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CIVIL SOCIETY, MEDIA, AND DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the interplay of civil society, media, and digital democracy in promoting transparency, accountability, and democratic governance in Nigeria. The research assesses how civil society and media leverage digital tools to promote democracy, evaluates the role of digital democracy in enhancing citizen engagement, and identifies challenges facing civil society, media, and digital democracy in Nigeria. The study reveals that civil society organizations and media effectively use digital tools to promote democracy, citing examples like the #EndSARS protests and electronic transfer of election results. Digital democracy is seen as a key enhancer of citizen engagement, with respondents agreeing that it increases citizen participation. The #EndSARS protests highlighted the power of digital democracy in mobilizing citizens and promoting accountability. However, challenges like government restrictions, digital divides, and digital literacy gaps hinder the effectiveness of civil society, media, and digital democracy. The research highlights the critical role of civil society, media, and digital democracy in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria. Civil society organizations play a significant role in promoting transparency, while media effectively uses digital platforms to promote accountability. Digital democracy has the potential to enhance citizen engagement, but addressing challenges like government restrictions, digital divides, and digital literacy gaps is crucial to realizing this potential. To strengthen democratic governance in Nigeria, it is essential to promote digital inclusion, protect online freedoms, and ensure that digital democracy is inclusive and equitable. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can harness the power of civil society, media, and digital democracy to promote transparency, accountability, and democratic governance.

Key words: Digital Democracy, Civil Society, Media, Transparency, Accountability

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's civil society organizations (CSOs) have evolved significantly since the 1960s, transforming from ethnic-based groups to advocates for democracy, transparency, and accountability (Adamu et al., 2020). CSOs like the Ijaw National Congress, Afenifere, and Ohaneze Ndigbo have played crucial roles in promoting regional interests and democratic practices (Abari, 2013). The #EndSARS protests in 2020 highlighted CSOs' ability to mobilize citizens and advocate for governance reforms, leveraging digital platforms to amplify demands for accountability and electoral transparency (Akinola, 2022; Ogundele, 2021).

CSOs in Nigeria have been instrumental in promoting voter education, monitoring elections, and advocating for electoral reforms (Adeyeye, 2020). Organizations like the Transition Monitoring Group and the Civil Liberties Organization have been at the forefront of promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria's electoral process (Nwankwo, 2022). The #EndSARS protests also highlighted the potential of digital technologies in mobilizing citizens and promoting accountability. CSOs have leveraged digital platforms to promote electoral transparency, including advocating for real-time electronic transmission of election results (Akinola, 2022; Nwankwo, 2022).

CSOs have consistently pushed for real-time electronic transmission of election results, introduction of downloadable voter cards, and retention of existing electoral timelines to enhance credibility of elections. During the last protest, they urged the National Assembly to adopt the House of Representatives' position on mandatory electronic transmission, citing the need for transparency and accountability (von.gov.ng/civil-society).

The coalition of CSOs has proposed modifications to the electoral act, including allowing designated officials to electronically transmit results from polling units to a public portal, and broadening the scope of persons eligible to file reports when an election is signed under duress. They also advocate for downloadable voter cards to prevent disenfranchisement and urge INEC to publish the 2027 election timetable to avoid operational failures (von.gov.ng/civil-society).

These efforts demonstrate CSOs' commitment to strengthening Nigeria's democratic process. By promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, they contribute to the country's democratic development. However, CSOs face significant challenges, including government restrictions, politicization, and funding constraints (Akinwumi, 2023; Adeyemo, 2022). The politicization of organizations like the National Association of Nigeria (NANS) and the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) has undermined their effectiveness (Matthew, 2021). Moreover, CSOs are often subject to co-optation, incorporation, and rejection by governments, which can compromise their independence and effectiveness (Kukah, 1999). To strengthen CSOs, Nigeria must address these challenges and promote a conducive environment for civil society to thrive.

The media in Nigeria has historically advocated for democratic principles, exposed corruption, and promoted human rights (Ojo, 2021). During the #EndSARS protests, the media played a pivotal role in amplifying citizens' voices, documenting abuses, and promoting accountability (Akinola, 2022). However, the media faces significant challenges,

including censorship, political interference, and threats to journalists' safety (Ake, 2016). Restrictive laws like the Cybercrime Act and Official Secrets Act have been used to intimidate and silence journalists (Amadi & Ekekwe, 2021).

The media landscape in Nigeria is diverse, with print, broadcast, and digital media outlets. However, concentration of media ownership and political affiliations undermine media independence and public trust (Nwabueze, 2018). The media must navigate these challenges to promote transparency and accountability in governance. Digital media has transformed Nigeria's information landscape, enabling citizens to access information and engage with governance processes (Eze, 2021). Real-time electronic transmission of election results can enhance transparency and credibility, but requires robust infrastructure and safeguards against manipulation (Nwankwo, 2022).

To strengthen the media, Nigeria must address these challenges and promote a free and independent media. This requires legal and regulatory reforms to protect press freedom, ensure financial and operational independence, and promote media literacy (Amadi & Ekekwe, 2021). CSOs and citizens must also support media organizations and journalists in promoting transparency and accountability.

Digital democracy in Nigeria leverages technology to enhance civic engagement and political participation, transforming how citizens communicate with elections, institutions, and leadership (Adeyinka & Ijaiya, 2024). The use of digital tools, especially social media, has empowered a new generation of activists and played a significant role in promoting democratic governance (Akinola, 2022). Key elements of civic change include participation in voting, protests, petitions, and public discussions, advocacy for reforms, accountability for transparency, and inclusion for fairness.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has introduced digital technologies like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) to enhance electoral transparency and credibility (Chatham House, 2023; GIGA, 2023). These innovations aim to improve the legitimacy of elections, but challenges persist. The 2023 presidential elections saw BVAS malfunctions, disenfranchising voters and undermining trust in the process (Oladeji, 2023; Chatham House, 2023). The IReV portal also faced technical issues, including failed image uploads and login problems (Oladeji, 2023; GIGA, 2023).

Nigeria's digital divide is a significant challenge, with only approximately 12% of the population having access to functional internet (Onuoha, 2023). This disparity is particularly pronounced in rural and underserved areas, raising concerns about digital participation and inclusion (Onuoha, 2023). The uneven rollout of digital technologies and persistent digital exclusion hinder inclusive democratic processes. To strengthen digital democracy, Nigeria must address digital inequality, improve technical infrastructure, and ensure inclusive participation.

The interplay between civil society, media, and digital democracy is crucial for promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria's democratic process. CSOs, media, and digital technologies have transformed civic engagement and promoted democratic governance. However, challenges persist, including government restrictions, digital divides, and technical

issues. This research examines the role of civil society, media, and digital democracy in Nigeria's electoral process, focusing on CSOs' impact on reforms, media's role in transparency, and digital technologies' potential in enhancing credibility.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Civil Society

Civil society in Nigeria encompasses a diverse range of voluntary associations, organizations, and movements that operate independently of the state and market, with the primary goal of promoting public interests, accountability, and democratic values (Abari, 2013; Adamu et al., 2020). This broad spectrum includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and social movements, all of which contribute to the country's democratic development (Sule et al., 2021).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria are characterized as non-profit entities that are not owned or controlled by the government, focusing instead on promoting the welfare of their members and the broader society, often with reference to cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations (Azis, 2018). These organizations are typically self-sufficient and operate independently of government influence, providing a platform for citizens to engage in collective action and advocate for social change (Meyer, 2015).

The concept of civil society has evolved significantly over time, with its roots tracing back to pre-independence nationalist movements in Nigeria (Ekeh, 1994). Since then, civil society has played a pivotal role in promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance, often serving as a counterbalance to state power (Ojo, 2021). In the modern era, CSOs have been recognized as key tools for advancing democracy, good governance, civil rights, and democratization (Sule et al., 2021).

Nigerian civil society has been instrumental in promoting electoral reforms, transparency, and accountability, with organizations such as the Transition Monitoring Group and the Civil Liberties Organization playing crucial roles in monitoring elections and advocating for electoral reforms (Adeyeye, 2020; Nwankwo, 2022). Additionally, CSOs have leveraged digital platforms to amplify demands for accountability and electoral transparency, as seen in the #EndSARS protests (Akinola, 2022; Ogundele, 2021).

The growing influence of civil society in Nigeria has challenged traditional notions of development, which often place the state at the center and prioritize infrastructure development (Azis, 2018). Instead, CSOs have emphasized the importance of citizen participation, social justice, and human rights in the development process (Meyer, 2015).

During the last protest, civil society organizations (CSOs) demanded real-time electronic transmission of election results, introduction of downloadable voter cards, and retention of existing electoral timelines to enhance credibility of the 2027 general elections. The coalition of CSOs urged the National Assembly to adopt the House of Representatives' position on mandatory electronic transmission of results, citing the need for transparency and accountability (Jack & Bitrus, 2026).

The CSOs also called for the review of section 65 of the electoral bill to broaden the scope of persons eligible to file reports when an election is signed under duress, recommending inclusion of political parties, candidates, accredited party agents, and observers present during collation of results (Jack & Bitrus, 2026).

Concept of Digital Technology

Digital technology encompasses electronic tools, systems, devices, and resources that generate, store, or process data using binary code, including computers, mobile telephones, the internet, social networking sites, cloud services, artificial intelligence (AI), and blockchain (Floridi, 2014). This technology has transformed various sectors, including education, healthcare, trade, government, and civic activities (Adeyinka & Ijaiya, 2024).

In the context of elections, digital technology refers to electronic tools and systems used to facilitate voting, voter registration, and result transmission. Electoral technology uses biometrics, such as fingerprints, eye retinas, and faces, to identify voters and prevent fraud (Idowu, 2021; Wang & Yanushkevich, 2007). These systems rely on pattern recognition algorithms to accurately identify individuals (Bolle et al., 2004).

Digital technology has been touted as a means to strengthen democracy by promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency in elections (Diamond, 2010; Farid, 2008). The concept of "liberation technology" suggests that digital technology can expand political, social, and economic freedom, enabling citizens to participate more effectively in the democratic process (Diamond, 2010). However, critics argue that digital technology can also reinforce existing inequalities and create new mechanisms of control (Fuchs, 2017; Van, 2020).

Digital technology has transformed the democratic landscape, offering unprecedented opportunities for citizen engagement, participation, and accountability. The impact of digital technology on democracy is multifaceted, with both positive and negative consequences.

On the one hand, digital technology has enabled electronic voting systems, making elections more efficient and transparent. Online voter registration, digital voter verification, and electronic result transmission have reduced electoral fraud and improved the integrity of the electoral process (Idowu, 2021; Nwankwo, 2022). Social media platforms have become crucial tools for civic engagement, enabling citizens to access information, mobilize support, and hold governments accountable. Social media has also facilitated the emergence of online activism, allowing citizens to participate in democratic processes remotely (Tufekci, 2017; Akinola, 2022).

Digital platforms have been established to facilitate citizen participation in governance, enabling citizens to contribute to policy-making processes, provide feedback, and engage with governments (Adeyinka & Ijaiya, 2024). The internet has improved access to information, enabling citizens to access government data, policies, and laws, promoting transparency and accountability (Ojo, 2021).

However, digital technology also poses significant challenges to democracy. The digital divide refers to the gap between those with access to digital technology and those without,

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exacerbating existing inequalities and limiting access to information and participation in democratic processes (van Dijk, 2020). Social media platforms have enabled the spread of misinformation and disinformation, undermined democratic processes and manipulating public opinion (Masduki, 2021).

Digital technology has also introduced new cyber threats, including hacking, cyber-attacks, and data breaches, compromising the integrity of democratic processes (Zuboff, 2019). Governments can use digital technology to surveil citizens, potentially undermining democratic freedoms and limiting participation (Winner, 1986).

Concept of Media

Media refers to the various channels and tools used to communicate information, ideas, and messages to a wide audience, encompassing traditional forms like newspapers, radio, and television, as well as digital platforms like websites, blogs, and social media (Kperogi, 2015). The term "media" derives from the Latin word "medium," meaning "middle," reflecting its role as an intermediary between information sources and the public.

Media serves several crucial functions in society, including providing news and information, education, entertainment, and acting as a watchdog (Ojo, 2021). It helps shape public opinion, facilitates informed decision-making, and promotes transparency and accountability (McQuail, 2010). Media also provides a platform for public debate and dialogue, fostering a diverse range of viewpoints and encouraging civic engagement (Schudson, 2008).

In democratic societies, media plays a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation (Curran, 2011). Freedom of the press is a fundamental element of democracy, allowing journalists and media organizations to report news and express opinions without undue interference (Sambrook, 2017). A free press acts as a watchdog, holding those in power accountable and promoting good governance (Waisbord, 2013).

The evolution of media has been significantly influenced by technological advancements, with digital media and the internet transforming how information is produced, consumed, and shared (Kperogi, 2015). Social media platforms have introduced new ways for individuals to engage with content and participate in public conversations, further expanding the reach and impact of media (Tufekci, 2017).

In Nigeria, media has played a significant role in promoting democracy and good governance, from anti-corruption crusades to current protests (Akinola, 2022; Ogundele, 2021). However, challenges persist, including government restrictions, censorship, and intimidation (Akinwumi, 2023).

The current protests in Nigeria, including #EndSARS and the demand for real-time transmission of election results, have been significantly amplified by the media. The #EndSARS movement, which began in 2020, was largely driven by social media, with platforms like Twitter playing a crucial role in mobilizing protesters and spreading awareness about police brutality (Adeyeye & Nwaoboli, 2023)

In 2026, the protests around election result transmission have also gained traction, with the Nigerian Senate reversing its decision to approve real-time electronic transmission of election results after facing backlash from labor unions, civil society, and legal experts. The media has been instrumental in highlighting the importance of transparency in the electoral process, with many Nigerians taking to social media to express their support for the protests (Jack & Bitrus, 2026).

The Nigerian media has played a vital role in shaping public opinion and influencing the narrative around these protests. By providing comprehensive coverage and analysis, the media has helped to educate citizens about their rights and the importance of democratic accountability (Agbim, Etumnu & Iredibia, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Transition Theory (DTT)

Democratic Transition Theory (DTT) provides a broad framework for understanding the role of civil society in promoting democracy and governance reforms in Nigeria. At its core, DTT suggests that a strong, vibrant civil society is essential for driving democratization and holding governments accountable. This theory assumes that countries like Nigeria are transitioning from authoritarian regimes to democratic systems, and civil society plays a crucial role in this process.

In Nigeria, civil society has been instrumental in promoting democratic values, advocating for reforms, and mobilizing citizens to demand accountability from their leaders. Civil society organizations (CSOs) have been at the forefront of advocating for electoral reforms, transparency, and good governance. They have also played a crucial role in monitoring government actions, exposing corruption, and holding public officials accountable.

The implications of DTT for Nigeria are significant. Strengthening civil society is crucial for promoting democracy and governance reforms. This can be achieved by creating an enabling environment for CSOs to operate, promoting civic engagement, and addressing the challenges faced by civil society, such as government restrictions, funding constraints, and capacity limitations.

Moreover, DTT highlights the importance of institutionalizing democratic norms, values, and practices. This involves promoting transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, as well as ensuring that democratic institutions are robust and effective.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the critiques and limitations of DTT. Some argue that the theory overestimates civil society's capacity to drive democratization, while others point out that Nigeria's unique historical, cultural, and institutional context may limit the applicability of DTT.

Social Movement Theory (SMT)

Social Movement Theory (SMT) provides a framework for understanding how civil society organizations, media, and digital platforms come together to mobilize collective action and

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promote social change and democratic accountability in Nigeria. At its core, SMT suggests that social movements are driven by collective action, which is often facilitated by the interaction of various actors, including civil society organizations, media, and digital platforms.

In Nigeria, social movements have played a significant role in promoting democratic accountability and social change. For instance, the #EndSARS protests, which began in 2020, were largely driven by social media, with platforms like Twitter and Instagram playing a crucial role in mobilizing protesters and spreading awareness about police brutality. Similarly, civil society organizations have used digital platforms to advocate for electoral reforms, transparency, and good governance.

The interaction between civil society organizations, media, and digital platforms is critical in mobilizing collective action and promoting social change. Media outlets provide a platform for civil society organizations to amplify their messages, while digital platforms enable citizens to engage with each other and with civil society organizations. This interaction helps to create a sense of solidarity and shared purpose, which is essential for mobilizing collective action.

Moreover, SMT highlights the importance of framing and narrative-building in social movements. Civil society organizations and media outlets play a crucial role in framing issues, creating narratives, and mobilizing public opinion around social causes. Digital platforms have also enabled citizens to participate in these processes, creating a more inclusive and participatory environment.

The implications of SMT for Nigeria are significant. Strengthening the interaction between civil society organizations, media, and digital platforms is crucial for promoting democratic accountability and social change. This can be achieved by promoting media literacy, supporting digital rights, and creating an enabling environment for civil society organizations to operate.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the critiques and limitations of SMT. Some argue that the theory overestimates the potential of social movements to drive social change, while others point out that Nigeria's unique historical, cultural, and institutional context may limit the applicability of SMT.

Democratic Transition Theory (DTT) and Social Movement Theory (SMT) provide frameworks for understanding the role of civil society in promoting democracy and governance reforms in Nigeria. DTT suggests that a strong civil society is essential for driving democratization and holding governments accountable, while SMT highlights the importance of collective action and interaction between civil society organizations, media, and digital platforms in promoting social change and democratic accountability. In Nigeria, civil society has played a crucial role in promoting democratic values, advocating for reforms, and mobilizing citizens, while social movements like #EndSARS have leveraged digital platforms to drive social change. Strengthening civil society and promoting interaction between civil society, media, and digital platforms are crucial for promoting democracy and governance reforms in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Studies have shown that civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria have played a significant role in promoting democracy and governance reforms. For instance, Adamu et al. (2020) in their study "Civil Society and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: An Assessment of the Role of NGOs" found that CSOs have been instrumental in promoting voter education, monitoring elections, and advocating for electoral reforms. Similarly, Abari (2013) in his study "Civil Society and Democracy in Nigeria" noted that CSOs like the Ijaw National Congress, Afenifere, and Ohaneze Ndigbo have played crucial roles in promoting regional interests and democratic practices.

The #EndSARS protests in 2020 highlighted the potential of digital technologies in mobilizing citizens and promoting accountability. Akinola (2022) in his study "Social Media and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Study of the #EndSARS Protests" found that social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram played a crucial role in mobilizing protesters and spreading awareness about police brutality. Ogundele (2021) in his study "#EndSARS Protests and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis" also noted that CSOs have leveraged digital platforms to advocate for electoral reforms, transparency, and good governance.

The media has also played a significant role in promoting democracy and governance reforms in Nigeria. Ojo (2021) in his study "Media and Democracy in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment of the Role of the Media" found that the media has been instrumental in exposing corruption, promoting human rights, and holding public officials accountable. However, the media faces significant challenges, including censorship, political interference, and threats to journalists' safety as noted by Ake (2016) in his study "Media and Democracy in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis".

Digital democracy has also transformed Nigeria's information landscape, enabling citizens to access information and engage with governance processes. Eze (2021) in his study "Digital Democracy and Civic Engagement in Nigeria: A Study of Online Participation" found that digital technologies have enhanced citizen participation and engagement in governance processes. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has introduced digital technologies like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) to enhance electoral transparency and credibility as noted by Chatham House (2023) in their study "Nigeria's 2023 Elections: A Review of the Electoral Process" and GIGA (2023) in their study "Nigeria's 2023 Elections: A Review of the Electoral Process and its Implications for Democracy".

However, challenges persist, including digital inequality, technical issues, and cybersecurity threats. Onuoha (2023) in his study "Digital Inequality and Democratic Participation in Nigeria: A Study of the Impact of Digital Divide on Civic Engagement" noted that only approximately 12% of the population has access to functional internet, raising concerns about digital participation and inclusion.

Studies have also shown that the interaction between civil society organizations, media, and digital platforms is critical in mobilizing collective action and promoting social change. Akinola (2022) in his study "Social Media and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A Study

of the #EndSARS Protests" found that social media platforms have enabled CSOs to amplify their messages and mobilize citizens around social causes.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a quantitative method to ensure unbiased, trustworthy, and broadly applicable findings across a range of domains. By employing numerical and statistical methods to measure and analyse data, this approach enables researchers to test hypotheses, find trends, and draw conclusions about populations from sample data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method has the capacity to lessen bias, improve study replicability, and make comparisons across other research or time periods.

In terms of research design, the study relied on a descriptive survey, a common methodology in social sciences, to compile data about a specific group of people and provide a description of the current situation (Babbie, 2021). The design gives a wide scope of perception and experience of respondents regarding the role of civil society, media, and digital democracy in amplifying the #EndSARS protests and advocating for real-time electronic transfer of election results in Nigeria.

The research instrument employed by the study for data collection was a structured questionnaire, comprising closed-ended questions structured on a five-point Likert-type scale. This method was selected due to its reliability, ease of administration, and familiarity with statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). The survey was conducted online using Google Forms, distributing an open-ended questionnaire to ensure efficient data collection.

A total of 180 respondents were sampled from the urban population in FCT-Abuja, Nigeria, where citizens have a high level of access to digital platforms. This sample was determined through a simple random sampling method, making it suitable for understanding the role of civil society, media, and digital democracy in promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria's electoral process. As noted by Wimmer and Dominick (2014), a sample of 180 is sufficient for exploratory studies where funds or access are limited.

The research process was guided by ethical considerations for research participants, including informed consent and data confidentiality. Respondents were informed about the purpose and risks of the study and provided consent before participating. Their identities were kept confidential, and the research was conducted in a way that minimized harm to respondents and stakeholders.

Data analysis involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, were used to analyze the survey data, providing insights into the relationships between variables and testing hypotheses. Additionally, thematic analysis and content analysis were employed to analyze the open-ended survey responses, identifying patterns and themes in the data related to civil society, media, and digital democracy in Nigeria's electoral process.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-25	18	10%
26-35	31	17.9%
36-45	51	28%
46-55	48	| 26.7
Above 55	|32	| 17.8%
Occupation		
Student	28	16%
Professional	35	19%
Business	85	47%
Other	32	18%
Level of Education		
Secondary	4	2%
Tertiary	62	34%
Postgraduate	75	42%
Other	39	22%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The demographic characteristics of the survey respondents reveal interesting patterns. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (28%) fall within the 36-45 age range, indicating that this age group is well-represented in the survey. The 46-55 age group is also prominent, with 26.7% of respondents. The occupation breakdown shows that business professionals dominate the survey, accounting for 47% of respondents. This is followed by professionals (19%) and students (16%).

Regarding education, the majority of respondents hold a postgraduate degree (42%), with tertiary education coming in second (34%). This suggests that the survey respondents are relatively well-educated.

Descriptive Statistics

Section B: Civil Society, Media, and Digital Democracy

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Civil society organizations play a significant role in promoting transparency in Nigeria's democratic process.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (3%)	86 (48%)	88 (49%)
Media effectively uses digital platforms to promote accountability in Nigeria.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	110 (61%)	67 (37%)
Digital democracy enhances citizen engagement in Nigeria's electoral process.	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	95 (53%)	70 (39%)
The #EndSARS protests highlighted the power of digital democracy in Nigeria.	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	5 (3%)	131 (73%)	41 (22%)
Real-time electronic transfer of election results can improve transparency in Nigeria's elections.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (3%)	124 (69%)	50 (28%)

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The descriptive statistics reveal strong support for the role of civil society, media, and digital democracy in promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria's electoral process. For instance, 97% of respondents agree or strongly agree that civil society organizations play a significant role in promoting transparency, indicating a high level of confidence in the ability of these organizations to contribute to democratic governance. This is further reinforced by the fact that 98% of respondents agree or strongly agree that media effectively uses digital platforms to promote accountability, highlighting the critical role of media in holding those in power accountable.

Similarly, 92% of respondents agree or strongly agree that digital democracy enhances citizen engagement, suggesting that digital platforms are seen as a key means of increasing citizen participation in the electoral process. The #EndSARS protests are also seen as a prime example of the power of digital democracy, with 95% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the protests highlighted the potential of digital democracy in Nigeria.

The results also show strong support for the use of technology to improve transparency in elections, with 97% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that real-time electronic transfer of election results can improve transparency. This suggests that respondents believe technology can play a significant role in enhancing the integrity of the electoral process.

Overall, these findings suggest that civil society, media, and digital democracy are crucial components of Nigeria's democratic process, and that technology can play a significant role in enhancing transparency and accountability.

Inferential Statistics

Regression analysis is used to test the hypotheses on H1 and H2.

H1: Civil society and media effectively use digital tools to promote democracy in Nigeria.

Independent Variables	Coefficient	P-value
Civil society organizations' use of digital tools	0.45	< 0.01
Media use of digital platforms	0.38	< 0.01

R-squared: 0.72

H2: Digital democracy enhances citizen engagement and participation in Nigeria.

Independent Variable	Coefficient	P-value
Digital democracy	0.52	< 0.01

R-squared: 0.65

The regression analysis results support H1, indicating that civil society organizations and media effectively use digital tools to promote democracy in Nigeria. The coefficients suggest that civil society organizations' use of digital tools has a stronger impact on promoting democracy (0.45) compared to media use of digital platforms (0.38).

The results also support H2, indicating that digital democracy enhances citizen engagement and participation in Nigeria. The coefficient suggests a moderate to strong positive relationship between digital democracy and citizen engagement (0.52).

These findings have implications for policy and practice, highlighting the importance of supporting civil society organizations and media in their use of digital tools to promote democracy, and investing in digital democracy initiatives to enhance citizen engagement and participation.

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis reveals several key themes that underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of digital democracy in Nigeria. One of the dominant themes that emerged was _digital empowerment, with respondents highlighting the potential of digital democracy to empower citizens and promote transparency. Many respondents saw digital democracy as a means of increasing citizen participation and engagement in the democratic process, allowing citizens to hold elected officials accountable and demand greater transparency and accountability. For instance, one respondent noted, "Digital democracy has the potential to revolutionize the way Nigerians engage with their government, making it more participatory and inclusive."

However, respondents also identified significant _challenges_ that threaten the potential of digital democracy in Nigeria. Government restrictions and censorship were cited as major obstacles, with many respondents expressing concerns about the government's willingness to regulate and control online content. Digital divides and unequal access to technology were also seen as significant challenges, with many respondents noting that not all Nigerians have equal access to digital technologies, thereby exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities. As one respondent put it, "The digital divide is a major challenge to digital democracy in Nigeria. Many people in rural areas do not have access to the internet or smartphones, making it difficult for them to participate in online discussions and debates."

Despite these challenges, respondents saw significant _opportunities_ for digital democracy to enhance citizen engagement, promote accountability, and strengthen democratic governance. Many respondents believed that digital democracy could help to increase voter turnout, improve the transparency of electoral processes, and provide citizens with greater access to information about government policies and actions. One respondent noted, "Digital democracy can help to reduce electoral malpractices and ensure that elections are free and fair. It can also help to increase transparency and accountability in government."

Overall, the thematic analysis suggests that digital democracy has significant potential to promote democratic governance in Nigeria, but that this potential is threatened by significant challenges. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort from government, civil society, and citizens to promote digital inclusion, protect online freedoms, and ensure that digital democracy is inclusive and equitable.

The themes that emerged from the thematic analysis are consistent with the quantitative findings, highlighting the potential of digital democracy to promote democratic governance in Nigeria. The analysis suggests that digital democracy is a key component of Nigeria's democratic process, and that efforts to promote digital inclusion and protect online freedoms are essential to strengthening democratic governance in the country.

Descriptive Statistics

Section C: Challenges and Opportunities

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
CHALLENGES		
Internet access	76	42.7%
Government restrictions	64	36%
Digital literacy	136	76.4%
Other	13	7.3%
Suggestions		
Increase digital literacy	51	28%
Improve internet access	|38	21%
Reduce government restrictions	81	45%
Other	10	6%

Source: Field survey, 2026

The descriptive statistics reveal significant challenges to using digital tools for democratic engagement in Nigeria. Digital literacy is a major obstacle, with over three-quarters of respondents citing it as a challenge. This suggests that efforts to promote digital literacy are crucial to enhancing democratic engagement in Nigeria.

Government restrictions are also a significant challenge, highlighting the need for policymakers to create an enabling environment for digital democracy to thrive. Improving internet access is also essential, as over 40% of respondents cited it as a challenge. The results also provide insights into how civil society, media, and digital democracy can be strengthened in Nigeria. Reducing government restrictions is seen as the most important step, suggesting that respondents believe that government interference is a major obstacle to democratic engagement. Increasing digital literacy and improving internet access are also seen as important, highlighting the need for investments in these areas.

Overall, the findings suggest that addressing the challenges to digital democracy in Nigeria will require a multifaceted approach that involves government, civil society, and citizens. Efforts to promote digital literacy, improve internet access, and reduce government restrictions are essential to strengthening democratic governance in Nigeria.

Inferential Statistics

Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses on H3: Challenges like government restrictions and digital divides hinder civil society, media, and digital democracy in Nigeria.

Independent Variables	Coefficient	P-value
Government restrictions	-0.32	< 0.01
| Digital divides	-0.25	< 0.01

R-squared: 0.58

The results support H3, indicating that government restrictions and digital divides are significant challenges to civil society, media, and digital democracy in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDING

The findings of this study reveal a complex and multifaceted landscape of digital democracy in Nigeria. The demographic characteristics of the survey respondents indicate that the sample is relatively well-educated, with a majority holding postgraduate degrees and being employed in professional or business sectors. This suggests that the respondents are likely to be familiar with digital technologies and have a vested interest in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria.

The descriptive statistics reveal strong support for the role of civil society, media, and digital democracy in promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria's electoral process. For instance, 97% of respondents agree or strongly agree that civil society organizations play a significant role in promoting transparency, indicating a high level of confidence in the ability of these organizations to contribute to democratic governance. Similarly, 98% of respondents

agree or strongly agree that media effectively uses digital platforms to promote accountability, highlighting the critical role of media in holding those in power accountable.

However, the study also identifies significant challenges to using digital tools for democratic engagement in Nigeria. Digital literacy is a major obstacle, with over three-quarters of respondents citing it as a challenge. Government restrictions are also a significant challenge, highlighting the need for policymakers to create an enabling environment for digital democracy to thrive. Improving internet access is also essential, as over 40% of respondents cited it as a challenge.

The regression analysis results support the hypotheses that civil society organizations and media effectively use digital tools to promote democracy in Nigeria (H1), digital democracy enhances citizen engagement and participation in Nigeria (H2), and challenges like government restrictions and digital divides hinder civil society, media, and digital democracy in Nigeria (H3).

The thematic analysis reveals several key themes that underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of digital democracy in Nigeria. One of the dominant themes that emerged was digital empowerment, with respondents highlighting the potential of digital democracy to empower citizens and promote transparency. However, respondents also identified significant challenges that threaten the potential of digital democracy in Nigeria, including government restrictions and censorship, digital divides, and unequal access to technology.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital democracy has significant potential to promote democratic governance in Nigeria, but that this potential is threatened by significant challenges. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort from government, civil society, and citizens to promote digital inclusion, protect online freedoms, and ensure that digital democracy is inclusive and equitable.

Summary of Findings

The study reveals that civil society organizations and media play a crucial role in promoting democracy in Nigeria through their effective use of digital tools. The #EndSARS protests and electronic transfer of election results are notable examples of how digital tools have been leveraged to promote transparency and accountability. Digital democracy is also seen as a key enhancer of citizen engagement and participation in Nigeria, with a significant majority of respondents agreeing that it has the potential to increase citizen involvement in the democratic process. However, the study also identifies significant challenges that hinder the effectiveness of civil society, media, and digital democracy in Nigeria, including government restrictions, digital divides, and digital literacy gaps. These challenges underscore the need for a concerted effort to promote digital inclusion, protect online freedoms, and ensure that digital democracy is inclusive and equitable.

Conclusion

The study highlights the critical role of civil society, media, and digital democracy in promoting transparency, accountability, and democratic governance in Nigeria. While digital

democracy has the potential to enhance citizen engagement and participation, it is hindered by significant challenges. To realize the full potential of digital democracy, Nigeria must address these challenges and create an enabling environment for civil society, media, and digital democracy to thrive.

Recommendations

1. **Promote digital literacy**: Implement programs to enhance digital literacy among citizens, particularly in rural areas.

2. **Reduce government restrictions**: Encourage policymakers to reduce government restrictions on digital platforms and ensure online freedoms.

3. **Improve internet access**: Invest in digital infrastructure to improve internet access and affordability across Nigeria.

4. **Support civil society and media**: Provide support to civil society organizations and media outlets to enhance their digital capacities and promote transparency and accountability.

5. **Encourage citizen engagement:** Foster a culture of citizen engagement and participation through digital democracy initiatives, including online consultations and participatory budgeting.

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