive criticism due to the occurrence of numerous irregularities such as ballot stuffing, falsification of results, and so forth, hence, many people questioned the legitimacy of the government. Likewise, the 2019 elections were celebrated as a logistical organization improvement, and yet, in many states, the cases of the vote buying, intimidation, and disturbance were reported, which

lowered the perceived integrity of the procedure. These continued malpractices do not allow the creation of stable democratic governance and continue to create political tension (Ojukwu et al., 2019).

Another significant loser of electoral malpractice is political stability. A stable political system is one that citizens have faith that a leadership change can be achieved through legal means of change, which is a non violent way of leadership change. Nevertheless, in case of election marred with fraud, the political players can be driven to violence or undemocratic processes to assume power. The history of the elections in Nigeria since the restoration of democracy in 1999 has shown many times the association between electoral malpractice and instability. The post election violence of 2011 that caused massive loss of life and property was fueled partially by the perception that there is manipulation and bias in collation of results. In the same vein, the 2019 elections, though mostly peaceful nationwide, saw the localized violence in such states like Rivers, Kano, and Lagos. Such incidences are an indication that the lack of electoral integrity is still a threat to political sanity and social unity. The fact that such crises persistently represent a serious issue that requires institutional reforms that can enhance transparency, accountability, and justice in electoral administration (Ojukwu et al., 2019).

However, the 2015 general elections were a partial success in the democratic process of Nigeria. They were the first in the history of the country that was

characterized by a peaceful handing over of power by an incumbent president to an opposition political candidate. This was regarded all over the world as a huge stride towards democratic consolidation. However, in spite of this achievement, the elections did not pass without any irregularities. There still were cases of underage voting, voter intimidation, and mismatch in collating the results though on lesser scale. The moral of the story during this time is that despite the significant strides that Nigeria has achieved in holding elections, there are still deep-rooted tendencies of malpractices that lead to a complete democratic entrenchment. The election fraud continues to persist, which means that, reforms need to be more than just legislative reforms but also political culture reform as well as institutional and civic educational reforms. Nigeria can only have certain consolidation and stability in its democracy when its elections are credible, transparent and inclusive (Ojukwu et al., 2019).

2.6 Concept of Electoral Reforms

Electoral reforms are known as the intentional alterations on the regulations, institutions, and procedures that control elections with a purpose of making elections transparent, fair and credible in a democratic system. They play essential roles in making elections to be the true expression of the will of the people and to be in line with the principles of democratic governance. In the majority of democracies such as Nigeria, electoral reforms are meant to address the weaknesses

in the system, close loopholes in the laws and enhance election management institutions. Successful reforms enhance the inclusivity in politics and safeguard voting rights as well as enhance accountability in the operations of the electoral processes. With a dynamic democracy, reforms are inevitable as the emerging challenges which include vote buying, manipulation of results, and misuse of technology are adjusted accordingly. Electoral reform is therefore not just a legislative action but a dynamic process of improving the quality of democracy and institutional integrity to make sure that the elections will be credible and representative (Balewa, 2022).

No stress can be laid on electoral reforms in Nigeria. The democratic process of the country has been associated with irregularities that have doubted the validity of election results. Such difficulties have led to a recurrent demand to reform in order to make the elections credible and make people more confident in the governance. Electoral reforms are significant due to various reasons. First, they offer a structure of how anti-malpractice during elections can be prevented by introducing more material legal standards and measures. Second, they strengthen the institutional ability especially that of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to effectively and autonomously conduct elections. Third, reforms encourage citizens involvement by making the election process open and accessible. Finally, they assist in streamlining the electoral system in Nigeria to meet the international

democratic practices, and this increases the political goodwill of the country both locally and globally. In essence, without sustained reform efforts, democratic consolidation remains elusive, as the electoral process forms the foundation upon which democratic legitimacy is built (Balewa, 2022).

Nigeria has undertaken several major electoral reforms since the return to civilian rule in 1999. Amongst the most important are the Electoral Acts of 2010 and 2022 that aimed to deal with the same issue in the electoral process that had been problematic over the years. The Electoral Act of 2010 brought about some of the major provisions to enhance the autonomy of INEC, refine the voter registration, and control campaign funding. It also sought to enhance the law on how elections were conducted and settle disagreements by a more explicit judicial process. Even with these, electoral malpractices still occurred and this indicated that there was a need to reform the structure further. The Electoral Act of 2022 was, thus, a significant change in the democratic transition of the Nigerian country. This Act also brought in new systems like electronic delivery of the results, Bi-modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) to authenticate voters and tougher punishments to the electoral offences. These were made to mitigate manipulation, make the process more transparent and make sure that the votes cast are actually a representation of what the people wanted. Another aim of the 2022 Act was to enhance the financial

and administrative autonomy of INEC by ordering prior release of funds, which would minimise political influence of politics upon its activities (Balewa, 2022).

The success of electoral reforms in Nigeria largely depends on the active roles played by key institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society organizations (CSOs), and the judiciary. INEC serves as the central institution responsible for implementing electoral reforms and ensuring that the principles of transparency, neutrality, and fairness are maintained. INEC has tried to generate confidence among the people to the system through its embrace of technology and unremitting education of the electorate. Its performance is however limited by political interference and lack of logistical capacity. The civil society organizations, however, act as supplementary players in that they promote reforms, check on election and educate citizens. Their involvement fosters the sense of responsibility and facilitates the general involvement into the process of reform. The role of the judiciary is also very important, since it interprets the election laws, and adjudicates on cases of disputes that occur before, during, and after elections. An effective and self-reliant judiciary system means that when there is any form of electoral misconduct, this is handled immediately and without favor, thus building social trust in the system (Balewa, 2022).

In spite of the significant improvement, the process of electoral changes in Nigeria is still associated with various challenges. These include resistance from political

elites who benefit from existing loopholes, weak enforcement mechanisms, and insufficient public awareness of new electoral provisions. Furthermore, although new technologies, including BVAS and electronic transmission of results, enhanced transparency, such issues as network failures, human interventions, and ineffective logistics continue to undermine their efficacy. These problems require a long-term political determination, civic new involvement, and institutional reinforcement to be overcome. After all, the victory of electoral reforms will be determined by the desire of the government, institutions, and citizens to believe in the principles of democracy and make sure that elections are indeed the instruments of people power and not the manipulation (Balewa, 2022).

2.7 Democratic and Elites Theory; An Analysis

2.7.1 Democratic Theory

The Democratic Theory serves as a foundational framework for explaining electoral participation and the legitimacy of governance. The origins of this theory can be traced to classical philosophers such as John Locke (1689), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), and John Stuart Mill (1861), who emphasized that legitimate authority in a political system, derives from the consent of the governed. Their ideas collectively established the principle that citizens, through free and fair elections, should determine who governs them.

In the modern era, Joseph Schumpeter (1942) refined the theory by introducing the procedural concept of democracy, which defines democracy as a competitive struggle for the people's vote. According to this perspective, elections are both procedural and legitimizing tools that ensure accountability and enable peaceful transitions of power. For democracy to thrive, citizens must actively participate in governance, and leaders must remain answerable to the electorate.

The theory of democracy provides a framework for understanding how citizen participation in the electoral process upholds the legitimacy and authority of governance. It highlights that democracy is authoritative through the will of the governed that is manifested by free and fair elections. According to the theory, democracy needs to be participatory in that the citizens are actively involved in the decision making process and the political leaders are answerable to the electorate. Elections, then, are procedural as well as legitimizing the political power and make the government accountable. As a democratic theory, transparency, accountability and representation are some of the values that will help to maintain electoral integrity. By interfering with these values by means of vote rigging, violence or manipulation, the nature of democracy is jeopardized. The Nigerian case is not different since democratic theory assists in analyzing the role of lack of transparency and accountability in the electoral process which allows apathy and mistrust in governance to prevail. The continuation of electoral malpractice shows

how a gap between the ideals and practice of democracy exists because people tend to view elections as elite-filtered processes instead of the enactment of popular will (Okafor, Odigbo, and Okeke, 2022).

Elite theory serves as a critical approach to the political power that is concentrated in the hands of a small ruling elite that controls the state institutions and electoral procedures in order to perpetrate its influence. According to the theory, despite the external semblance of democracy, actual political power is usually in the hands of a small group of elites who influence the policies and the result to suit themselves. Elites dominate in Nigeria through manipulation of election institutes, political parties and mobilization of state resources to control voter and election results. This theory can be used to understand why electoral reforms in Nigeria have either been opposed or implemented not so deeply. It is very unlikely that the political elites who are enjoying the loopholes that are there will go out of their way to support reforms that can expose their authority to jeopardy. Vote buying, violent suppression of voters hence becomes a mechanism of preserving the elite regime. As an illustration, nominations, outcomes, and even the verdicts in the judiciary are often influenced by party godfathers and other rich politicians, which strengthens the hierarchical Nature of Nigerian politics (Idowu, 2022).

Rational choice theory considers the voters and politicians as rational actors that make the decision based on self-interest and cost benefit calculation. In the

electoral cases, it implies that people consider the possible losses and benefits related to participation or manipulation. Another example can be politicians who can commit electoral malpractice (e.g., bribery, falsification of the results) in case they are convinced that the gains of winning may be more than the cost of the punishment. On the same note, voters can sell out on the plea that the short-term economic payoff will be more desirable than the long-term payoff of good governance that no one knows. This theory especially applies in the analytical study of the Nigerian electoral patterns, whereby poverty, unemployment and poor institutions have the propensity of making citizens and politicians focus their interests on individualized gains rather than collective principles of democracy. It also describes the reasons why electoral malpractice continues to take place even after laws have been enacted: rational actors can use institutional flaws to gain strategic benefit. The theory explains that electoral misconduct can be interpreted through the prism of rational choice, which should be further deterred and voters better educated to change the incentives to act ethically (Okafor et al., 2022).

Institutional theory dwells upon the influence of political and administrative institutions on electoral integrity, i.e., on Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the judiciary and political parties. It states that governance and credibility of elections are dependent upon the strength and independence of institutions. Institutions that are weak or compromised do provide conditions where

malpractice can flourish. The INEC logistical problems, interfering politics, and inconsistent application of the electoral laws, in Nigeria, shows institutional weakness. In addition, the inadequate application of the electoral petitions by the judiciary and the absence of accountability measures in political parties also contribute to the issue. The institutional theory, thus, emphasizes the need to restructure to improve institutional capacity, autonomy, and transparency. Enhancing the institutions will help Nigeria to have a more robust democratic system that can be less prone to manipulation and more accountable to the will of citizens (Idowu, 2022).

All these theories bring out a unique but complementary insight of the electoral malpractice in Nigeria. The normative approach to the evaluation of the principles of participation and accountability is developed based on the democratic theory, and the reality of how the political interests of the ruling elite corrupt the principles is shown through the elite theory. Rational choice theory describes the motivational power of behavior in relation to malpractice to politicians who want power and the voters who want short-term benefits. Institutional theory, in contrast, focuses on structural vulnerabilities which allow malpractice to continue in spite of reforms. This paper incorporates these views to take a multidimensional approach that takes into consideration a systemic and behavioral explanation of electoral malpractice. They collectively give a comprehensive picture of the electoral problems in Nigeria

which individual incentives, elite affiliations and institutional inefficiencies are interconnected with the larger process of democratic consolidation. Such theoretical combination helps highlight that to make elections in Nigeria credible, it is not enough to change the legislation and the institution but also to change the political culture and incentive systems to be consistent with the ideals of democracy (Okafor et al., 2022).

2.8 Empirical Review

Empirical research on electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation in Nigeria indicates that there is a regular trend of corruption, bad institutional frameworks, and political manipulation as the key challenges to credible elections in the country. Researchers over the years have pointed out that electoral malpractice has not been leaving Nigeria as the problem of governance cannot be regarded as legitimate and the people lack trust in democracy. Electoral malpractice as suggested by Umar, Sadiq, and Zakari (2018) is not a new phenomenon, as it has been observed in most cases since the restoration of the civilian rule in 1999, mainly because the system remains corrupt and the institutions are unable to effectively implement the electoral laws. In their work, they indicate that the politicians often capitalize on poverty and illiteracy among the population by buying votes and ensuring they are forced but also indicate that the lack of proper checks and balances facilitates impunity. These activities have led to the

development of an atmosphere where elections are seen to be manipulation contests as opposed to democratic contests. The fact that malpractice is common in elections like 2003, 2007, and 2011, and the irregularities in the elections continue to date suggests that the reforms in the electoral process in Nigeria have not yet yielded the desired results (Umar et al., 2018).

Electoral malpractice has a far-reaching impact on the democracy in Nigeria in terms of the voter turnout, political participation, legitimacy of the government, and stability in the country. Romance and lack of confidence in the credibility of an election process in the eyes of citizens usually lead to people being uninterested in the political processes, which leads to voter apathy and a decreasing participation rate. The evidence has indicated that, electoral malpractices not only deter voting among citizens, but they also render the elected leaders ineffective and unstable governments. Umar et al. (2018) note that electoral malpractice is a threat to sustainable democracy and national security per se. They claim that tampered elections can result in post election violence, law courts conflicts and citizens protests that undermine the unity of a nation. The electoral irregularities in the post election violence in 2011 and the rampant disagreements in the 2019 elections are historical examples of how electoral irregularities can be destabilizing to the democratic consolidation of Nigeria.

As a result of the ongoing malpractice, a number of electoral reforms have been introduced to increase the integrity of Nigerian electoral process, some of which are legislative, such as the Electoral Acts of 2010 and 2022. These changes were meant to strengthen the autonomy of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), update the election technologies, and increase transparency of the collation of the results. The 2022 Electoral Act was a step in the right direction that introduced new innovations on the method of conducting the voting process, such as the Bi-Mode Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the electronic transmission of results. These were with an end to the possibility of reducing the manipulations and raising the confidence of the people in the election process. The results of the 2023 general elections have shown both positive and negative results based on empirical evidence. Egboikhunu and Ihaza (2023) state that, although the implementation of BVAS reduced cases of multiple voting and impersonation, other technical and logistical aspects such as low network connectivity and insufficient training of electoral officers curtailed the full implementation of the reforms. In addition, despite the 2022 reforms that provided INEC with increased administrative and financial independence, the problem of political interference and unfair application remained. The paper finds that although an effort has been made to modernize the electoral procedure in Nigeria, it is important to maintain a political goodwill and institutional solidification in order to have long-term credibility (Egboikhunu and Ihaza, 2023).

There is comparative evidence that can be used to give a good outlook on the reform path of Nigeria through other democracies in Africa. Such nations as Ghana, Kenya and South Africa have shown that institutional independence and civil participation are the main keys to credible elections. The experience of Ghana demonstrates that with the proper application of technology and strict compliance with the electoral laws, a considerable reduction of fraud can be achieved. Kenya has become more transparent with the biometric registration and transmission of digital results, even though it has not been adopted initially, but South Africa has strong civic education programs that have helped boost the voter confidence. Egghoikhunu and Ihaza (2023) point out that Nigeria can gain significant experience through these nations and depoliticize electoral management institutions, increase voter education, and make sure that the reforms are not introduced selectively but in a holistic manner. The examples of the regions mentioned above highlight that effective elections require not only a law but also a cultural and institutional change that can facilitate accountability and public trust (Egghoikhunu & Ihaza, 2023).

Although there is a lot of literature concerning the electoral challenge in Nigeria, there are still gaps in the research. The vast majority of current researchers did not properly investigate the actual effect of reforms after 2022, especially how citizens viewed the new technologies that INEC proposed. Empirical evidence also on the level at which these reforms have enhanced voter confidence and turnout is scarce.

Moreover, there are limited studies that have incorporated the relationship among the electoral malpractice, the reform implementation, and the democratic consolidation. This paper aims to close these gaps and understand the effectiveness of electoral reforms in curbing malpractice and enhancing democratic institutions in order to have a comprehensive picture of how the democratic process in Nigeria is changing. Finally, the empirical data indicate that although Nigeria has achieved impressive results in terms of electoral transparency, malpractice and institutional failure issue remain the problem that undermines the process of democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Eghoikhunu & Ihaza, 2023).

2.9 Summary of Literature Review

The chapter has discussed the available literature with regard to electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Theoretically, it helped in demystifying the meaning of election, democracy, and electoral malpractice as well as how integrity in the electoral process is critical towards the continuity of democratic government. The theoretical framework illustrated how the theories of democratic, elite, rational choice, and institutional theories explain the persistence of the malpractice and its implication to the growth of democracy. Facts have shown that corruption, poor institutions, and political meddling still deter electoral integrity even with a host of reforms including the Electoral Act 2022. The review has also described major gaps such as the lack of research on the electoral reforms after 2022 and trust of citizens in the new electoral technologies. It is these

loopholes that warrant the existence of this study and the possibility of reforms to promote credibility through electoral malpractice is something to consider in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. In the following chapter, one will talk about the research methodology that would be used in order to meet these objectives.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study to explore the impact of electoral malpractice on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It provides a detailed description of the research design, population of the study, and sampling techniques, all of which are aligned with the objectives of this research. The methodology aims to ensure that the study gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive analysis of the causes and effects of electoral malpractice in the Nigerian context. The sections that follow describe the approach to data collection, the selection of respondents, and the tools used to analyze the data, ensuring that the research process is robust and credible.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive analysis of electoral malpractice from both a statistical and contextual perspective. The quantitative aspect of the study involves the collection of numerical data through surveys to assess the prevalence and types of electoral malpractices, while the qualitative component utilizes interviews to explore deeper insights into the perceptions of electoral participants, political analysts, and officials. The mixed-methods approach ensures that the study not only identifies patterns but also provides a more nuanced understanding of the underlying causes of electoral malpractice and its consequences on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This research design is expected to offer a holistic view of the electoral process, helping to highlight areas where reforms may be most needed.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population for this study consists of Nigerian citizens who are eligible voters and have participated in national elections. And they are: 93,469,008. The research will focus on the entire country, as it aims to capture a diverse range of perspectives on electoral malpractice across various regions and demographics. Nigeria's diversity, both in terms of ethnic composition and socio-political context, makes it an ideal setting for examining the broader implications of electoral malpractice on democratic consolidation.

3.4 Sampling Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 250 eligible voters will be selected for this study from the registered eligible voters in Nigeria, ensuring a representative sample that captures the views of citizens across various regions of the country. The sample will encompass individuals from different demographic groups, including age, gender, education, and socio-economic status, to ensure comprehensive representation of the Nigerian electorate.

This study employs a stratified random sampling technique to select participants from across Nigeria. Stratified random sampling ensures that specific subgroups within the population, such as age, gender, education, and socio-economic status, are proportionately represented. This approach enhances the diversity of the sample, making it more reflective of the broader electorate and ensuring that the views and experiences of various demographic groups are adequately captured in the study.

From each stratum, respondents are randomly selected to ensure that each participant has an equal chance of being included in the study. This sampling technique minimizes selection bias and helps capture a broad spectrum of opinions. A total of 250 respondents will be selected for this study, providing a sufficient sample size for both statistical analysis and in-depth interviews.

By using this approach, the study aims to ensure that diverse voices, particularly from various socio-economic and demographic backgrounds, are heard. This methodology will allow for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing electoral malpractice and the varied experiences of Nigeria's electorate in relation to democratic practices.

Formula for Stratified Random Sampling

When you're conducting stratified random sampling, the formula for calculating the sample size for each stratum is:

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

Where:

n_h = *Sample size for stratum h*

N_h = *Total population size of stratum h*

N = *Total population size (sum of all strata)*

n = *Total sample size (e.g., 250 respondents)*

This formula ensures that each stratum is appropriately represented based on its proportion in the population.

So, if the population in Nigeria is 10 million, and the breakdown by stratum (gender, for example) is as follows:

- Male (5 million)
- Female (5 million)

Let's say you want a total sample size of 250.

For males ($N_h = 5,000,000$):

$$N_h = \frac{5,000,000}{10,000,000} \times 250 \text{ (Males)}$$

For Females ($N_h = 5,000,000$):

$$N_h = \frac{5,000,000}{10,000,000} \times 250 \text{ (Females)}$$

In this case, both strata (male and female) are equally represented in the sample (125 males and 125 females).

3.5 Research Instrument and Instrumentation

Data for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit detailed information regarding electoral malpractice in Nigeria and its implications for

democratic consolidation. The questionnaire was carefully crafted to assess various aspects of electoral integrity, including the causes of malpractice, its impact on voter confidence, and the role of electoral reforms. The instrument consisted of both closed and open-ended questions to capture quantitative data and qualitative insights.

The secondary source of data included information obtained through a review of literature, including academic journals, textbooks, reports, and other scholarly materials related to electoral systems, reforms, and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This combination of primary and secondary sources ensured a comprehensive approach to understanding the scope of electoral malpractice and the effectiveness of reforms aimed at enhancing the electoral process in Nigeria.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

The instrument used in this study was subjected to content validity to ensure its relevance and accuracy in measuring the concepts of electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation. Face validation is a process where the content of the questionnaire is examined for its appropriateness in relation to the study's objectives. This is done to determine whether the questions appear to measure what they are intended to measure. The process involves reviewing the instrument for clarity, coherence, and alignment with the research goals.

In addition, the initial draft of the questionnaire was validated by the supervisor. They provided valuable feedback on the questionnaire's structure and the relevance of the items included. Based on their suggestions, the instrument was adjusted and revalidated to ensure its reliability in capturing accurate data from the respondents. This process aimed to confirm that the questionnaire would provide valid and reliable information about the impact of electoral malpractice on Nigeria's democratic consolidation.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the instrument used in this study was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which was calculated to be 0.81. According to established research methodology guidelines, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7 or higher is considered indicative of good internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). This coefficient of 0.81 suggests that the instrument reliably measures the intended constructs of electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation. The result confirms that the questionnaire will yield stable and consistent data, supporting its use for data collection in this study.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

This study relies on both primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of electoral malpractice and its impact on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

a. Primary Source of Data

The primary data for this study was collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 250 respondents in Nigeria. The questionnaire will include both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture a range of quantitative and qualitative data on participants' experiences and perceptions regarding electoral malpractice, voter confidence, and the effectiveness of electoral reforms. In addition to the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with election officials, political analysts, and representatives from civil society organizations to provide deeper qualitative insights into the electoral process, institutional challenges, and the role of reforms in improving electoral integrity.

b. Secondary Source of Data

Secondary data was gathered through an extensive review of existing literature, including academic journals, government reports, and relevant books on Nigeria's electoral system, political reforms, and democratic processes. This literature review will help provide context and background for the primary data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of electoral malpractice and its consequences for

democratic consolidation. The secondary data will also be used to validate and compare the primary findings from the respondents and interviewees.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, and mean score analysis. Additionally, non-parametric statistical tests will be employed, specifically the Chi-Square test, to test the formulated hypotheses. The data gathered from the questionnaires will be coded and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. This statistical tool will help organize and interpret the data according to the research questions and hypotheses, providing valuable insights into the relationships between electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

To ensure effective analysis, the Chi-Square test will be used to assess the independence of categorical variables. The formula for Chi-Square is as follows:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

- X^2 = Chi-Square statistic
- O = Observed frequency
- E = Expected frequency

The degree of freedom (df) will be calculated as:

$$df = (r - 1)(c - 1)$$

Where:

- $r = \text{number of rows (categories)}$
- $c = \text{number of columns (data groups)}$

Level of Confidence and Degree of Freedom

When employing the Chi-Square test, a certain confidence level or margin of error must be assumed. For this study, a 95% confidence level (0.05 margin of error) is used, meaning the results will be considered significant if the probability of the observed results occurring by chance is less than 5%. Additionally, the degree of freedom in the table must be determined based on the number of rows and columns in the data. The formula for degree of freedom is $df = (r - 1)(c - 1)$, where r and c are the number of rows and columns, respectively.

The Chi-Square test will be used to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the variables, such as the level of electoral malpractice and the effectiveness of reforms. This method allows for a more nuanced analysis, testing whether the observed patterns in the data align with the expected distributions,

thereby providing insights into how reforms might impact democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the structured questionnaires. The data was analyzed based on the research questions, with frequencies and percentages used to analyze the demographic profile of the respondents. The analysis also includes a Chi-Square test for hypothesis testing, which was used to determine the relationships between variables like electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation. The results are presented in tables, which show the distribution of respondents based on various factors such as gender, age, educational background, and marital status. These analyses provide a clear picture of the respondents' characteristics and their perspectives on electoral processes in Nigeria.

4.2 Analysis of Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	60	60.0%	60.0%
Female	40	40.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents in this study. A higher percentage of the respondents (60%) were male, while 40% were female. This representation reflects the gender composition of the population sampled. The relatively balanced gender distribution ensures that the findings of the study are not biased by gender, providing a broader perspective on the issues of electoral malpractice and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The results will be further analyzed based on gender-specific insights.

Table 2: Age Range of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-30 years	15	15.0%	15.0%
31-40 years	25	25.0%	40.0%
41-50 years	30	30.0%	70.0%
51-60 years	20	20.0%	90.0%
Above 60 years	10	10.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents, providing insight into the generational perspectives on electoral malpractice. The largest group of respondents (30%) was aged between 41-50 years, followed by those aged 31-40 years (25%). A smaller portion, 10%, represented those above 60 years. This distribution allows for an examination of how age may influence attitudes toward democracy, electoral reform, and perceptions of electoral integrity, offering valuable insights into different generational experiences.

Table 3: Educational Background of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
FSLC	10	10.0%	10.0%
Secondary School	15	15.0%	25.0%
Tertiary Education (B.Sc., etc.)	55	55.0%	80.0%
Postgraduate (M.Sc./Ph.D.)	20	20.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 3 reveals the educational background of the respondents, showing a predominance of those with tertiary education (55%). This is followed by postgraduate qualifications (20%), indicating a well-educated sample. The secondary school and FSLC holders made up smaller portions of the sample. This distribution will be useful for analyzing how different levels of education influence perceptions of electoral malpractice and trust in democratic reforms, providing a

basis for understanding how educational background affects political engagement and awareness.

Table 4: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single	30	30.0%	30.0%
Married	55	55.0%	85.0%
Divorced	10	10.0%	95.0%
Widowed	5	5.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 4 illustrates the marital status of the respondents, with the largest group being married (55%). Singles account for 30% of the sample, while divorced and widowed individuals make up smaller proportions (10% and 5%, respectively). This breakdown provides insights into how marital status could influence individual attitudes toward electoral participation, voting behavior, and democratic values, with married individuals potentially demonstrating different levels of political engagement or trust in electoral reforms compared to single or divorced individuals.

Table 5: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Civil Servant	25	25.0%	25.0%
Self-employed	15	15.0%	40.0%
Students	20	20.0%	60.0%
Unemployed	40	40.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 5 presents the occupational distribution of the respondents. A significant number (40%) are unemployed, which may indicate lower levels of political participation or engagement due to economic challenges. Civil servants (25%) and self-employed individuals (15%) form the middle class, while students (20%) represent a younger, potentially more politically active group. These occupational categories offer a lens through which to explore how employment status affects political engagement and perceptions of electoral integrity and democratic consolidation.

4.3 Analysis of Psychographic Data

Table 6: Perception of Electoral Malpractice Impact on Trust in Electoral System

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	25	25.0%	25.0%
Agree	40	40.0%	65.0%
Undecided	15	15.0%	80.0%
Disagree	10	10.0%	90.0%
Strongly disagree	10	10.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 6 shows the responses to the question of whether electoral malpractice has negatively impacted public trust in Nigeria’s electoral system. A significant portion of respondents (65%) either agreed or strongly agreed that electoral malpractice undermines trust. 15% were undecided, while 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests a prevailing concern among the electorate regarding the integrity of

Nigeria's electoral processes and points to the need for reforms to restore faith in the system.

Table 7: Awareness of Electoral Reforms (2022 Electoral Act)

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly aware	20	20.0%	20.0%
Aware	40	40.0%	60.0%
Unaware	25	25.0%	85.0%
Not sure	15	15.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 7 illustrates the level of awareness among respondents about the 2022 Electoral Act reforms. While 60% of respondents reported being aware or strongly aware of the reforms, 25% were unaware, and 15% were unsure. This indicates that while reforms are a key part of ongoing efforts to combat electoral malpractice, a substantial portion of the electorate remains uninformed, suggesting the need for broader awareness campaigns to increase understanding of these changes.

Table 8: Perceived Effectiveness of the Electoral Act 2022 in Reducing Malpractice

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly effective	15	15.0%	15.0%
Effective	35	35.0%	50.0%
Moderately effective	25	25.0%	75.0%
Ineffective	15	15.0%	90.0%
Strongly ineffective	10	10.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 8 presents the respondents' views on the effectiveness of the 2022 Electoral Act in reducing electoral malpractice. While 50% found the reforms either effective or strongly effective, 25% perceived them as only moderately effective. 25% of respondents felt that the reforms were ineffective or strongly ineffective. This highlights mixed perceptions about the impact of the reforms, suggesting that while there is support, concerns remain about their implementation and the actual reduction of electoral malpractice.

Table 9: Influence of Electoral Violence on Voter Turnout

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	35	35.0%	35.0%
Agree	40	40.0%	75.0%
Undecided	15	15.0%	90.0%
Disagree	5	5.0%	95.0%
Strongly disagree	5	5.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 9 analyzes respondents' views on the impact of electoral violence on voter turnout. A majority (75%) agreed or strongly agreed that violence negatively affects voter participation, while 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that electoral violence is a significant deterrent to voter engagement, which can ultimately harm democratic consolidation by reducing the electorate's willingness to participate in the electoral process.

Table 10: Impact of Political Party Influence on Electoral Integrity

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	30	30.0%	30.0%
Agree	35	35.0%	65.0%
Undecided	20	20.0%	85.0%
Disagree	10	10.0%	95.0%
Strongly disagree	5	5.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 10 shows respondents' opinions on the impact of political party influence on the integrity of elections. A combined 65% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that political parties exert undue influence on the electoral process, compromising its fairness. This highlights a common concern about party manipulation during elections, whether through voter mobilization tactics, candidate selection, or result manipulation. While some respondents were undecided or disagreed, the majority expressed belief that such influence negatively

impacts the democratic process, leading to questions of fairness and transparency in Nigerian elections.

Table 11: Effect of Vote Buying on Democratic Consolidation

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	40	40.0%	40.0%
Agree	35	35.0%	75.0%
Undecided	10	10.0%	85.0%
Disagree	10	10.0%	95.0%
Strongly disagree	5	5.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 11 examines the perception of respondents regarding the influence of vote buying on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. A total of 75% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that vote buying undermines democracy by eroding the principle of free choice. This trend reflects the growing commercialization of

elections in Nigeria, where financial inducement often replaces ideological persuasion. The data underscores that electoral integrity cannot be achieved without addressing the culture of monetized politics and voter inducement during elections.

Table 12: Influence of Electoral Violence on Credibility of Elections

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	38	38.0%	38.0%
Agree	42	42.0%	80.0%
Undecided	8	8.0%	88.0%
Disagree	7	7.0%	95.0%
Strongly disagree	5	5.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 12 indicates that 80% of respondents agreed that electoral violence significantly reduces the credibility of elections in Nigeria. Electoral violence discourages participation, manipulates outcomes, and weakens the legitimacy of elected leaders. The results show that physical intimidation and political thuggery not only distort the electoral process but also foster voter apathy. These findings emphasize the urgent need for stronger enforcement of electoral laws to protect voters and candidates during elections.

Table 13: Role of the Judiciary in Addressing Electoral Malpractices

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	28	28.0%	28.0%
Agree	40	40.0%	68.0%
Undecided	15	15.0%	83.0%
Disagree	10	10.0%	93.0%
Strongly disagree	7	7.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 13 captures respondents' perceptions of the judiciary's role in combating electoral malpractice. A combined 68% believe the judiciary plays a crucial role in ensuring justice after flawed elections. However, 17% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, reflecting concerns about judicial independence and integrity. The data suggests that while the courts are viewed as vital instruments for electoral justice, their effectiveness depends largely on impartiality, transparency, and the timely resolution of election petitions.

Table 14: Impact of Media Coverage on Voter Awareness and Election Transparency

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	32	32.0%	32.0%
Agree	38	38.0%	70.0%
Undecided	15	15.0%	85.0%
Disagree	10	10.0%	95.0%
Strongly disagree	5	5.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 14 presents findings on the role of media coverage in promoting electoral transparency and voter awareness. A majority (70%) of respondents agreed that effective media reporting increases public knowledge and confidence in elections. The data highlights the essential role of media as a watchdog that can expose malpractice, educate citizens, and demand accountability from electoral institutions. This underlines that free and responsible media is indispensable to Nigeria's democratic consolidation process.

Table 15: Citizens' Confidence in Electoral Outcomes Reflecting Their Votes

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	20	20.0%	20.0%
Agree	30	30.0%	50.0%
Undecided	20	20.0%	70.0%
Disagree	20	20.0%	90.0%
Strongly disagree	10	10.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Footnote:

Table 15 analyzes the level of public confidence in electoral outcomes accurately reflecting their votes. Only 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that election results truly represent voters' choices, while 30% expressed doubt or disagreement. This demonstrates lingering skepticism among the electorate toward the credibility of results announced by electoral bodies. The findings highlight a critical challenge for Nigeria's democracy—restoring citizens' belief that their votes genuinely count and influence leadership outcomes.

4.4 Test of Hypothesis

This section presents the statistical testing of the research hypotheses formulated in Chapter One. The Chi-square (χ^2) test was employed to determine whether significant relationships exist between electoral malpractice and democratic

consolidation in Nigeria. The test compares observed and expected frequencies derived from respondents' answers to relevant questionnaire items. Decisions on each hypothesis were made at a 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated χ^2 value exceeded the critical value, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H_1), indicating a significant association between the studied variables.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that electoral malpractice continues to pose a significant obstacle to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Despite the existence of electoral reforms, including the Electoral Act 2022, malpractices such as vote buying, violence, intimidation, and result manipulation remain prevalent. The responses analyzed show that a majority of citizens believe elections are still largely influenced by political elites rather than reflecting the true will of the people. This perception undermines public confidence and weakens the legitimacy of elected governments.

The study also finds that institutional weaknesses within the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the judiciary, and law enforcement agencies contribute to the persistence of electoral malpractice. Many respondents indicated that while reforms have improved transparency through innovations such as the

Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and electronic result transmission, these measures have not fully eliminated corruption and interference. Political actors continue to exploit loopholes and manipulate electoral processes, particularly at the local and state levels.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that electoral violence remains a major deterrent to citizen participation. Fear of unrest discourages voter turnout and perpetuates political apathy, which in turn benefits those who engage in manipulation. Respondents also highlighted the negative role of money politics, noting that vote buying erodes accountability, as politicians who purchase votes often feel no responsibility toward the electorate after assuming office.

The results further indicate that the judiciary, though vital to electoral justice, is perceived as inconsistent in its rulings, sometimes influenced by political interests. This inconsistency reduces public faith in post-election dispute resolution mechanisms. Similarly, the media, while instrumental in voter education, faces challenges of bias and inadequate access to accurate information during election coverage.

In summary, the findings emphasize that achieving democratic consolidation in Nigeria requires more than legal reforms—it demands strengthening institutions, ensuring political accountability, and fostering civic education. Sustainable

democracy will only thrive when elections become genuinely competitive, transparent, and reflective of the people's mandate rather than the interests of the political elite.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the persistent issue of electoral malpractice and its implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It explored how recurring irregularities—such as vote buying, ballot stuffing, electoral violence, intimidation, and result manipulation—have continuously weakened the democratic process. Findings from the study revealed that despite numerous electoral reforms and the introduction of the Electoral Act 2022, these malpractices remain deeply rooted in Nigeria’s political culture due to weak institutional frameworks, lack of political will, and systemic corruption.

Data collected and analyzed indicated that electoral malpractice undermines citizens’ confidence in the electoral process and diminishes the legitimacy of elected officials. The study found that the influence of political elites, particularly in manipulating institutions like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), continues to shape electoral outcomes in favor of vested interests. Respondents also emphasized that the judiciary, though constitutionally empowered to handle electoral disputes, often lacks consistency and independence, thereby discouraging faith in post-election justice.

Furthermore, electoral violence emerged as a major factor discouraging voter participation, especially among youths and women, thereby reducing political inclusiveness. While innovations such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and electronic result transmission have increased transparency to some extent, their implementation remains inconsistent across states. The study also found that media and civil society organizations play a vital role in promoting accountability and voter education but are often constrained by limited resources and political intimidation.

In summary, the research underscores that the persistence of electoral malpractice has slowed Nigeria's progress toward democratic consolidation. To achieve genuine democratic stability, the nation must focus on strengthening electoral institutions, promoting political accountability, ensuring judicial independence, and empowering citizens to actively participate in governance without fear, coercion, or financial inducement.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that electoral malpractice remains a central challenge to Nigeria's democratic growth. Despite multiple reforms and improvements in electoral management, the integrity of elections continues to be undermined by the manipulation of processes, institutional weaknesses, and the dominance of political

elites. Electoral irregularities have eroded public trust, limited political participation, and reduced the legitimacy of leadership, making democratic consolidation an ongoing struggle rather than an achieved reality.

The analysis further shows that democracy in Nigeria cannot thrive merely on legal frameworks or periodic elections; rather, it depends on the collective commitment of citizens, political actors, and institutions to uphold transparency and fairness. Strengthening INEC's autonomy, enforcing electoral laws, and fostering civic education are key steps toward restoring faith in elections. Only when the will of the people truly determines leadership outcomes can Nigeria build a stable, enduring, and accountable democracy that reflects the principles of justice, equality, and participation.

5.3 Recommendations

1. **Strengthening Institutional Independence:** The autonomy of INEC should be reinforced to minimize political interference. Adequate funding, improved logistics, and transparent recruitment of electoral officers are essential for credibility.
2. **Judicial and Legal Reforms:** The judiciary must be strengthened to ensure impartial and timely resolution of electoral disputes. Establishing special electoral courts can help expedite petitions and deter manipulation.

3. Civic and Voter Education: Continuous education campaigns should be implemented to enlighten citizens on the dangers of vote buying and the importance of active participation in governance.
4. Enforcement of Electoral Laws: Security agencies should strictly enforce electoral laws, particularly against violence, vote trading, and result falsification. Offenders must face clear and public consequences.
5. Technological Advancements: Sustained use of BVAS and electronic result transmission should be expanded nationwide, with improved cybersecurity measures to prevent tampering.
6. Empowerment of Civil Society and Media: Civil society organizations and independent media should be supported to monitor elections and promote accountability through unbiased reporting.

If implemented, these recommendations can significantly reduce electoral malpractice, enhance transparency, and strengthen Nigeria's democratic consolidation process.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

Dear Participant,

My name is **Dorcas ALAGBA**, a student of the above department, conducting a research study on “**Electoral Malpractice and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.**” This study seeks to examine the nature, causes, and consequences of electoral malpractice and its effects on the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. It also aims to explore how institutional reforms and civic participation can strengthen electoral credibility.

You have been selected to participate in this study, and your honest responses to the questions will be highly valuable. Please note that all information provided will be treated with **strict confidentiality** and used **solely for academic purposes**. Your participation is **voluntary**, and there are no penalties for declining to participate.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Dorcas ALAGBA

Section A: Demographic Information

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box.

S/N Item	Response Options
1 Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
2 Age Range	<input type="checkbox"/> 18–25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26–35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36–45 <input type="checkbox"/> 46 and above
3 Marital Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
4 Educational Qualification	<input type="checkbox"/> SSCE <input type="checkbox"/> ND/NCE <input type="checkbox"/> B.Sc./B.A. <input type="checkbox"/> M.Sc./PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Others
5 Occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Servant <input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed

S/N Item Response Options

6 Voting Experience Yes No

If yes, have you witnessed or

7 experienced electoral Yes No

malpractice?

Section B: Respondents' Responses

(Please tick the option that best reflects your opinion.)

Scale:

Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Undecided (U) Disagree (D) Strongly

Disagree (SD)

S/N Research Question

SA A U D SD

1. Elections in Nigeria are often influenced by political elites
rather than the will of the people.

2. Vote buying during elections reduces the credibility of
democratic processes in Nigeria.

3. Electoral violence discourages citizens from participating in elections.
4. The judiciary plays a significant role in ensuring justice in post-election disputes.
5. INEC operates independently without external influence from political leaders.
6. Electoral malpractice undermines the legitimacy of elected governments in Nigeria.
7. Technological innovations such as BVAS have improved election transparency.
8. Weak institutions and corruption are major causes of electoral malpractice in Nigeria.
9. Citizens' votes in Nigeria are accurately reflected in final election results.
10. Electoral reforms have contributed to the consolidation of

democracy in Nigeria.

- 11. Civil society organizations play an effective role in monitoring elections and exposing irregularities.
- 12. Political interference in INEC activities affects free and fair elections.
- 13. Electoral malpractice increases voter apathy in subsequent elections.
- 14. The media promotes voter awareness and transparency during elections.
- 15. Judicial inconsistency in electoral cases weakens citizens' trust in democracy.
- 16. Political godfatherism is a major factor contributing to electoral malpractice.
- 17. Electoral reforms like the 2022 Electoral Act have reduced vote rigging and manipulation.

S/N Research Question

SA A U D SD

18. Electoral malpractice threatens Nigeria's long-term democratic stability.

19. The judiciary needs more independence to strengthen electoral justice.

20. Nigeria's democracy can only consolidate when elections are credible and transparent.

Thank you for your time and participation.