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MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACHES TO CREDIBLE AND PEACEFUL 2027 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study has addressed multi-stakeholder approaches to the promotion of credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria with particular reference to the 2027 general elections. The study was motivated by lingering concerns about the credibility of elections, declining public confidence, electoral violence, vote buying, misinformation and other challenges that continue to haunt Nigeria's democratic consolidation. The objectives were to assess the level of public trust in Nigeria's electoral process ahead of the 2027 general elections; identify the challenges to credible and peaceful elections; and examine the role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in promoting credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria. The study employed a mixed-method research design, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews from key stakeholders including government officials, civil society actors, media practitioners, electoral personnel and citizens in Abuja, Nigeria. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a target population of key electoral stakeholders with a sample size of 40 respondents. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis using the Braun and Clarke framework. The findings reveal that notwithstanding the gains of technological innovations such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and electronic result management platforms, public confidence in Nigeria's electoral process is still relatively low. Vote-buying, weak institutional frameworks, inadequate voter education, insecurity, misinformation and electoral violence were identified as the major challenges to credible and peaceful elections in the study. The findings also showed that multi-stakeholder collaboration among the Independent

National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society organisations, the media, security agencies, political parties and citizens is essential in promoting electoral credibility, transparency, accountability and peace. The study concludes that credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria would depend on stronger electoral institutions, improved voter education, effective enforcement of electoral laws and sustained collaboration among relevant stakeholders. The study recommends the need to strengthen institutional capacity, expand civic education programmes, improve stakeholder coordination and promote increased transparency in electoral administration for the successful conduct of the 2027 general elections.

Keywords: Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration, Electoral Credibility, Peaceful Elections, Electoral Governance, Voter Education, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

A credible and peaceful election is an important element of democratic governance especially in developing democracies such as Nigeria where the outcome of the election has far reached implications for political stability, national cohesion and socio-economic development. But elections are not just a mechanism for determining leaders; they are also a means of political legitimacy and democratic accountability. The credibility of electoral processes is critical to prevent conflict and promote democratic consolidation in situations where institutions are weak, the population is ethnically diverse and political contestation is high. The need for inclusive, transparent and peaceful electoral processes is becoming more pressing with Nigeria's national elections of 2027 fast approaching. With a population of over 200 million, Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and has a tortured electoral history. It is a history of episodes of institutional regression punctuated by advances in democracy. Since the country's transition to democracy in 1999, the administration of elections has improved but the problems of vote buying, political intimidation, election violence, misinformation and lack of confidence in electoral institutions persist. Such issues erode the public's trust in the democratic process, and the credibility of elections. The coordination of agencies that administer elections is not enough to ensure real and peaceful elections. The electoral ecosystem calls for the collaboration of a wide range of actors.

In recent times, multi-stakeholder projects have emerged as a core approach to improving electoral governance. The concept of multi-stakeholder engagement is based on the idea that credible elections can only be delivered through effective collaboration between a variety of actors, including electoral management bodies, civil society organisations, media, political parties, security agencies, development partners and citizens (Adebayo, 2018; Ojo, 2020; Smith, 2019). The collaboration promotes shared responsibility, collective oversight and broad participation that enhance accountability, transparency and public confidence in election results. The premise of a multi-stakeholder approach is that it is based on participatory and interconnected democratic processes. Stakeholders leverage their institutional assets, knowledge and supervisory capacities to jointly address electoral challenges such as disinformation, electoral violence, logistical deficiencies and political distrust (Adeyemi, 2021). A good example is the National Peace Committee, a stakeholder that jointly participates in electoral peace building and conflict mediation in Nigeria. The committee has been active in helping to de-escalate tensions during elections and in encouraging peaceful conduct by political actors during elections through dialogue and alternative dispute resolution processes. Nwosu, 2025 Scholarly works have documented the significant role of civil society organizations in the electoral governance process via voter education, election observation, advocacy for reforms and promotion of inclusive

participation. The Nigerian legal and institutional framework makes provision for the participation of stakeholders at all stages of the electoral cycle from pre-election planning through post-election evaluation to promote transparency and democratic accountability. This participation makes elections stronger through fair monitoring and citizens' participation in the whole electoral process. Nigeria politics is blessed with many major political parties. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the main organ for the organization and conduct of elections. INEC has a history of undergoing successive reforms geared towards promoting transparency in elections such as improved voter education, biometric voter registration and technological innovation in result transmission (Adebayo, 2018; Okonkwo, 2023). But operational difficulties, logistical limitations and public mistrust suggest the need for more holistic, collective governance.

Civil society organizations support the management of elections through accountability, non-partisan observation missions, and the promotion of citizen participation in democracy. Their activities have been very effective in raising the consciousness of the electorate and mobilizing the down trodden masses to vote (Ojo, 2020; Eze & Nwankwo, 2022). Again, building electoral credibility involves transmitting information, challenging political actors and exposing irregularities. But there are other issues in the media ecosystem like political reporting, wrong information and digital disinformation and if not properly managed can erode electoral trust (Smith, 2019; Uche, 2021). Another important group of stakeholders are political parties. They vote. They choose candidates. They structure political competition. But intra-party wars, electoral violence, vote buying and opportunistic defection continue to erode democratic norms and public faith in elections (Adeyemi, 2021; Nwosu, 2025. Such problems point to the need for internal reforms and greater regulatory oversight to protect the integrity of elections.

Electoral credibility is multi-dimensional in terms of compliance to established legal and international standards, justice, transparency and inclusivity (Kalu, 2018). Credible elections also require fair administration, transparent handling of results, acceptance of results by stakeholders and equal opportunity for participation. However, in terms of electoral credibility, voter registration, media coverage, election observation and institutional independence are the critical factors that make the difference in Nigeria (Ibrahim, 2020). There is some technology improvement in some areas of election administration but big concerns remain regarding voter suppression, electoral fraud and declining voter confidence (Ojo, 2020). Domestic and international observer missions, which provide an independent assessment and identify procedural deficiencies, also play an important role in further enhancing the transparency of elections. Access, logistics and political interference are often problems for expeditions (Eze & Nwankwo, 2022). Electoral institutions are not very trusting of public opinion polls and there is need for continuous multi-stakeholder engagement in order to build credibility and rebuild trust (Nwosu, 2025) Therefore, a holistic and coordinated strategy that encompasses institutional reform, civic education, media accountability, and transparent stakeholder engagement is required to promote free and fair elections. Also, the enhancement of electoral credibility is crucial to the operational independence and adequate funding of INEC (Adebayo, 2018). Other critical steps include electoral reforms, collaboration with the security sector, transparency in campaign financing and continuous engagement between political actors and civil society organizations (Adeyemi, 2021; Uche, 2021; Kalu, 2018). This is a critical opportunity to enhance peaceful political transitions and democratic gains as Nigeria approaches the 2027 general elections. Past elections have been marred by electoral violence, voter suppression, logistical challenges and technological problems that undermine public confidence in the voting process

particularly the 2019 general elections (Ojo, 2020). The incidents highlight the need for fresh, collective thinking to deal with the underlying electoral issues.

In this context, the study addresses the promotion of free and peaceful elections in Nigeria for the 2027 general elections through multi-stakeholder approaches. Many democracies such as Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and India have adopted the multi-stakeholder approach where political parties, civil society organisations, security agencies, media and citizens work together to enhance electoral credibility and reduce election-related disputes. This study is important in the context of a very difficult election in Nigeria, marked by political distrust, electoral violence, disinformation and governance challenges. Unlike previous studies that have studied the activities of different actors in isolation, this study underscores the importance of collective role of different actors in engendering electoral integrity, peaceful elections and democratic consolidation in the lead up to the 2027 general elections.

Problem Statement: Free and fair elections are the foundation of democratic government, political credibility and national stability. But, despite the unbroken democratic government for almost two decades, electoral processes in Nigeria are still bedevilled with perennial issues. Electoral violence, vote buying, logistical inefficiencies, misinformation and charges of irregularities have consistently eroded public faith in the outcome of elections. Biometric voter registration, technical advances and voter education initiatives have been introduced; however, issues of transparency, fairness and accountability have not been entirely addressed. Distrust of democratic institutions and the dwindling faith of voters continue to be key impediments to democracy. One fundamental drawback in Nigeria's election system is the fragmented character of stakeholder participation. Electoral procedures are not without the key responsibilities of institutions like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society organizations, the media, political parties, security agencies and individuals. However, coordination among these actors is sometimes poor and inconsistent. Electoral violence, political intolerance, misinformation and unethical campaign activities continue partly because collaborative structures for conflict avoidance, civic education and electoral monitoring are not sufficiently institutionalized. The expanding importance of digital media has also added to the complexity of the election environment, as disinformation can be circulated swiftly, which can aggravate tensions and alter voters' perceptions adversely. The cyclical nature of these difficulties emphasizes the limitations of single-institution solutions to electoral governance and the need for integrated multi stakeholder approaches as Nigeria prepares for the 2027 general elections. Previous research has concentrated mostly on institutional reforms and has not sufficiently addressed the relevance of coordinated stakeholder participation in boosting electoral credibility and achieving peaceful results. This study thus aims to address the problem of under-structured multi-stakeholder engagement in Nigeria's electoral process by exploring how collaborative approaches among key actors can enhance transparency, reduce electoral conflict and foster credible and peaceful elections in the run-up to the 2027 general elections.

Objectives of the Study

The major purpose of the project is to evaluate the efficiency of multi-stakeholder initiatives in supporting free, fair and peaceful general elections in Nigeria in 2027. In particular, the work tries to:

1. Investigate the link between the credibility of elections in Nigeria and public trust, ahead of the 2027 general elections.
2. Identify the impediments to the holding of credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria.

3. Examine the influence of multi-stakeholder involvement on the conduct of credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. With the 2027 general elections coming up, how much do Nigerians trust the electoral process in Nigeria?
2. What are the major barriers to credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria?
3. What role does the presence of multiple stakeholders have in guaranteeing credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria?

2. Review of the literature

Concept of Multi-Stakeholder Approaches

The multi-stakeholder approach has become a dominant paradigm in the discourse on governance and development, allowing different parties to work together for common goals (Smith, 2019). The principles point out that in the area of electoral governance, no one institution alone can guarantee peaceful and credible elections. The collective effort of government agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs), media institutions, political parties, security agencies and citizens with their unique expertise, resources and oversight roles (Ojo, 2020; Adeyemi, 2021) is required to improve transparency, accountability and inclusivity.

Multi-stakeholder approaches are theoretically supported by principles of collaborative governance and network theory which argue that the complex societal challenges of electoral violence, voter manipulation and mistrust require collective action, shared responsibility and structured coordination (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2015). In an electoral environment, this means that players should not only do their respective tasks but also work together in a synergistic manner to ensure that processes from voter registration to vote counting and proclamation of results are transparent, credible and peaceful.

Indeed, multi-stakeholder collaboration in Nigeria takes various forms such as formalized partnership, coalition and ad hoc networks which are formed to tackle specific electoral problems (Bingham & O'Leary, 2015). A salient case is the National Peace Committee (NPC) which provides a platform for the resolution of electoral conflicts, promotion of dialogue among political actors, and improvement of inter-agency collaboration to prevent violence during election periods (Nwosu, 2025). The platforms suggest that it is possible to work together to settle disputes, maintain compliance with electoral regulations and to provide early information of potential problems.

Civil society organizations play a special role in implementing multi-stakeholder procedures. They undertake projects on civic participation, voter education, monitoring electoral processes and accountability of public institutions (Adebowale, 2022). Therefore, CSOs create a space for the voice of the citizens to be expressed and help break down the wall between the formal electoral institutions and the public, thereby improving participation and credibility. The media is a part of these efforts as it provides the necessary oversight, factual information, emphasizing flaws and influencing the public discourse on electoral fairness (Uche, 2021). Together, CSOs and media actors form an important feedback loop: they educate stakeholders, advocate for change and improve electoral credibility.

Multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) offer promise but also face a range of challenges to effectiveness. Power struggles, competing political interests, budgetary constraints, ethnic and regional rivalries, and security considerations can impede cooperation (Eme, 2019; Okeke, 2024). In Nigeria, mistrust among stakeholders, especially between political actors, electoral administration bodies and civil society can undermine efforts at cooperation,

resulting in fragmented interventions and weak implementation of election standards. The solutions to these problems are: building focused trust, defining clear roles and institutional support for joint actions.

But the opportunities in multi-stakeholder systems are enormous. Communication among stakeholders, management of resources and the creation of responsibility can help to prevent electoral malpractice, reduce violence and increase public trust in the democratic process (Adeyemi, 2021; Nwosu, 2025). Bringing together multiple stakeholders is essential to dealing with operational complexity, democratic credibility, the rule of law and making sure that the electoral process contributes to national stability and growth, especially with the 2027 general elections approaching. At the end of the day, the effectiveness of these measures depends on how much all the key stakeholders are integrated, trust each other and engage consistently. This is a good example of the importance of collaboration in modern democratic governance.

Concept of Electoral Credibility

Electoral credibility is the perception of an electoral process as free, fair, transparent and able to transmit the genuine will of the electorate. It is a sine qua non for democratic governance as it enhances the credibility of elected governments and builds up the confidence of the people in political institutions (Kalu, 2018). Electoral credibility is generally defined as the transparency, honesty, accountability and public confidence in the electoral processes and outcomes.

Electoral integrity in Nigeria has often been associated with allegations of electoral malpractices, vote buying, voter intimidation, manipulation of results and logistic challenges (Ibrahim, 2020). Such hurdles have dented the faith of the general people in the democratic process and compromised the credibility of election results at times. Thus, the improvement of electoral credibility is still one of the main objectives of the electoral reforms in the country.

Public confidence is an important indicator of the credibility of elections. People develop trust in the outcome of an election when they see the electoral institutions especially the Independent National voting Commission (INEC) as neutral, transparent and effective. On the other hand, the lack of popular confidence is often an aggravating factor for the integrity of voting and for democratic credibility. Therefore, the credibility of elections is contingent on transparent electoral management, adherence to electoral laws, effective voter education and meaningful participation of key stakeholders in the electoral process.

In the lead up to the 2027 general elections in Nigeria, the most critical element for democratic consolidation and political stability is to create electoral credibility by improving the public's trust.

Concept of Peaceful Elections

Peaceful elections are electoral processes in an environment free of violence, intimidation, coercion and other forms of conflict that may jeopardize the integrity of the democratic process. They require the peaceful participation of citizens, political parties, electoral officials and other stakeholders before, during and after elections and that conflicts are resolved through legal and institutional channels rather than violence or extra-constitutional means (Adeyemi, 2021). Peaceful conduct of elections is an important element of democratic governance as it enhances political stability, public confidence and credibility of election results. Violent, insecure and controversial elections can damage democratic institutions and erode people's trust in government. Hence the conduct of peaceful elections is generally considered a requirement for further democratic development.

Electoral violence, political thuggery, voter intimidation, hate speech and post-election anxieties have been perennial challenges of holding peaceful elections in Nigeria. Elections have been marred by different levels of violence, owing to intense political rivalry, ethnic and religious divides and claims of electoral malfeasance (Ojo, 2020). These issues have highlighted the need for more strategies to prevent electoral violence and promote non-violent political participation.

The peaceful conduct of the elections is made possible by the joint efforts of key stakeholders such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, political parties, civil society organizations, the media, traditional institutions and individuals. Stakeholders contribute to maintaining an environment conducive to peaceful electoral conduct through voter education, conflict prevention programmes, respect for election norms and the promotion of political tolerance.

As Nigeria prepares for the general elections of 2027, the need for peaceful elections is critical to sustaining democratic government, reducing electoral tensions and ensuring that electoral outcomes are accepted by public and political actors.

Theoretical Framework:

The study is based on three interconnected theoretical perspectives, namely: Participatory Governance Theory, Conflict Prevention Theory and Institutional Theory. The concepts are useful in explaining how the collaboration of various stakeholders can enhance electoral credibility and ensure peaceful elections in Nigeria.

Participatory Governance Theory

Lecturers such as Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright have been the main proponents of Participatory Governance Theory in their work on democratic governance and citizen involvement. This theory advocates that active participation of citizens and key stakeholders in decision-making processes enhances democratic credibility, accountability, and policy efficacy (Fung & Wright, 2003). The theory's main assumption is that governance outcomes are more credible and sustainable when accountability is shared between state and non-state actors.

When applied to electoral governance, the theory suggests that valid and peaceful elections cannot be managed by the electoral administration bodies such as INEC alone. It is essential that political parties, civil society organizations, the media, the security services, traditional institutions and individuals cooperate effectively in order to guarantee that the electoral process is open, accountable and that public confidence in it is preserved. The importance of this idea to this study is the emphasis on multi-stakeholder collaboration in building electoral credibility ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Conflict Prevention Theory

John Paul Lederach is associated with Conflict Prevention Theory, which advocates for proactive strategies to stop conflicts from spiraling into violence. The theory contends that permanent peace is achievable through communication, mediation, trust-building, early warning mechanisms, and collaborative problem-solving (Lederach, 1997). The theory investigates the role of stakeholder engagement in averting election violence and encouraging peaceful political participation. In Nigeria, where elections have often been marred by tensions, disputes and violence, conflict prevention mechanisms involving civil society organizations, community leaders, security agencies, political parties and the media can help identify potential sources of conflict and address them before they escalate. This is therefore an important thought in understanding how multi-stakeholder activities can contribute to peaceful elections in 2027.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory is closely intertwined with intellectuals like W. Richard Scott and Douglass North. This idea highlights the role of formal and informal institutions, rules, norms, and procedures in shaping political behavior and organizational outcomes (Scott, 2014). Efficient institutions are perceived as creating predictable frameworks that direct stakeholders' actions and encourage compliance with defined standards. In the context of electoral governance, institutions like INEC, Electoral Act, political parties, election tribunals and security agencies provide the regulatory environment for electoral conduct. Institutional Theory illuminates the influence of these frameworks on stakeholder behavior and the credibility of elections. This concept is especially applicable to the present study because the effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder collaboration is mainly determined by how strong and efficient the institutions responsible for electoral procedures are.

Relevance of the Theories to the Study

The three assumptions are consistent and they provide a comprehensive basis for understanding the inquiry. The Participatory Governance Theory emphasizes the importance of stakeholder inclusion and collaboration, Conflict Prevention Theory identifies mechanisms for reducing electoral violence and promoting peaceful elections, and Institutional Theory points to the importance of electoral institutions, rules and procedures in ensuring credibility and accountability. These principles provide a clear picture of how multi-stakeholder actions could improve electoral credibility and support peaceful elections in Nigeria ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies of elections in Nigeria have focused mostly on the conduct of individual actors in the electoral process with little or no emphasis on the collaborative interaction of the various stakeholders. This has resulted in a significant knowledge gap on how the coordinated efforts of electoral institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, media, security forces and individuals contribute to credible and peaceful elections.

Adeyemi (2021) in his study of political parties and electoral politics in Nigeria using a qualitative case study method, examined the effect of political parties on electoral results. Research indicates that political parties are a prominent actor in the development of election conduct and results but often constrained by lack of internal democracy and low transparency. The study adds to knowledge of the role of political parties in the electoral process in Nigeria. But the analytical perspective of the study is restricted to party politics. The study focuses on one stakeholder group and does not consider the wider governance networks within which election procedures are embedded. Hence, it does little to shed light on the potential of multi-stakeholder engagement to improve democratic credibility and reduce electoral conflicts.

Similarly, Eze and Nwankwo (2022) explored the role of civil society organizations in enhancing electoral transparency through a mixed-methods approach. It was found that civil society organisations play a crucial role in voter education, election monitoring and advocating for electoral reform. But the survey also found concerns about low funding and limited access to institutions. The research successfully highlights the importance of civil society engagement but does so by treating civil society organizations as independent actors and not as part of a broader stakeholder community. The suggestion is that the study downplays the significance of collective action of electoral institutions, political actors, security agencies and citizens for the implementation of long-lasting election changes.

Nwosu (2025) used qualitative study design on electoral violence and party flipping in Nigeria. The analysis showed that election violence, political defection and weak party structure influence electoral credibility and democratic consolidation. Importantly, the study advised more adoption of stakeholder participation as a way of overcoming electoral conflicts. While stakeholder involvement was emphasized as a feasible alternative, the study did not empirically analyze how this collaboration happens, who the actors are and under what conditions it leads to peaceful electoral outcomes. This leaves a big gap in the understanding of the operational dynamics of the multi-stakeholder initiatives in the Nigerian electoral context.

Ojo (2020) investigated the role of civil society in the democratic advancement of Nigeria and discovered that civil society organizations are instrumental in building accountability, citizen engagement and democratic governance. Although these findings are in the context of electoral governance, the paper proposes a broad approach towards democracy rather than electoral credibility and peaceful elections. More importantly, it does not fully explain the relationship between civil society and other electoral stakeholders in pushing democratic outcomes during election times.

Smith (2019) examined the role of the media in the election process and found that media institutions foster voter knowledge, political accountability, and public scrutiny of electoral processes. However, the study mainly looked at the media influence as an independent variable without examining the interdependence between media organizations and other stakeholders such as electoral administration bodies, political parties, civil society groups and security agencies. It is this narrow focus that limits its ability to capture the underpinning social processes of credible and peaceful elections.

The critical analysis of the papers reviewed has three main gaps. First, a majority of the available studies adopt a single-stakeholder approach, focusing on either political parties, civil society organizations or the media. This approach ignores the fact that electoral governance is a collaborative process involving the participation of various players. Second, most of the studies are on explaining electoral results or electoral problems, rather than on how stakeholder coordination improves electoral credibility and peace. Third, the upcoming 2027 general elections have not been well-scientifically studied despite growing concerns over electoral trust, political polarization, misinformation and electoral security.

In this study, we address these gaps by employing a multi-stakeholder approach to evaluate how collaboration among major electoral actors could facilitate credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria. Unlike previous studies that focus on individual stakeholders, this study examines the interactions, relationships and collective contributions of electoral institutions, political parties, civil society organisations, media organisations, security services and citizens. In this sense, it offers a more holistic picture of electoral governance and contributes to the growing literature on collaborative approaches to democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

3. Research Methodology

This research is using mixed method research technique. It employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative instruments to analyze multi-stakeholder options to credible and peaceful 2027 general elections in Nigeria. The study was conducted in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory due to its strategic importance as the seat of election administration and governance.

The target population for the research includes sixty 60 key stakeholders in election governance, comprising representatives from government agencies, civil society groups, media practitioners, and informed individuals. The study purposively selected forty 40 respondents based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in electoral processes. A structured questionnaire was administered to 30 respondents, and 10 respondents were interviewed one-on-one

The respondents were selected from relevant institutions such as INEC, National Assembly, government ministries, civil society organisations, media organisations and community groups within Abuja. Data were collected through surveys, interviews and documentary sources to provide in-depth insights into the engagement of stakeholders towards credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria.

Data were collected using standardised surveys and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire was administered to selected stakeholders for collection of quantitative data on perception and assessment on multi-stakeholder approaches to credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria. In-depth interviews with key informants such as electoral officials, civil society actors and media practitioners provided qualitative, context-specific insights. The two-pronged technique allowed for triangulation of data and better understanding of the topic under study. Analysis of the data was conducted in two stages. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) including systematic processes of data familiarisation, coding, theme development and examination of emerging patterns. Quantitative data collected through surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies). The triangulation permitted the combination of qualitative and quantitative results, which contributed to the validity and the depth of interpretation of the study results.

Due regard was had to ethical considerations. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed and prior informed consent was sought before participation. Ethical approval and research permission were obtained from the relevant authorities. The methodological design of this study is expected to proffer robust insights on the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder approaches in fostering credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria, especially in the context of the 2027 general elections, and to guide strategies for electoral reform and governance.

4. Data Presentation, Interpretation, and Analysis

Section A: Demographic Information

Table 4.1 summarizes the distribution of respondents across stakeholder groups, occupational positions, and years of professional experience.

Table: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Stakeholder Group	Government agency	6	20.0
	Civil society organization	7	23.3
	Media	7	23.3
	Citizen	10	33.3
Occupation/Position	Government official	6	20.0
	Civil society organization representative	7	23.3
	Journalist/Media practitioner	7	23.3

	Academic/Researcher	3	10.0
	Student	4	13.3
	Private sector professional	3	10.0
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	3	10.0
	5–10 years	4	13.3
	11–15 years	6	20.0
	16–20 years	10	33.3
	More than 20 years	7	23.3
TOTAL		30	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The demographic profiles of the respondents reflect a fair representation of the major stakeholders in Nigeria's election process. Most of the respondents were citizens (33.3%), followed by media practitioners (23.3%) and civil society organization representatives (23.3%) respectively. 20.0% Officers of government agencies. The distribution is a result of the fact that the study was intentionally multi-stakeholder, where the points of view of both state and non-state actors were adequately represented in the study of electoral governance and collaboration.
The results showed that the respondents were from different professional fields related to electoral operations. The most important occupational categories were civil society representatives and journalists/media practitioners, each representing 23.3% of the sample. It consisted of 20.0% government officials, 10.0% academics/researchers, 13.3% students and 10.0% private sector workers. This dispersion shows that the study includes institutional players directly involved in election administration, as well as outsider observers who contribute to the electoral accountability, thus broadening the spectrum of opinions.

The results show that the respondent base has high experience in terms of years of experience. Most of the respondents (33.3%) had 16–20 years of experience and 23.3% had more than 20 years of experience. The respondents with 11-15 years of experience were most 20.0% followed by 13.3% with 5-10 years and 10.0% with less than 5 years of experience. This suggests that the bulk of participants have a strong background in government, media practice, civil society or related fields, which adds to the credibility and richness of the information presented. The demographic characteristics indicate the use of a sufficiently varied and experienced sample for the study. This adds more weight to the findings as the conclusions reached are based on the informed opinions of various stakeholders in the Nigerian electoral process.

Section B: Current State of Electoral Credibility

Table 4.2 presents respondents' perceptions of the current state of electoral credibility in Nigeria, as well as the key factors influencing these perceptions.

Table: Perception of Electoral Credibility and Contributing Factors

Question	**Response**	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
How would you rate the current state of electoral credibility in Nigeria?	Very credible	4	12.9
	Somewhat credible	9	31.7
	Not very credible	10	32.7

	Not credible at all	7	22.8
What factors contribute to the current state of electoral credibility in Nigeria?	INEC's capacity and independence	8	27.0
	Role of security agencies	8	27.0
	Media coverage	5	18.0
	Civil society engagement	3	10.0
	Other (please specify)	6	18.3
TOTAL		30	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The descriptive data show that respondents still perceive electoral credibility in Nigeria as moderate to poor. In particular, 32.7% of respondents stated that the electoral process was "Not very credible" and 31.7% said that it was "Somewhat credible". Only 12.9 percent of respondents said Nigeria's elections were "Very credible," indicating a lack of confidence in the electoral system. In contrast, 22.8% of respondents rated the system as "Not credible at all", pointing to the problems of confidence, openness and institutional reliability in Nigeria's electoral process.

On issues that affect electoral credibility, the respondents said that the most important are characteristics related to institutions and governance. Capacity and independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and participation of security services accounted for 27.0% of the responses each (27.0%). This implies that institutional strength, autonomy and enforcement capacity are seen as central to electoral credibility. Respondents constituted 18.0% of media coverage, indicating the importance of media coverage in shaping public opinion, disseminating electoral information and performing supervision through reporting. Participation of civil society was 10.0% indicating a relatively smaller but significant participation in procedures of electoral accountability. Also mentioned by 18.3% of respondents were other relevant issues like voter behavior, political influence and larger systemic problems.

The findings generally point to the fact that the credibility of elections in Nigeria is basically determined by the performance of institutions, especially the performance of INEC and security agencies. Still, the fact that only a small share of respondent's rate elections as very credible suggests that there are still trust problems regarding the system. This means that while there is a need for institutional reforms, reinforcing collaborative engagement of stakeholders including the media and civil society is still crucial for improving transparency, accountability and public confidence going into the 2027 general elections.

Section C: Challenges to Credible and Peaceful Elections

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.3 presents respondents' views on the major challenges affecting credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria, as well as the perceived significance of these challenges.

Table: Major Challenges to Credible and Peaceful Elections in Nigeria

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
What are the major challenges to credible	Electoral violence	4	14.4

and peaceful elections in Nigeria?			
	Vote buying	10	32.2
	Inadequate voter education	6	19.4
	Weak institutional framework	6	21.0
	Other (please specify)	4	13.0
How significant are these challenges?	Very significant	6	21.0
	Somewhat significant	9	29.0
	Not very significant	8	27.0
	Not significant at all	7	23.0
TOTAL		**30**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The descriptive statistics revealed that the leading threat to legal and peaceful elections in Nigeria was vote buying (32.2%). In the order of important challenges that affect the democratic process, weak institutional frameworks (21.0%) and low voter education (19.4%) follow closely, both being structural inadequacies and deficiencies in civic competence. Respondents pointed to election violence (14.4%) as another significant but less widespread cause than financial incentives and institutional problems. The 'additional factors' category which includes other contextual difficulties such as political manipulation, insecurity and electoral malpractices accounted for 13.0%.

Regarding the perceived severity, 29.0% of the respondents reported these difficulties as "Somewhat significant" and 21.0% as "Very significant. On the other hand, 27.0% of respondents believe that the problems are "Not very significant" and 23.0% consider the barriers "Not significant at all". The distribution shows a moderate impression of the electoral concerns with a slight majority holding the significance of the electoral challenges to the Nigerian election environment.

The results revealed that the problems of electoral integrity and peaceful elections in Nigeria are multi-dimensional touching on behavioural issues such as vote buying, institutional failings, and deficiencies in voter education. Vote buying is widespread and is a sign of the continuing monetisation of politics which affects the fairness and integrity of elections. Democratic participation is undermined by structural gaps created by institutional frameworks and shortcomings in voter education.

In wider analytical terms, the findings highlight the need for a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach that brings together electoral institutions, civil society groups, the media and individuals to strengthen the credibility of elections in Nigeria. The institutional frameworks, voter education and dealing with electoral misconduct are all jointly crucial in promoting trust, transparency and peaceful electoral outcomes ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Section D: Multi-Stakeholder Approaches

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.4 presents respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder approaches in promoting electoral credibility and peace in Nigeria, as well as which stakeholders should play a more significant role in this regard.

Table: Perceptions of Multi-Stakeholder Approaches and Key Actors in Electoral Credibility and Peace

Question	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How effective are multi-stakeholder approaches in promoting electoral credibility and peace in Nigeria?	Very effective	5	16.7
	Somewhat effective	9	30.0
	Not very effective	9	30.0
	Not effective at all	7	23.3
Which stakeholders should play a more significant role in promoting electoral credibility and peace?	Government agencies	6	20.0
	Civil society organizations	8	26.7
	Media	7	23.3
	Citizens	7	23.3
	Other (please specify)	2	6.7

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Descriptive statistics show that a plurality of respondents (30%) rated multi-stakeholder initiatives as "Somewhat effective" in building electoral credibility and peace, while 29% rated the approaches as "Not very effective". Just 17% rated these tactics as "Very effective", whereas 24% rated them as "Not effective at all". These results suggest that multi-stakeholder collaboration is considered as a potentially important technique, although its effectiveness is now perceived as moderate and uneven.

When asked about the roles of stakeholders, civil society organizations (26%) and the media (25%) were seen as the actors that should play the most significant roles to ensure election credibility and peace, followed closely by people (23%) and government agencies (19%) . This implies that respondents see non-state actors as crucial in promoting voting integrity, highlighting the need for civic engagement, independent scrutiny, and sharing of information.

The findings highlight the unexploited potential of multi-stakeholder approaches to conducting fair and peaceful elections in Nigeria. The stakeholders know their value; however, the average effectiveness scores indicate problems with coordination, allocation of resources, and commitment of stakeholders. Civil society organizations and media featured prominently in the perceptions of respondents, consistent with their engagement in advocacy, voter education and election monitoring. Empowering these people might create more overall

electoral openness. Citizens and government entities also need to be involved to provide accountability and institutional support. Collectively, these findings demonstrate the need to strengthen stakeholder collaboration if credible and peaceful elections are to be delivered, especially in the run-up to the 2027 general elections.

Table 4.5: Summary of Interview Responses on Multi-Stakeholder Approaches to Credible and Peaceful Elections in Nigeria

Theme	**Sub-Theme**	**Key Findings from Respondents**
Current State of Electoral Credibility	Perception of Electoral Credibility	Most respondents acknowledged some improvement in electoral credibility due to technological innovations such as BVAS and IReV. However, concerns remain regarding transparency, public trust, inconsistencies in implementation, and result management.
	Factors Influencing Credibility	Respondents identified INEC's capacity and independence, political actors' conduct, security conditions, voter education, media reporting, and information management as major determinants of electoral credibility.
Challenges to Credible and Peaceful Elections	Electoral Malpractices	Vote-buying, voter intimidation, electoral violence, manipulation of electoral processes, and weak enforcement of electoral laws were consistently identified as major threats.
	Institutional Challenges	Respondents highlighted logistical failures, inadequate accountability mechanisms, weak institutional frameworks, and perceived political interference in electoral administration.
	Information and Communication Challenges	Misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and poor communication from electoral authorities were reported as factors undermining public confidence and increasing electoral tension.
Effectiveness of Multi-Stakeholder Approaches	Stakeholder Collaboration	The majority of respondents considered multi-stakeholder engagement important for improving transparency, accountability, voter education, election monitoring, and conflict prevention.
	Limitations of Existing Approaches	Some respondents argued that many stakeholder initiatives remain largely symbolic, with limited practical impact due to weak implementation and lack of accountability.
Role of Key Stakeholders	INEC	Expected to ensure transparency, consistency, professionalism, and effective

		management of electoral processes.
	Civil Society Organizations	Responsible for voter education, election observation, advocacy, accountability promotion, and public sensitization.
	Media	Plays a critical role in information dissemination, fact-checking, voter education, election monitoring, and shaping public perception.
	Security Agencies	Responsible for maintaining peace, preventing violence, protecting electoral materials, and ensuring voter safety.
	Citizens and Political Parties	Citizens are expected to reject vote-buying and participate responsibly, while political parties should comply with electoral regulations and promote peaceful conduct.
Examples of Successful Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives	Peacebuilding and Monitoring Mechanisms	The Abuja Peace Accord (2015), election observation missions, civil society monitoring initiatives, media engagement, and collaborative stakeholder forums were repeatedly cited as examples of successful interventions.
Recommendations for Improving Electoral Credibility and Peace	Institutional Reforms	Respondents recommended stronger enforcement of electoral laws, greater independence of electoral institutions, improved logistics, and stricter sanctions for electoral offences.
	Strengthening Collaboration	Respondents advocated institutionalized stakeholder engagement, improved coordination, regular dialogue, information sharing, and continuous collaboration throughout the electoral cycle.
	Voter Education and Public Awareness	Increased civic education, media literacy, public sensitization, and fact-checking initiatives were recommended to combat misinformation and encourage responsible participation.
	Technology and Transparency	Respondents emphasized the need for reliable electoral technology, transparent result management, and open communication to enhance public trust.

Source: Field survey, 2026

From the findings of the interview, it is clear that there is a wide acceptance by the stakeholders that the introduction of technical advances such as BVAS and IReV has enhanced the credibility of elections in Nigeria. However, respondents noted the fragility of public trust given recurrent challenges such as vote-buying, electoral violence, misinformation, logistical shortcomings and perceived institutional weaknesses. The data also reveal that no single organization can hold fair, peaceful elections on its own. Instead, it calls

for meaningful collaboration between INEC, civil society organizations, the media, security forces, political parties and individuals.

Multi-stakeholder approaches are also shown to play an important role in promoting transparency, accountability, voter education, election monitoring and conflict prevention in the interviews. However, there were complaints on poor implementation, lack of coordination and low responsibility of parties. Respondents, therefore, emphasized the need for stronger institutional reforms, continuous engagement with stakeholders, improved voter education, and enhanced enforcement of electoral laws to strengthen electoral credibility and promote peaceful elections in the run-up to the 2027 general elections in Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

The report looked at multi-stakeholder options for ensuring credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria, particularly the 2027 general elections. The findings revealed that despite the recent changes and the technological innovations by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the confidence of the public in the electoral process in Nigeria is still low. While respondents acknowledged improvements with the deployment of technologies such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and electronic result management platforms, concerns about transparency, consistency in implementation, vote-buying and undue political influence continue to undermine confidence in the electoral process.

The report identified various impediments to credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria. The most notable of these include vote buying, weak institutional frameworks, poor voter education, misinformation, insecurity and election violence. These challenges were seen as major threats to the electoral integrity and democratic consolidation. Respondents also expressed concern about weak enforcement of electoral laws, logistical inefficiencies and perceived lack of accountability for violators of electoral laws.

Findings show that multi-stakeholder engagement of key factors such as INEC, CSOs, the media, security agencies, political parties and citizens are still critical in improving electoral credibility and peace. Respondents pointed to the role of civil society organizations and the media in voter education, election monitoring, dissemination of information and accountability. The interviews also revealed that joint activities such as the Abuja Peace Accord and the election observation missions had contributed to de-escalation and increased transparency in past political cycles.

The study found that the efforts of one institution cannot bring about credible and peaceful elections. Rather, the successful conduct of the 2027 general elections in Nigeria and increased public trust would be dependent upon effective collaboration among relevant stakeholders, strengthened institutional capacity, improved voter education, strict enforcement of electoral laws and greater transparency in electoral administration. The findings support the existing body of research on electoral governance and reinforce the notion of multi-stakeholder participation as a core strategy for advancing democratic processes and electoral credibility in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study showed that for Nigeria to have credible and peaceful elections, there must be effective coordination among INEC, civil society organisations, the media, political parties, security services and the citizenry. Despite the changes and technical advances that have improved parts of the democratic process, challenges like vote-buying, insecurity,

misinformation and lack of institutional capacity continue to erode public faith. Therefore, developing electoral institutions, improving voter education, transparency and sustained multi-stakeholder participation are critical for credible and peaceful 2027 general elections and democratic government building in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the results of the study and the opinions of respondents from government agencies, civil society groups, media and citizens, the following proposals are made:

1. 1Enhance INEC's Independence and Capacity: The commission needs more power, an adequate budget and impartial staff to conduct free and fair elections. Good electoral management includes the protection of electoral staff and the deployment of competent officials.
2. Increase Voter Education: Significant voter education initiatives must be carried out to educate citizens on their rights, the electoral process and the importance of active participation. The outreach and efficacy will be maximized through partnerships between INEC, CSOs and media outlets.
3. Improve transparency and accountability: INEC should employ technology to track movement of voting materials, provide real-time updates on the polls and make electoral data accessible to the public. Transparent methods will foster public trust and enhance stakeholders' confidence in the integrity of elections.
4. Tackle Election Violence and Insecurity: Security agencies must guarantee a safe environment for voters and election officials. Election offences should be penalised and procedures for speedy settlement of election disputes should be evolved.
5. Foster Cooperation Among Stakeholders: Civil society organisations, media and the public should maintain constant communication, collaborate in the oversight of electoral processes and demand improvements. Effective cooperation would foster transparency, credibility and shared responsibility for peaceful elections.
6. Enhance Logistics and Infrastructure: INEC has to tackle the logistical problems by ensuring that electoral materials get to their destinations on time, improving the quality of voting equipment and providing adequate facilities for voters This will increase operational efficiency and eliminate procedural delays.
7. Encourage Citizen Participation Citizens should be active participants not only as voters but also as observers and participators in civic activities. When people are broadly involved, they take ownership, responsibility and a culture of democratic accountability.

Implementation of these recommendations will enhance the credibility and peaceful conduct of elections and strengthen Nigeria's electoral procedures. The only way forward for Nigeria to evolve towards a resilient, transparent and participatory democracy is the combination of institutional efficiency and active stakeholder engagement.

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