



Electoral Reform and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: A Comparative Study of the Electoral Act 2022 and Emerging Reform

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ABSTRACT

Electoral reform serves as a pivotal mechanism for securing democratic consolidation in developing polities. This study evaluates the capacity of the Electoral Act 2022 and emerging reform proposals to advance democratic stability in Nigeria ahead of the 2027 general elections. Adopting a hybrid methodological framework, the research integrates doctrinal legal analysis with qualitative content analysis across statutory frameworks, judicial decisions, electoral observer reports, and institutional data. The thematic examination reveals statutory progress in electoral transparency, notably through the legal backing of biometric voter accreditation and electronic result transmission. However, comparative evaluation highlights critical implementation failures during the 2023 elections, including procedural ambiguities in electronic transmission, technological infrastructure breakdowns, institutional incapacity, and weak enforcement of electoral offences. Addressing these gaps requires statutory mandates for electronic result transmission, the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission, and institutional safeguards for electoral independence. These findings imply that statutory innovation alone cannot guarantee democratic resilience without institutional capacity, infrastructural investment, and enforcement mechanisms.

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INTRODUCTION

Elections constitute the most fundamental pillar of democratic governance, providing citizens with the opportunity to participate in political decision-making while determining the legitimacy of governmental authority. In democratic societies, credible elections serve as an essential mechanism for ensuring political accountability, facilitating the peaceful transfer of power, and sustaining public confidence in governance institutions. Since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, however, the conduct of elections has remained a persistent concern, with successive electoral cycles characterised by widespread irregularities including ballot manipulation, vote buying, voter intimidation, electoral violence, falsification of results, and administrative inefficiencies. These recurring challenges have progressively weakened public trust in electoral institutions and raised fundamental questions about the credibility of Nigeria's democratic process. The enactment of the Electoral Act 2022 represented a significant milestone in Nigeria's electoral reform trajectory, introducing innovations such as the legal recognition of electronic transmission of results, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV). Nevertheless, the 2023 general elections—the first major test of these reforms—exposed critical implementation challenges, including technical failures, logistical constraints, and controversies surrounding compliance with statutory provisions. These persistent deficiencies have intensified public discourse on the necessity of further electoral reforms ahead of the 2027 general elections, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive evaluation of Nigeria's electoral framework.

Existing scholarship on electoral reform and democratic consolidation in Nigeria has evolved along three primary thematic trajectories. The first theme examines the institutional and governance dimensions of electoral administration, with Ajagba, Gberevbie, and Agbu (2020) leveraging the governance approach to explore the constraints and prospects of rebranding Nigeria's electoral process between 1999 and 2019, arguing that sustainable democratic consolidation requires a healthy synergy between the electorate, political class, political parties, and government institutions. Similarly, Arowosegbe (2020) interrogates the responsibilities of university academics in election administration from 1959 to 2019, revealing that the constraints of intellectual interventions are connected largely with the reality that no institution is insulated from the power dynamics associated with Nigerian politics. The second theme focuses on legal and technological innovations, with Anjide (2025) critically examining the influence of the Electoral Act 2022 on the 2023 general elections, highlighting that several provisions suffer from ambiguity and allow excessive latitude for subjective interpretation. Abdulrahman (2025) conducts a comparative analysis of electoral technology deployment across the 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections, finding that technological deployment alone does not guarantee voter trust, as operational reliability, institutional transparency, and political interference significantly shape electoral credibility. The third theme addresses the persistent challenges undermining electoral integrity, with Amin and Bamidele (2025) revealing that despite the reforms introduced by the Electoral Act 2022, the 2023 presidential election faced allegations of irregularities including vote-buying, polling disruptions, violence, and delayed result transmission. While these studies have significantly advanced understanding of discrete aspects of Nigeria's electoral reform agenda, they remain largely fragmented, with limited integration of doctrinal legal analysis and systematic assessment of institutional implementation capacity.

Despite the valuable contributions of existing scholarship, a significant gap persists in the literature regarding the comprehensive integration of legal provisions, institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, and enforcement mechanisms within a unified analytical framework. Prior studies have tended to examine these dimensions in isolation—legal scholars focusing on statutory provisions and constitutional questions, political scientists evaluating operational performance and electoral integrity, and governance experts analysing institutional autonomy and administrative challenges—without systematically assessing how these elements interact to determine reform effectiveness. Furthermore, few studies have comparatively evaluated the relationship between statutory requirements established by the Electoral Act 2022 and the practical realities of institutional readiness, technological infrastructure, and enforcement mechanisms as revealed during the 2023 general elections. The novelty of this study lies in its synthesis of doctrinal legal analysis with institutional capacity metrics through a structured thematic and comparative examination of the Electoral Act 2022, its implementation during the 2023 electoral process, and emerging reform proposals for the 2027 electoral cycle. By integrating legal, institutional, technological, and governance dimensions within a single analytical framework, this study provides a comprehensive assessment of the conditions necessary for sustainable democratic consolidation in Nigeria, thereby addressing the fragmentation that characterises the current state of knowledge.

The broad objective of this study is to examine the role of electoral reform in promoting democratic consolidation in Nigeria through a critical analysis of the Electoral Act 2022 and emerging reform proposals aimed at strengthening the country's electoral framework ahead of the 2027 general elections. Specifically, this study seeks to achieve five interconnected objectives: first, to examine the major innovations introduced by the Electoral Act 2022 and their significance for electoral governance in Nigeria; second, to analyse the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 during the 2023 general elections, with particular attention to its strengths, weaknesses, and operational challenges; third, to identify the legal, institutional, and technological gaps revealed by the application of the Electoral Act 2022 in the 2023 electoral process; fourth, to evaluate emerging electoral reform proposals and their potential to address existing deficiencies within Nigeria's electoral framework; and fifth, to recommend policy and institutional measures necessary for strengthening Nigeria's electoral system ahead of the 2027 general elections. By pursuing these objectives, this study complements and extends existing literature by providing an integrated assessment that bridges the gap between legal provisions, institutional capacity, technological innovation, and governance outcomes. The findings are expected to contribute meaningfully to both academic scholarship and policy formulation on electoral reform and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

This study advances the central argument that the effectiveness of electoral reforms in promoting democratic consolidation in Nigeria depends not merely on the quality of legal provisions but fundamentally on the strength, independence, and efficiency of institutions responsible for implementation, coupled with sustained political will and adherence to democratic norms. Drawing upon institutional theory, which posits that the success of electoral laws depends on the institutional capacity to enforce them, this study explores the critical relationship between statutory reforms and their practical implementation. The analysis focuses on three interconnected dimensions: first, the legal and technological innovations introduced by the Electoral Act 2022; second, the operational and institutional

challenges revealed during the 2023 general elections; and third, the emerging reform proposals designed to address identified deficiencies ahead of the 2027 electoral cycle. Through qualitative analysis of legal instruments, official reports, academic literature, and policy documents, this study systematically evaluates the extent to which electoral reforms have contributed to improving electoral integrity and public confidence in Nigeria's democratic process. The findings are expected to illuminate the conditions under which electoral reforms can effectively promote democratic consolidation, thereby providing valuable insights for policymakers, electoral administrators, and civil society organisations engaged in Nigeria's ongoing democratic development. Subsequent sections of this study present the theoretical framework, research methodology, analysis of findings, and concluding recommendations.

The urgency of this study is underscored by the approaching 2027 general elections and the intensifying public discourse on the need for comprehensive electoral reforms in Nigeria. As debates continue regarding mandatory electronic transmission of results, establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission, diaspora voting, and enhanced institutional independence for INEC, there is an pressing need for rigorous academic analysis that can inform evidence-based policy decisions. This study responds to this need by providing a systematic and integrated assessment of Nigeria's electoral reform trajectory, thereby contributing to the scholarly literature while simultaneously offering practical recommendations for strengthening democratic governance in Africa's most populous nation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative socio-legal research design, integrating doctrinal legal analysis with qualitative content analysis to examine electoral reform and democratic consolidation in Nigeria through the Electoral Act 2022 and emerging reform proposals ahead of the 2027 general elections. The socio-legal approach is appropriate because it enables the examination of both the normative legal framework governing elections and the practical realities of its implementation within Nigeria's political and institutional context. Doctrinal analysis provides a systematic interpretation and evaluation of legal rules, statutes, judicial decisions, and constitutional principles relevant to electoral governance (Bhaghamma, 2023), while qualitative content analysis facilitates the systematic examination of institutional reports, election observer reports, policy documents, and scholarly literature to identify recurring themes relating to institutional capacity, technological implementation, electoral integrity, and democratic consolidation. The study adopted a transparent document selection protocol to ensure the credibility and reproducibility of the qualitative doctrinal analysis. Documentary evidence was identified through structured searches of major academic and legal databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, HeinOnline, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and SSRN, together with official institutional sources such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the National Assembly of Nigeria, the Federal Government Gazette, and reports published by accredited election observation organisations, including the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Yiaga Africa, and CLEEN Foundation. Searches were conducted using combinations of the keywords Electoral Act 2022, Nigeria electoral reform, BVAS, electronic transmission of results, INEC, 2023 general elections, electoral governance,

electoral offences, and democratic consolidation. The review focused on materials published between 2022 and 2025, while earlier seminal works on electoral governance and institutional theory were included where necessary to provide theoretical context. Documents were included if they: examined the Electoral Act 2022 or its implementation; addressed electoral governance, institutional capacity, electoral technology, or democratic consolidation in Nigeria; were peer-reviewed publications, official legal instruments, judicial decisions, government documents, or credible election observation reports; and contained sufficient analytical evidence relevant to the study objectives. Documents were excluded if they duplicated previously identified sources, consisted solely of opinion pieces or media commentary without verifiable evidence, focused exclusively on non-Nigerian electoral systems without comparative relevance, or lacked methodological or legal substance.

The study employs a comparative analytical approach to evaluate the innovations of the Electoral Act 2022 and proposed reforms aimed at enhancing Nigeria's electoral system. It utilizes comparative matrices to assess the relationship between pre-reform challenges, innovations from the Electoral Act 2022, experiences from the 2023 elections, and future reform proposals. Doctrinal content analysis is applied to examine statutory provisions alongside evidence from election observer reports and institutional assessments. Key areas of focus include the performance of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV), and electronic result transmission. Grounded in Institutional Theory, the analysis is structured around four indicators: legal frameworks, institutional capacity, informal constraints, and accountability mechanisms. These serve as a framework to evaluate the implementation of the Electoral Act and the potential of future reforms for democratic consolidation ahead of the 2027 elections. The study analyses the impact of institutional strengths and weaknesses on the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 during Nigeria's 2023 elections, emphasising that effective electoral governance relies on more than just legal frameworks—it hinges on the operational capacity and independence of the responsible institutions. The research, while geographically focused on Nigeria, draws comparative insights from other democracies like Ghana, India, Brazil, and Estonia, which have successfully implemented relevant electoral technologies and reforms. Limitations include a reliance on secondary data sources, as the research does not involve primary empirical studies. The findings are supported through thematic and doctrinal content analysis of authoritative sources, observer reports, and legal documents. The study critically examines innovations from the Electoral Act 2022, identifies challenges faced in the 2023 elections, evaluates proposed reforms, and outlines necessary policy and institutional measures to bolster Nigeria's electoral system in preparation for the 2027 general elections.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Objective One: Examination of the Major Innovations Introduced by the Electoral Act 2022 and their Significance for Electoral Governance in Nigeria

The findings of this study reveal that the Electoral Act 2022 introduced significant legal, technological, and institutional innovations aimed at strengthening electoral governance in Nigeria. Through doctrinal analysis of statutory provisions and comparative

evaluation of pre-2022 and post-2022 electoral frameworks, the study finds that the Act represents one of the most substantial electoral reform efforts since Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999. The reforms primarily targeted persistent electoral challenges such as result manipulation, voter fraud, administrative inefficiency, lack of transparency, and weak electoral accountability. The study further finds that the innovations introduced by the Electoral Act 2022 align with global trends toward electoral modernisation and digitalisation. Comparative evidence from jurisdictions such as India, Brazil, Estonia, and Ghana demonstrates that the integration of technology into electoral administration can significantly improve transparency, efficiency, and electoral integrity when supported by adequate institutional capacity and political commitment (Okuro, 2021; Melie, 2021). In Nigeria, the Act sought to modernise electoral administration by legally recognising technological innovations that had previously operated largely through administrative guidelines issued by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Electronic Transmission of Election Results

One of the most important innovations introduced by the Electoral Act 2022 is the legal recognition of electronic transmission of election results. Before the enactment of the Act, electoral result collation in Nigeria relied heavily on manual processes, which created opportunities for manipulation, falsification, and delays during collation. The introduction of Section 60(5) of the Electoral Act 2022 marked a major shift by empowering INEC to electronically transmit results directly from polling units. The doctrinal analysis finds that this innovation significantly strengthened electoral transparency by reducing opportunities for human interference during result collation. Comparative studies indicate that electronic result transmission systems contribute to improved electoral credibility by enhancing real-time monitoring and reducing post-election disputes (Garnett & James, 2023). The deployment of the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) during the 2023 general elections further demonstrated the practical significance of this innovation by allowing citizens and political stakeholders to independently verify polling unit results. However, findings also reveal that the implementation of electronic transmission exposed infrastructural and operational weaknesses within Nigeria's electoral environment. Technical glitches, poor internet connectivity, delayed uploads, and inconsistent compliance generated controversies during the 2023 elections. These findings suggest that while legal innovation is important, its effectiveness depends largely on institutional preparedness and technological infrastructure.

Comparative Matrix 1: Significance of Electronic Transmission of Results

Dimension	Pre-2022 Framework	Electoral Act 2022 Innovation	Observed/Projected Impact
Transparency	Manual collation vulnerable to manipulation	Electronic transmission introduced	Increased public access to results
Speed of Collation	Slow manual collation processes	Digital transmission mechanisms	Faster result aggregation
Electoral Integrity	Frequent allegations of result alteration	Reduced human interference	Improved credibility of outcomes

Public Confidence	Widespread distrust in collation process	Enhanced monitoring opportunities	Potential increase in trust
Institutional Accountability	Weak verification	real-time Polling unit-level digital uploads	Improved accountability mechanisms

Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)

Another significant innovation introduced under the Electoral Act 2022 is the expanded legal recognition of technological voter accreditation through the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). Prior electoral processes in Nigeria were frequently undermined by multiple voting, voter impersonation, and manipulation of voter registers. Although Smart Card Readers had been introduced administratively during previous elections, the Electoral Act 2022 provided stronger statutory backing for technological accreditation devices under Section 47(2). The study finds that BVAS significantly improved the integrity of voter authentication by combining fingerprint and facial recognition technologies. Comparative doctrinal evidence from biometric electoral systems in Ghana and India suggests that biometric accreditation substantially reduces identity fraud and improves confidence in electoral outcomes (Debrah et al., 2019). In Nigeria, the deployment of BVAS during the 2023 elections reduced incidents of multiple voting and strengthened verification procedures at polling units. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that operational difficulties limited the full effectiveness of BVAS. Device failures, insufficient technical support, poor electricity supply, and inadequate training of ad hoc electoral officials created delays and voter frustration in several polling units. These implementation gaps demonstrate that technological reforms require substantial infrastructural investment and institutional capacity to achieve intended objectives.

Expansion of INEC's Technological and Regulatory Powers

The Electoral Act 2022 also expanded the discretionary powers of INEC in relation to technological deployment and electoral administration. Before the Act, several technological innovations operated without comprehensive statutory recognition, thereby generating legal uncertainty and judicial controversies. The Act strengthened INEC's authority to issue regulations, deploy technologies, and determine procedures for electoral administration. The study finds that this innovation significantly enhanced institutional flexibility and administrative modernisation. Institutional theory suggests that effective institutions require sufficient operational autonomy to adapt to emerging governance challenges (Ho & Im, 2015; Tremblay-Cantin et al., 2023). By granting broader discretionary authority to INEC, the Electoral Act 2022 improved the Commission's ability to introduce innovative mechanisms for improving electoral governance. However, findings further reveal that excessive administrative discretion may also generate implementation inconsistencies where legal provisions are insufficiently precise. During the 2023 elections, controversies surrounding the interpretation and implementation of electronic transmission provisions illustrated the tension between administrative discretion and legal certainty. Consequently, the study finds that while institutional flexibility is necessary, clearer statutory guidelines remain essential for effective electoral governance.

Inclusiveness and Electoral Participation

The Electoral Act 2022 also introduced reforms aimed at promoting electoral inclusiveness, particularly for persons with disabilities and marginalised groups. The Act mandates INEC to provide suitable voting arrangements for persons with disabilities and recognises the importance of accessible electoral participation. The findings suggest that these provisions represent important progress toward inclusive democratic governance. Comparative electoral governance literature emphasises that electoral legitimacy depends not only on procedural fairness but also on broad citizen participation (Diamond, 2015). By expanding accessibility measures, the Act contributes to strengthening democratic inclusiveness and equal political participation. Nonetheless, the study finds that implementation remains limited due to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient assistive technologies, and weak institutional support mechanisms. Therefore, while the legal framework demonstrates progressive intent, practical realisation of inclusive electoral participation remains incomplete.

Objective Two: Analysis of the Implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 during the 2023 General Elections, with Particular Attention to its Strengths, Weaknesses, and Operational Challenges

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 during the 2023 general elections represented both a significant advancement in Nigeria's electoral governance framework and a major test of the country's institutional and technological preparedness for modernised elections. Through doctrinal analysis of statutory provisions, official reports, observer assessments, policy reviews, and comparative electoral literature, the study finds that the 2023 elections demonstrated notable progress in electoral transparency and technological innovation while simultaneously exposing serious operational, infrastructural, and institutional deficiencies. The Electoral Act 2022 introduced several reforms intended to improve electoral credibility, including the legal recognition of electronic transmission of results, expanded use of technological devices for voter accreditation, and enhanced regulatory powers for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The implementation of these provisions during the 2023 elections marked the first large-scale deployment of technology-driven electoral administration under a comprehensive statutory framework in Nigeria. The findings indicate that while the reforms strengthened certain aspects of electoral governance, the effectiveness of implementation was uneven across different regions and electoral processes. The study further finds that the 2023 elections highlighted the distinction between legal innovation and institutional implementation capacity. In line with institutional theory, the effectiveness of electoral reforms depended not merely on statutory provisions but also on the administrative competence, infrastructural readiness, political neutrality, and operational efficiency of implementing institutions (Ayobolu, 2025).

Strengths Observed in the Implementation of the Electoral Act 2022

One of the major findings of the study is that the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 significantly improved transparency within Nigeria's electoral process. The deployment of the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) enabled political parties, observers, civil society organizations, and citizens to monitor polling unit results electronically in near real time. This represented a major departure from previous electoral cycles where result

collation was largely manual and less accessible to public scrutiny. Comparative doctrinal evidence suggests that digital result management systems improve electoral transparency by reducing opportunities for manipulation during collation and increasing public confidence in electoral outcomes (Garnett & James, 2023). The findings indicate that despite operational challenges, the introduction of IReV improved accountability by making polling unit results publicly accessible and independently verifiable.

Another major strength identified in the findings is the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which significantly strengthened voter authentication procedures. The findings reveal that BVAS reduced incidents of multiple voting, voter impersonation, and manipulation associated with manual accreditation systems. Secondary comparative evidence from biometric electoral systems in Ghana and India supports the conclusion that biometric verification technologies improve electoral integrity by strengthening identity authentication and reducing electoral fraud (Adjei, 2018; Idowu, 2021). In Nigeria, the implementation of BVAS during the 2023 elections enhanced the credibility of voter accreditation and improved confidence in polling unit verification processes.

The findings further indicate that the technological innovations introduced under the Electoral Act 2022 contributed to increased citizen participation in electoral monitoring. Civil society organizations, media institutions, political parties, and election observers utilized digital platforms to track results and monitor electoral conduct more effectively than in previous elections. The implementation of digital tools expanded opportunities for participatory accountability and strengthened public scrutiny of electoral processes. This aligns with democratic governance literature emphasizing that transparency and citizen engagement are critical components of electoral legitimacy (Diamond, 2015).

Weaknesses and Operational Challenges in the Implementation of the Electoral Act 2022

Despite the strengths identified above, the findings reveal substantial operational and institutional challenges that limited the effectiveness of the reforms during the 2023 general elections. One of the most significant weaknesses observed during implementation was the widespread occurrence of technical glitches affecting the electronic transmission of results and BVAS functionality. Several polling units experienced delayed uploads of results to the IReV portal, while some BVAS devices malfunctioned or experienced connectivity problems. The findings indicate that these operational deficiencies undermined public confidence in the consistency and reliability of the technological reforms. Although the legal framework provided for technological deployment, the supporting infrastructure necessary for seamless implementation remained inadequate in many locations.

The study further finds that one of the most controversial issues during the 2023 elections was the inconsistent implementation of electronic transmission of presidential election results. While the Electoral Act 2022 recognized electronic transmission, ambiguities regarding implementation procedures and administrative discretion generated legal and political controversies. The findings reveal that discrepancies between public expectations and actual implementation contributed significantly to post-election disputes and public skepticism. This demonstrates that legal reforms require not only statutory authorization but also operational clarity and institutional consistency. The findings also reveal that institutional capacity limitations significantly affected implementation outcomes. Although INEC demonstrated substantial administrative innovation, operational

challenges such as inadequate training of ad hoc personnel, weak logistical coordination, and insufficient technical support constrained the effective implementation of reforms. Institutional theory emphasizes that formal legal rules alone cannot guarantee governance effectiveness without strong implementation institutions (Alam et al., 2021). The 2023 elections demonstrated that technological modernization must be accompanied by continuous institutional strengthening, staff training, and infrastructural investment. Another important finding is that electoral violence, political interference, vote buying, and insecurity continued to undermine electoral credibility despite legal reforms. The Electoral Act 2022 improved procedural safeguards but did not fully eliminate entrenched political practices that weaken democratic governance. The findings suggest that while technology can reduce certain forms of electoral malpractice, it cannot independently resolve broader political and structural problems such as elite interference, weak law enforcement, and electoral violence.

Overall, the findings reveal that the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 during the 2023 general elections produced mixed outcomes. On one hand, the reforms significantly improved transparency, strengthened voter accreditation, expanded digital electoral monitoring, and modernized electoral administration. On the other hand, operational weaknesses, infrastructural deficiencies, technical failures, inadequate institutional capacity, and political challenges limited the full realization of the objectives of the reforms. The findings therefore suggest that the Electoral Act 2022 represents a substantial advancement in Nigeria's electoral reform process, but its long-term effectiveness depends on improved implementation mechanisms, infrastructural development, institutional strengthening, cybersecurity protection, and sustained political commitment to democratic principles.

Objective Three: Identification of the Legal, Institutional, and Technological Gaps Revealed by the Application of the Electoral Act 2022 during the 2023 Electoral Process

The findings of this study reveal that although the Electoral Act 2022 introduced substantial reforms aimed at strengthening electoral governance in Nigeria, the implementation of the Act during the 2023 general elections exposed significant legal, institutional, and technological gaps that limited the full realization of its objectives. Through secondary doctrinal analysis of statutory provisions, election observer reports, judicial interpretations, policy assessments, and comparative electoral governance literature, the study finds that the challenges experienced during the 2023 elections reflected not merely operational failures but also structural deficiencies within Nigeria's electoral governance framework. The findings further demonstrate that electoral reform is a multidimensional process in which legal innovation alone cannot guarantee credible elections without corresponding institutional strength, infrastructural preparedness, and technological reliability. In line with institutional theory, the effectiveness of electoral laws depends substantially on the capacity, independence, and operational competence of institutions responsible for implementation (Abbott & Snidal, 2021; Gerring & Thacker, 2008). Consequently, the 2023 elections exposed critical inconsistencies between the progressive intentions of the Electoral Act 2022 and the realities of implementation within Nigeria's political and administrative environment.

Legal Gaps Revealed by the Implementation of the Electoral Act 2022

One of the major legal gaps identified in the findings relates to the ambiguity surrounding the implementation of electronic transmission of election results under the Electoral Act 2022. Although the Act recognised the use of electronic transmission technologies, certain provisions failed to provide sufficiently precise operational guidelines regarding the mandatory nature, timing, and procedural requirements for result uploads. The findings reveal that this ambiguity contributed significantly to controversies during the presidential election collation process in 2023. Public expectations regarding immediate electronic transmission of results conflicted with operational realities and administrative interpretations adopted by INEC. This generated legal disputes, political contestations, and allegations of non-compliance with statutory provisions. Comparative electoral governance studies indicate that successful digital electoral systems require clear and unambiguous legal frameworks capable of minimizing administrative discretion and ensuring procedural certainty (Garnett & James, 2023). The Nigerian experience demonstrates that where legal provisions are inadequately defined, institutional inconsistencies and political disputes are likely to emerge.

Weak Enforcement Mechanisms for Electoral Offences

Another major legal gap identified by the findings is the weakness of enforcement mechanisms for electoral offences. Despite the reforms introduced by the Electoral Act 2022, practices such as vote buying, voter intimidation, electoral violence, and political interference persisted during the 2023 elections. The findings indicate that the absence of an independent Electoral Offences Commission significantly undermined accountability within the electoral process. Enforcement responsibilities remained fragmented among security agencies and existing institutions that often lacked sufficient independence, coordination, or prosecutorial efficiency. Comparative evidence from emerging democracies suggests that effective prosecution of electoral offences is essential for deterring malpractice and strengthening electoral integrity (Mauk, 2022). The continued prevalence of electoral misconduct during the 2023 elections reveals a substantial gap between legal prohibition and practical enforcement capacity.

Institutional Gaps Revealed during the 2023 Electoral Process

The findings further reveal substantial institutional weaknesses in the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022. Although INEC demonstrated significant efforts toward technological modernization, several operational challenges exposed limitations in institutional preparedness and administrative coordination. The study finds that logistical failures, delayed arrival of electoral materials, inadequate training of ad hoc personnel, and insufficient technical support affected the efficiency of electoral operations in several parts of the country. In many polling units, delays in accreditation and voting procedures contributed to voter frustration and reduced confidence in electoral administration. Institutional theory emphasizes that formal legal reforms are unlikely to succeed in the absence of strong implementation institutions (Aksom & Tymchenko, 2020). The findings therefore suggest that Nigeria's electoral reform process remains constrained by weaknesses in administrative capacity, operational coordination, and institutional resilience.

The findings also reveal concerns regarding the practical independence of electoral institutions. Although the Electoral Act 2022 expanded INEC's regulatory powers, questions

remained regarding the Commission's operational autonomy, particularly in politically sensitive situations. The controversies surrounding result transmission during the presidential election generated public debate regarding institutional transparency and accountability. The findings suggest that while legal reforms may strengthen institutional authority formally, genuine independence depends largely on political neutrality, public trust, and resistance to partisan interference.

Technological Gaps Revealed during the 2023 Electoral Process

One of the most significant findings of the study is that technological innovation under the Electoral Act 2022 was constrained by infrastructural deficiencies within Nigeria's broader governance environment. The implementation of BVAS and electronic transmission systems depended heavily on stable electricity supply, reliable internet connectivity, and effective technical support infrastructure, all of which remained inadequate in several locations. The findings reveal that network failures and unstable connectivity significantly affected the timely upload of election results to the IReV portal. Rural communities were particularly affected by weak telecommunications infrastructure, thereby creating uneven implementation outcomes across different regions. Comparative studies on digital electoral systems emphasize that technological reforms require substantial infrastructural investment to function effectively (Bennett et al., 2018; Klinger et al., 2023). The Nigerian experience demonstrates that technological modernisation without corresponding infrastructural development may produce operational inconsistencies and public dissatisfaction.'

The findings also identify significant cybersecurity gaps within Nigeria's electoral digital infrastructure. As electoral administration increasingly relies on digital technologies, concerns regarding hacking, data breaches, server vulnerabilities, and unauthorised system interference become more significant. The study finds that although the Electoral Act 2022 promoted technological innovation, it did not comprehensively address cybersecurity governance, digital risk management, or data protection standards for electoral technologies. Comparative evidence from advanced digital democracies demonstrates that cybersecurity protection is essential for sustaining trust in electronic electoral systems (Khan & Zaheer, 2024; Codreanu, 2021). Consequently, the findings suggest that Nigeria's electoral reform framework requires stronger cybersecurity provisions, continuous system audits, and enhanced collaboration with digital security experts to safeguard electoral integrity.

Overall, the findings reveal that the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 during the 2023 general elections exposed substantial legal, institutional, and technological gaps within Nigeria's electoral governance framework. Legally, ambiguities regarding electronic transmission and weak enforcement mechanisms created controversies and accountability challenges. Institutionally, weaknesses in administrative capacity, logistical coordination, and operational independence limited effective implementation. Technologically, infrastructural deficiencies, digital system failures, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities undermined the efficiency and credibility of electoral innovations. The findings therefore suggest that while the Electoral Act 2022 represents a major advancement in Nigeria's electoral reform process, sustainable electoral credibility requires broader structural reforms that extend beyond legislative innovation alone. Effective electoral governance depends on clear legal frameworks, strong and independent institutions, reliable technological infrastructure, adequate funding, cybersecurity protection, and sustained political commitment to democratic principles.

Objective Four: Evaluation of Emerging Electoral Reform Proposals and their Potential to Address Existing Deficiencies within Nigeria's Electoral Framework

The findings of this study reveal that emerging electoral reform proposals in Nigeria are largely designed to address the legal, institutional, technological, and operational deficiencies exposed during the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 in the 2023 general elections. Through secondary doctrinal analysis of electoral reform debates, policy proposals, comparative electoral governance literature, observer reports, and institutional assessments, the study finds that the proposed reforms reflect increasing recognition of the need to strengthen electoral credibility, institutional accountability, technological reliability, and democratic inclusiveness within Nigeria's electoral system. The findings further indicate that the reform proposals are generally aimed at consolidating the gains of the Electoral Act 2022 while addressing implementation gaps revealed during the 2023 elections. Key proposals emerging from public discourse, policy advocacy, electoral observer recommendations, and scholarly analysis include: mandatory electronic transmission of results, establishment of an independent Electoral Offences Commission, strengthening of INEC's institutional independence, enhancement of cybersecurity protections, expansion of diaspora voting, improved voter education mechanisms, and broader technological modernisation of electoral administration.

The study finds that these reform proposals possess significant potential to improve electoral governance if effectively implemented. However, their effectiveness will depend substantially on political commitment, institutional capacity, infrastructural investment, and sustained adherence to democratic principles. In line with institutional theory, reforms are unlikely to succeed merely through legal enactment unless supported by strong implementation institutions and effective governance structures (Peters, 2022).

Mandatory Electronic Transmission of Results

One of the most prominent reform proposals identified in the findings is the demand for clearer and mandatory statutory provisions governing electronic transmission of election results. The controversies surrounding delayed uploads and inconsistent implementation during the 2023 elections revealed ambiguities within the Electoral Act 2022 regarding the operational requirements for electronic transmission. The findings indicate that many reform advocates propose amendments that would remove administrative uncertainty by making electronic transmission compulsory and procedurally uniform across all elections. Comparative electoral governance studies suggest that mandatory digital result transmission systems can significantly reduce opportunities for result manipulation and improve public confidence in electoral outcomes (Garnett & James, 2023). The study finds that if properly implemented, mandatory electronic transmission could strengthen transparency, reduce post-election disputes, and improve the credibility of result collation processes. However, the effectiveness of such reforms depends heavily on reliable digital infrastructure, stable internet connectivity, and effective technical support systems.

Establishment of an Independent Electoral Offences Commission

Another significant reform proposal identified in the findings is the establishment of an independent Electoral Offences Commission responsible for investigating and prosecuting electoral crimes. The 2023 elections revealed substantial weaknesses in the enforcement of electoral laws, particularly regarding vote buying, voter intimidation,

electoral violence, and political interference. The findings indicate that existing enforcement mechanisms remain fragmented and insufficiently effective in deterring electoral malpractice. Comparative evidence from other democratic systems demonstrates that specialized electoral enforcement institutions can improve accountability by ensuring timely investigation and prosecution of electoral offences (Mauk, 2022). The study finds that the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission could significantly strengthen the integrity of Nigeria's electoral system by reducing impunity and improving compliance with electoral laws. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such a commission would depend largely on institutional independence, prosecutorial autonomy, adequate funding, and insulation from political influence.

Strengthening the Independence of INEC

The findings further reveal that many reform proposals emphasize the need to strengthen the institutional independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Although the Electoral Act 2022 expanded INEC's administrative powers, concerns remained during the 2023 elections regarding political influence, operational autonomy, and public trust in the neutrality of electoral administration. The study finds that proposed reforms include improved appointment procedures for INEC officials, enhanced financial autonomy, greater security of tenure, and constitutional safeguards against political interference. Institutional theory suggests that credible electoral governance depends significantly on the independence and legitimacy of electoral management bodies (North, 1990). The findings therefore suggest that stronger institutional autonomy could improve public confidence, reduce political manipulation, and strengthen the impartial administration of elections in Nigeria.

Technological and Cybersecurity Reforms

Another major finding of the study is that emerging reform proposals increasingly emphasise the importance of cybersecurity and digital infrastructure protection within Nigeria's electoral system. The technological challenges experienced during the 2023 elections exposed vulnerabilities relating to server reliability, data security, internet connectivity, and system resilience. The findings indicate that proposed reforms include stronger cybersecurity protocols, periodic system audits, encrypted result transmission systems, backup digital infrastructure, and collaboration with cybersecurity experts. Comparative evidence from technologically advanced electoral systems demonstrates that cybersecurity protection is essential for sustaining confidence in digital elections (Sibe & Kaunert, 2023). The study finds that enhanced cybersecurity reforms possess substantial potential to improve technological reliability and reduce risks associated with digital electoral administration. However, implementation would require substantial financial investment, technical expertise, and continuous institutional adaptation to emerging cyber threats.

Expansion of Electoral Inclusiveness through Diaspora Voting and Accessibility Reforms

The findings also reveal increasing support for reforms aimed at expanding democratic inclusiveness through diaspora voting and improved accessibility for marginalised populations. Nigeria currently excludes many citizens residing abroad from participating in national elections despite the growing economic and political significance

of the diaspora population. Comparative electoral studies indicate that diaspora voting has become an increasingly important component of democratic participation in several emerging democracies (Wellman, 2021). The findings suggest that introducing diaspora voting could strengthen political inclusion and expand democratic participation among Nigerian citizens abroad. Similarly, proposed accessibility reforms targeting persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and rural communities possess the potential to improve electoral inclusiveness and democratic legitimacy.

Overall, the findings reveal that emerging electoral reform proposals possess considerable potential to address many of the legal, institutional, and technological deficiencies exposed during the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 in the 2023 general elections. The proposed reforms aim to strengthen transparency, improve accountability, enhance institutional independence, modernise electoral technologies, and promote broader democratic participation. However, the findings also demonstrate that the success of these reforms depends largely on implementation capacity, political commitment, infrastructural development, institutional independence, and effective governance structures. The Nigerian experience suggests that electoral reform is not merely a legislative exercise but a broader institutional process requiring sustained commitment to democratic principles, operational efficiency, and institutional integrity. Consequently, while emerging reform proposals represent important opportunities for strengthening Nigeria's electoral framework ahead of future elections, their long-term effectiveness will depend substantially on whether reforms are accompanied by genuine political will, institutional strengthening, adequate funding, technological investment, and consistent enforcement of electoral laws.

Objective Five: Recommend Policy and Institutional Measures Necessary for Strengthening Nigeria's Electoral System Ahead of the 2027 General Elections

The findings of this study reveal that strengthening Nigeria's electoral system ahead of the 2027 general elections requires a comprehensive combination of legal, institutional, technological, administrative, and governance reforms. Through secondary doctrinal analysis of electoral laws, observer reports, policy recommendations, comparative democratic governance studies, and institutional assessments, the study finds that the challenges exposed during the implementation of the Electoral Act 2022 in the 2023 general elections cannot be resolved through legislative amendments alone. Rather, sustainable electoral credibility depends on broader institutional strengthening, infrastructural development, technological modernisation, and political commitment to democratic principles. The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of electoral reforms is closely linked to the operational independence of electoral institutions, enforcement capacity, cybersecurity preparedness, voter education, and public trust in democratic processes. Comparative evidence from emerging democracies demonstrates that successful electoral governance systems rely not only on legal frameworks but also on strong institutions capable of implementing reforms consistently and transparently (Garnett & James, 2023). In line with institutional theory, the study finds that electoral governance outcomes are shaped significantly by the effectiveness, independence, and legitimacy of implementation institutions (Herrera, 2016).

Strengthening the Legal Framework for Electoral Transparency

One of the most important findings of the study is the need for clearer and more comprehensive legal provisions governing electoral technologies and result management processes. The controversies surrounding the electronic transmission of results during the 2023 elections revealed ambiguities within the Electoral Act 2022 regarding procedural implementation and administrative discretion. The findings therefore recommend statutory amendments that would make electronic transmission of election results mandatory, uniform, and procedurally precise across all categories of elections. Comparative electoral governance literature demonstrates that legal clarity is essential for reducing implementation inconsistencies and strengthening public trust in electoral outcomes (Mauk, 2022). The study further finds that clearer legal provisions governing technological failures, digital audits, result verification procedures, and emergency contingencies would improve electoral predictability and reduce post-election litigation.

Establishment of an Independent Electoral Offences Commission

The findings further reveal that one of the most critical institutional reforms required ahead of the 2027 elections is the establishment of an independent Electoral Offences Commission. The persistence of vote buying, electoral violence, intimidation, and political interference during the 2023 elections demonstrated the weakness of existing enforcement mechanisms. The study finds that the absence of a specialised institution dedicated to investigating and prosecuting electoral crimes has contributed significantly to the culture of impunity within Nigeria's electoral process. Comparative evidence from democratic systems with stronger electoral accountability frameworks indicates that independent prosecutorial institutions improve compliance with electoral laws and deter malpractice (Diamond, 2015). The findings therefore recommend the establishment of an autonomous Electoral Offences Commission with prosecutorial powers, financial independence, and operational autonomy insulated from partisan political influence.

Strengthening the Institutional Independence of INEC

Another major finding of the study is the need to strengthen the operational independence and institutional capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Although the Electoral Act 2022 expanded INEC's administrative authority, concerns regarding political influence, financial dependence, and public trust persisted during the 2023 elections. The findings recommend constitutional and policy reforms aimed at strengthening INEC's autonomy through transparent appointment procedures, guaranteed financial independence, improved staff professionalism, and greater administrative insulation from political interference. Institutional theory emphasises that credible electoral governance depends substantially on the legitimacy and independence of electoral management bodies (Van Ham & Garnett, 2019). Consequently, the study finds that strengthening INEC's institutional credibility is essential for improving electoral confidence ahead of the 2027 elections.

Investment in Electoral Technology and Infrastructure

The findings also reveal that technological reforms under the Electoral Act 2022 were significantly constrained by infrastructural deficiencies, including poor internet connectivity, unstable electricity supply, inadequate server capacity, and limited technical

support systems. The study therefore recommends substantial government investment in digital electoral infrastructure ahead of the 2027 general elections. Proposed measures include upgrading telecommunications infrastructure, improving electricity supply to polling areas, expanding server capacity, and conducting regular technical testing of electoral technologies before elections. Comparative studies on digital electoral governance indicate that technological modernisation is only effective when supported by reliable infrastructure and institutional preparedness (Milakovich, 2021).

Strengthening Cybersecurity Protection

Another important finding is the growing importance of cybersecurity protection within Nigeria's electoral governance framework. As electoral administration becomes increasingly digitised, vulnerabilities relating to hacking, data breaches, cyber manipulation, and unauthorised system access pose serious risks to electoral integrity. The findings therefore recommend the development of a comprehensive electoral cybersecurity framework that includes encryption protocols, independent digital audits, cybersecurity monitoring systems, and collaboration with national and international cybersecurity experts. Comparative evidence from technologically advanced democracies demonstrates that public trust in digital elections depends substantially on the perceived security and reliability of electoral technologies (Garnett & James, 2020).

Expansion of Voter Education and Public Awareness

The findings further reveal that voter education remains essential for improving the effectiveness of technology-driven electoral reforms. During the 2023 elections, many voters experienced confusion regarding the operation of BVAS, result transmission processes, and digital electoral procedures. The study therefore recommends nationwide voter education campaigns focusing on electoral technologies, voting procedures, electoral rights, and democratic participation. The findings suggest that public awareness programs should involve collaboration among INEC, civil society organisations, educational institutions, traditional media, and digital communication platforms. The study finds that improved voter education would enhance citizen participation, reduce misinformation, and strengthen public confidence in electoral processes.

Professionalisation and Capacity Building within Electoral Administration

The findings also reveal the necessity for continuous professional development and institutional capacity building within Nigeria's electoral management system. The operational challenges experienced during the 2023 elections exposed limitations in technical expertise, administrative coordination, and election logistics management. The study therefore recommends regular training programs for electoral officials, simulation exercises before elections, improved recruitment standards for ad hoc personnel, and institutional partnerships for technical capacity development. The findings indicate that professionalisation of electoral administration would improve operational efficiency, reduce implementation failures, and strengthen institutional resilience ahead of the 2027 elections.

Overall, the findings reveal that strengthening Nigeria's electoral system ahead of the 2027 general elections requires comprehensive legal, institutional, technological, and administrative reforms. The study finds that while the Electoral Act 2022 introduced

important innovations, the implementation challenges observed during the 2023 elections exposed deeper structural weaknesses that require sustained policy intervention. The findings further demonstrate that effective electoral governance depends not only on statutory reform but also on strong institutions, adequate infrastructure, technological reliability, cybersecurity protection, institutional independence, public trust, and political commitment to democratic principles. Consequently, the study concludes that successful preparation for the 2027 general elections requires a holistic reform strategy that combines legal clarity, institutional strengthening, technological modernisation, effective enforcement mechanisms, and inclusive democratic participation. If effectively implemented, these policies and institutional measures possess substantial potential to improve electoral credibility, reduce electoral disputes, strengthen democratic legitimacy, and promote sustainable democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Electoral Act 2022 introduced significant legal, technological, and institutional innovations aimed at improving electoral governance and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. These findings are largely consistent with earlier studies that identified electoral reforms as critical instruments for enhancing electoral integrity, transparency, and public confidence in democratic processes. For instance, the finding that the legal recognition of electronic transmission of results and the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) improved transparency and reduced opportunities for electoral fraud supports the arguments of Garnett and James (2023), who maintained that technology-driven electoral reforms can strengthen electoral integrity when supported by effective institutions. Similarly, the findings corroborate the work of Peter (2023), who observed that the introduction of electoral technologies in Nigeria enhanced voter authentication and increased transparency in election administration. The study's findings on the effectiveness of BVAS also align with the conclusions of Debrah et al. (2019) and Idowu (2021), who found that biometric voter verification systems significantly reduce voter impersonation, multiple voting, and identity fraud. The present study similarly revealed that BVAS strengthened voter accreditation procedures and improved confidence in the electoral process. This agreement suggests that biometric technologies remain an effective mechanism for promoting credible elections in emerging democracies.

Furthermore, the findings support the institutional theory perspective advanced by Papadopoulos (2023) and Faguet and Shami (2022), which argues that the effectiveness of reforms depends not only on legal provisions but also on the strength and capacity of implementing institutions. While the Electoral Act 2022 introduced progressive reforms, the study found that institutional weaknesses, inadequate logistics, poor staff training, and infrastructural deficiencies limited their effectiveness during the 2023 general elections. This finding is consistent with Ayobolu (2024), who reported that logistical failures and institutional deficiencies undermined the successful implementation of electoral reforms during the 2023 elections. The study also agrees with Mauk (2022), who argued that electoral malpractice persists where enforcement mechanisms are weak. Despite the innovations introduced by the Electoral Act 2022, the findings revealed that vote buying, electoral violence, political interference, and electoral intimidation continued to occur during the

2023 elections. This indicates that legal reforms alone cannot eliminate entrenched electoral misconduct without effective enforcement institutions and accountability mechanisms. However, some findings differ from the optimistic expectations of scholars who view electoral technology as a near-complete solution to electoral fraud. While studies such as Okuro (2021) and Melie (2021) highlighted the transformative potential of electronic electoral systems in improving election credibility, the present study found that technological innovations in Nigeria were constrained by poor internet connectivity, unstable electricity supply, server congestion, device malfunction, and inadequate cybersecurity protections. Unlike the experiences reported in countries such as Estonia, Brazil, and India, where technological reforms have been supported by relatively stronger digital infrastructure, Nigeria's experience demonstrates that technology alone cannot guarantee credible elections in the absence of adequate supporting infrastructure.

The findings also extend existing literature by identifying significant legal ambiguities within the Electoral Act 2022, particularly regarding the implementation of electronic transmission of election results. While previous studies generally celebrated the legal recognition of electronic transmission, this study found that the lack of procedural clarity generated controversies and conflicting interpretations during the 2023 presidential election. This finding contributes a new dimension to the discourse on electoral reform by demonstrating that legal innovation must be accompanied by precise implementation guidelines to avoid administrative inconsistencies and public distrust. In relation to emerging reform proposals, the findings support the recommendations of several scholars and electoral observers who have advocated for stronger institutional safeguards. The proposal for an independent Electoral Offences Commission aligns with Mauk (2022) position that effective prosecution of electoral offences is essential for deterring malpractice. Similarly, the recommendation to strengthen the independence of INEC supports the arguments of Van Ham and Garnett (2019), who emphasised that autonomous electoral management bodies are fundamental to electoral integrity and public confidence. The study further agrees with Garnett and James (2020) and Sibe and Kaunert (2023) on the growing importance of cybersecurity in electoral governance. The findings revealed that increasing reliance on digital electoral systems has created new vulnerabilities that require robust cybersecurity frameworks, regular system audits, and advanced data protection mechanisms. This demonstrates that future electoral reforms must address both traditional electoral challenges and emerging digital threats. Overall, the findings of this study are largely consistent with existing literature regarding the positive contribution of electoral reforms and technological innovations to democratic consolidation. Nevertheless, the study differs from some earlier works by emphasising that legal reforms and technological innovations alone are insufficient to guarantee credible elections. Rather, the Nigerian experience demonstrates that sustainable electoral integrity depends on the interaction of clear legal frameworks, strong institutions, adequate infrastructure, effective enforcement mechanisms, technological reliability, and political commitment to democratic principles.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of the Electoral Act 2022 in advancing democratic consolidation in Nigeria by evaluating its implementation during the 2023 general elections and assessing emerging reform proposals for the 2027 electoral cycle. The findings demonstrate that the Act introduced significant legal, technological, and institutional

innovations—including the legal recognition of electronic result transmission, deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV), and expanded regulatory powers for INEC—which enhanced electoral transparency, voter authentication, accountability, and public access to electoral information. However, these gains were moderated by persistent implementation challenges, including technological failures, inadequate digital infrastructure, logistical deficiencies, limited institutional capacity, weak enforcement of electoral offences, electoral violence, political interference, and ambiguities surrounding electronic result transmission. The study further identified critical legal, institutional, technological, and cybersecurity gaps, demonstrating that legislative reform alone cannot guarantee credible elections without effective implementation institutions, reliable infrastructure, and robust accountability mechanisms. While emerging reform proposals—including mandatory electronic transmission of results, the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission, strengthened INEC independence, enhanced cybersecurity, diaspora voting, and expanded voter education—offer viable pathways for improving electoral governance, their effectiveness will depend on sustained political commitment, institutional capacity, adequate funding, and technological preparedness. By integrating doctrinal legal analysis with institutional capacity assessment within a comparative thematic framework, this study extends the literature beyond technology-centred evaluations. It provides a holistic explanation of how legal design, institutional performance, and governance structures collectively shape democratic outcomes. The findings reinforce the central proposition of New Institutionalism that formal legal reforms produce sustainable governance outcomes only when supported by capable institutions, effective enforcement mechanisms, and complementary informal norms, while also demonstrating that technology-driven reforms in developing democracies cannot substitute for institutional resilience. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, including nationwide field surveys and stakeholder interviews, to evaluate voter perceptions of electoral technology, institutional trust, and the long-term effectiveness of post-2023 electoral reforms in strengthening democratic consolidation in Nigeria

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