

# Institutional Structures, Leadership Followership Dynamics and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: A 2010–2024 Analysis

**Amb. Ike-Onuigbo Chinyere Gift, Ph.D**

*House of Representatives Committee on Safety Standards and Regulations, National Assembly, Abuja, Nigeria*

## ABSTRACT

*Democratic governance depends not only on the existence of constitutional institutions but also on the quality of relationships among institutions, political leaders and citizens. In Nigeria, the period 2010–2024 represents an important phase in the development and consolidation of the Fourth Republic, characterized by electoral transitions, changes in governing parties, institutional reforms, increasing judicial intervention in electoral disputes, legislative–executive interactions, civil-society engagement and growing citizen demands for accountability. This study examines the relationship between institutional structures, leadership–followership dynamics and democratic governance in Nigeria between 2010 and 2024. The study adopts a qualitative documentary research design, drawing on the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, electoral materials published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), relevant legislation, institutional reports and scholarly literature on leadership, followership and democratic governance. The analysis is guided by institutional theory and leadership–followership perspectives. The study argues that democratic performance is shaped by the interaction between formal institutions and the behaviours of political leaders and citizens operating within those institutions. The Nigerian experience demonstrates that constitutional separation of powers provides an important framework for accountability, but institutional effectiveness can be affected by political incentives, party structures, accountability practices, citizen participation and the capacity of institutions to enforce established rules. The study further demonstrates that followership should not be understood merely as passive obedience to political leaders. Citizens, civil society, voters, professional groups, the media and other organized interests constitute important democratic actors capable of monitoring, questioning and influencing governance. The study concludes that strengthening democratic governance requires simultaneous institutional strengthening and the development of responsible, participatory and accountability-oriented leadership and followership. It recommends greater institutional independence, stronger internal party democracy, improved electoral administration, enhanced legislative oversight, civic education, transparent public accountability and mechanisms that facilitate constructive citizen participation.*

## KEYWORDS

*Institutional structures, leadership, followership, democratic governance, Nigeria, Fourth Republic, political institutions, accountability, electoral governance*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Democratic governance is fundamentally concerned with how political authority is acquired, exercised, regulated and transferred. It involves institutions, laws, political actors and citizens whose interactions determine the quality and sustainability of democratic government. In constitutional democracies, political authority is not expected to rest solely on the personal characteristics of political leaders. Rather, authority is organized through institutions, rules and procedures that establish responsibilities, limitations and mechanisms of accountability. Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which began in 1999, provides an important setting for examining these relationships. The 1999 Constitution establishes the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and assigns specific responsibilities to each. Legislative authority is vested in the National Assembly, executive authority is vested in the President, and judicial powers are vested in the courts. The constitutional framework also provides mechanisms through which the National Assembly exercises oversight and investigates matters within its legislative competence.

The period 2010–2024 is particularly significant because it encompasses four general electoral cycles: 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023. It also includes Nigeria's first major alternation of governing parties at the federal level during the Fourth Republic, technological and administrative changes in electoral management, continuing debates about electoral credibility, institutional accountability, political participation and the relationship between citizens and political leadership. INEC's records identify the 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 presidential elections as successive stages in the Fourth Republic's electoral development. Its official documentation also records the legislative and governorship elections conducted during these periods.

The concept of leadership is frequently employed in explaining the successes and failures of democratic governance. However, leadership does not operate in isolation. Political leaders function within institutional environments and depend upon citizens, political parties, bureaucracies, civil society and other social actors. Consequently, the concept of followership is equally relevant. Followership in a democratic context should not be equated with unconditional loyalty or passive obedience. Democratic followership encompasses voting, civic participation, monitoring of public officials, demanding accountability, engaging in policy debates, respecting lawful institutions and participating in peaceful political processes. Existing Nigerian scholarship has emphasized that citizens constitute an important democratic constituency capable of shaping and checking political leadership.

Similarly, research on leadership–followership relations in Nigeria has identified the interaction between political leadership and citizen behaviour as an important factor in understanding democratic outcomes. Arowolo's analysis, for example, examines the relationship between leadership dispositions, followership behaviour and democratic decline in Nigeria. Against this background, this study investigates how institutional structures and leadership–followership relationships interacted with democratic governance in Nigeria between 2010 and 2024.

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Nigeria possesses an extensive constitutional and institutional architecture for democratic governance. Elections are conducted through a constitutionally established electoral

management body; legislative authority is vested in elected representatives; executive authority is constitutionally defined; and courts possess judicial authority.

Nevertheless, the existence of democratic institutions does not automatically guarantee effective democratic governance.

The central problem addressed by this study is the gap that can emerge between formal institutional design and actual political practice. Institutions may establish rules of accountability while political actors develop strategies for pursuing political, electoral or organizational interests within those same institutions.

A second problem concerns the tendency to analyse democratic governance primarily through the behaviour of political leaders. Such an approach can underestimate the role of citizens and other actors who constitute the followership dimension of democracy.

A third problem relates to the relationship between political institutions. Democratic governance requires cooperation as well as checks and balances among institutions. Tensions between the executive and legislature, disputes involving electoral institutions and political parties, and judicial determination of electoral disputes demonstrate that institutional relationships are central to democratic development.

A fourth problem concerns citizen participation. Elections provide an important mechanism through which citizens select political representatives, but democratic participation extends beyond voting. Accountability requires continuous interaction between citizens and institutions.

The study therefore addresses the following broad question:

*How did institutional structures and leadership–followership dynamics influence democratic governance in Nigeria between 2010 and 2024?*

### **III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of this study is to examine institutional structures, leadership–followership dynamics and democratic governance in Nigeria between 2010 and 2024.

The specific objectives are to:

- examine the constitutional and institutional structures supporting democratic governance in Nigeria;
- analyse the relationship between political leadership and democratic institutions during the period 2010–2024;
- examine the role of followership and citizen participation in Nigerian democratic governance;
- assess the relationship between electoral institutions, political parties and democratic accountability;
- identify institutional and leadership–followership challenges affecting democratic governance;

And Propose measures for strengthening democratic governance in Nigeria

#### IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following questions:

- What institutional structures shaped democratic governance in Nigeria between 2010 and 2024?
- How did leadership behaviour interact with Nigeria's democratic institutions during the period under review?
- What role did citizens and other forms of followership play in democratic governance?
- How did electoral institutions and political parties affect democratic accountability?
- What major institutional and leadership–followership challenges affected democratic governance?
- What measures could strengthen institutional effectiveness, leadership accountability and democratic followership in Nigeria?

#### V. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

##### A. *Institutional Structures*

Institutional structures refer to the formal organizations, constitutional rules, procedures and established mechanisms through which political authority is organized and exercised.

In Nigeria, these include the executive, National Assembly, judiciary, electoral management institutions, political parties, public administration and other constitutional and statutory bodies.

The Constitution assigns legislative authority to the National Assembly and provides it with law-making and oversight functions. Sections concerning legislative investigations also empower the National Assembly to investigate matters connected with its legislative competence and the administration of public funds.

Institutions therefore provide the framework within which political leadership operates.

##### B. *Leadership*

Leadership in this study refers to the exercise of political authority by individuals occupying positions of responsibility within government, political parties and public institutions.

Democratic leadership involves more than possessing formal authority. It also involves accountability, responsiveness, respect for institutional rules and willingness to operate within constitutional limits.

Scholarship on Nigeria has emphasized the importance of institutional constraints because political authority can become overly personalized when institutions are weak or insufficiently independent.

##### C. *Followership*

Followership refers to the behaviour and participation of individuals and groups who interact with political leaders and institutions.

In democratic systems, followers are not simply passive recipients of political decisions. Citizen's vote, organize, communicate demands, participate in civil society, and monitor government, challenge public decisions through lawful means and influence political parties.

The literature on Nigeria's democratic experience has specifically identified followership as an important but sometimes under-emphasized component of democratization and good governance.

*D. Democratic Governance*

Democratic governance refers to the exercise of political authority through constitutionalism, participation, accountability, rule of law, representation, transparency and institutional checks and balances.

It therefore encompasses both the procedures of democracy and the quality of relationships between state institutions and citizens.

## **VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

*A. Institutional Theory*

Institutional theory provides the principal framework for this study.

The institutional perspective emphasizes the importance of formal and informal rules in shaping political behaviour. Institutions establish incentives, distribute authority and constrain the behaviour of political actors.

In Nigeria, the Constitution establishes the fundamental structure of government. It creates the executive, legislative and judicial branches and defines their respective powers. It also provides procedures for elections, legislation, public administration and judicial adjudication.

The importance of institutionalism to Nigeria's democratic development lies in the proposition that democratic governance should not depend exclusively upon the personal character of individual leaders. Rather, institutions should provide predictable rules that apply to both leaders and citizens.

This perspective is particularly relevant because Nigeria's experience between 2010 and 2024 demonstrates repeated interactions among elected officials, political parties, electoral institutions, courts and citizens.

*B. Leadership–Followership Perspective*

The second analytical perspective concerns leadership and followership.

Leadership and followership are relational concepts. A political leader operates within a social and institutional environment containing citizens, political supporters, civil society organizations, professional groups and other constituencies.

The leadership–followership relationship can therefore be cooperative, participatory, conflictual or accountability-oriented.

Existing scholarship on Nigeria suggests that the quality of democratic governance is affected by the relationship between political leadership and citizen behaviour.

The framework adopted here assumes that democratic governance improves when:

*Strong institutions + accountable leadership + active citizenship = stronger democratic governance.*

Conversely, institutional weakness combined with unaccountable leadership and passive or politically manipulated followership can create conditions for weak democratic accountability.

This is presented as an analytical relationship rather than a mathematical causal model.

### *C. Conceptual Model*

To make the analytical relationship explicit, the study represents the interaction among the three core constructs as a mediated, bidirectional model rather than a simple additive one:

*Institutional Structures ⇌ Political Leadership ⇌ Citizen Followership → Democratic Governance Outcomes*

In this model, institutional structures set the formal rules within which leaders and citizens act; leadership behaviour shapes how faithfully those rules are applied; and followership behaviour (participation, monitoring, and accountability demands) feeds back into both leadership conduct and institutional legitimacy. The model is descriptive and interpretive: it organizes the documentary evidence reviewed in Sections 8 to 15 rather than testing a statistical hypothesis. It is offered as a framework future quantitative or mixed-methods research could operationalize and test.

## **VII. METHODOLOGY**

### *A. Research Design*

The study adopted a qualitative documentary research design.

The design was selected because the research examines institutional development, constitutional arrangements, elections, political behaviour and scholarly interpretations across a fourteen-year period.

Rather than generating primary survey data, the study analyses documentary evidence produced by relevant institutions and scholarly researchers.

### *B. Sources of Data*

The study relied primarily on secondary sources, including:

- Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended;
- electoral reports and election results published by INEC;
- relevant electoral legislation;
- institutional reports;
- academic journal articles;
- books and scholarly publications;
- policy documents;
- Relevant materials concerning democratic institutions and governance.

INEC's official election database provides results and records for presidential, legislative and governorship elections, including the 2019 and 2023 electoral cycles.

The official 2023 General Election Report describes the 2023 election as the seventh successive general election since 1999 and documents INEC's preparation, administration and monitoring activities.

#### *C. Period of Analysis*

The study covers 2010–2024.

The period begins immediately before the 2011 general election and ends after the 2023 general election and subsequent 2024 developments.

The selected period captures four general electoral cycles:

- 2011
- 2015
- 2019
- 2023

#### *D. Method of Analysis*

Documentary content analysis was used.

Documents were examined according to five analytical themes:

- institutional structure
- leadership behaviour
- followership and citizen participation
- electoral governance
- accountability and democratic consolidation

The analysis focuses on patterns across the period rather than attempting to establish statistical causation.

#### *E. Document Selection and Review Protocol*

To make the documentary review transparent and reproducible, sources were selected according to three criteria: (i) primary constitutional or statutory status (the 1999 Constitution and electoral legislation), (ii) official institutional provenance (INEC election reports, results platforms and observer briefings), and (iii) peer-reviewed scholarly treatment of Nigerian leadership, followership or institutional governance.

Sources were read and coded against the five analytical themes listed in Section 7.4. Where a source addressed more than one theme, relevant passages were coded under each applicable theme rather than assigned to a single category.

The review does not claim exhaustiveness of the secondary literature on Nigerian democratic governance; rather, it draws on a purposively selected set of primary and scholarly sources

sufficient to address the study's six research questions. This is a limitation of the documentary design and is revisited in Section 17.

## **VIII. INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY**

Nigeria's democratic system operates within a presidential constitutional structure.

The Constitution distributes political authority among institutions rather than concentrating it formally in a single organ.

### **A. *Executive Institution***

The executive branch is headed by the President at the federal level.

The executive is responsible for implementing laws and managing public administration within the constitutional framework.

Its relationship with the legislature is central to democratic governance because executive policies generally require legislative interaction through legislation, appropriation and oversight.

### **B. *Legislative Institution***

The National Assembly consists of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Its constitutional responsibilities include law-making, representation, appropriation and oversight.

The constitutional provisions concerning legislative investigations illustrate the legislature's accountability role. The National Assembly may investigate matters within its legislative competence and issues involving the administration of funds appropriated by it.

Consequently, the legislature represents an important institutional mechanism through which executive power can be scrutinized.

### **C. *Judiciary***

The judiciary provides an institutional mechanism for resolving disputes and interpreting law.

Its role is especially significant in electoral democracies because electoral disputes can involve questions concerning constitutional provisions, electoral legislation, candidate eligibility, electoral procedures and declarations.

Judicial review therefore constitutes one of the institutional mechanisms through which political authority is subjected to legal scrutiny.

### **D. *Electoral Institutions***

INEC plays a central role in the electoral process.

The constitutional and statutory framework assigns the Commission responsibility for organizing elections into relevant political offices.

INEC's election-result platform provides official records for successive electoral cycles, including presidential, legislative and governorship elections.

The Commission's 2023 election report further demonstrates the increasingly systematic planning and monitoring required to administer national elections.

## **IX. LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

Political leadership significantly affects how institutions function in practice.

Formal rules establish institutional powers, but political leaders interpret and operate within those rules.

Between 2010 and 2024, Nigeria experienced significant political transitions, including the 2015 transfer of presidential power between political parties.

The 2015 election therefore represented an important event in the development of competitive electoral politics during the Fourth Republic.

However, institutional democracy cannot be assessed solely through changes in political leadership. A democratic system requires continuity of institutions beyond individual office holders.

The central analytical issue is therefore whether institutions can perform their functions irrespective of which political party controls government.

A strong institutional system should preserve:

- constitutional continuity
- procedural regularity
- accountability
- transparency
- legislative oversight
- judicial independence
- electoral credibility
- citizen participation

Research examining leadership in Nigeria has similarly emphasized the importance of institutional constraints in preventing excessive personalization of political authority.

## **X. FOLLOWERSHIP AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

Democracy is not sustained exclusively by political leaders.

Citizens constitute the principal source of electoral legitimacy.

The electoral process gives citizens the opportunity to participate in the selection of representatives, but democratic participation also occurs between elections.

Citizens participate through:

- voting
- political parties
- civil society organizations
- professional associations
- community organizations
- public hearings
- media engagement
- peaceful demonstrations
- petitions
- litigation
- policy advocacy
- public accountability campaigns

The followership perspective is therefore particularly relevant to Nigeria.

Scholarly work has argued that followers possess significant potential to shape, monitor and constrain leadership through democratic participation.

The problem arises when followership becomes reduced to personal loyalty, ethnic or sectional allegiance, material expectations, or unconditional support for political leaders.

Democratic followership requires citizens to distinguish between loyalty to individuals and loyalty to constitutional principles.

## **XI. POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT**

Political parties constitute an essential link between citizens and government.

They recruit candidates, formulate political programmes, organize campaigns and provide structures through which political leadership is contested.

However, the quality of democratic governance can be influenced by the internal organization of political parties.

Research on Nigeria's party politics has examined the relationship between internal party democracy, candidate recruitment and democratic governance. Studies concerning the period 2010–2020 have highlighted debates surrounding candidate selection and compliance with democratic principles within political parties.

The implication is that democratic governance begins before Election Day.

If political parties operate through transparent and participatory processes, citizens may have greater opportunities to influence candidate selection and political programmes.

If internal decision-making is highly centralized, citizens may have fewer opportunities to influence leadership recruitment.

## **XII. ELECTORAL GOVERNANCE, 2010–2024**

The period under study encompasses four major general elections.

Table 1 summarizes the principal institutional and political features of each cycle as documented in INEC's official records and reports.

| <b>Cycle</b> | <b>Key institutional/political feature</b>                                                                                                                                             | <b>Primary source</b>                                                  |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2011         | Important stage in post-1999 electoral development; demonstrated the role of electoral institutions in managing competition in a large, politically diverse federation.                | INEC official results, House of Representatives elections              |
| 2015         | Resulted in the first change of the political party controlling the federal executive in the Fourth Republic; illustrated peaceful transfer of power through constitutional procedure. | INEC historical election documentation                                 |
| 2019         | Continued cycle demonstrating electoral administration, party organization, campaign processes and judicial dispute resolution.                                                        | INEC official presidential and legislative results                     |
| 2023         | Seventh successive general election since 1999; incorporated evolving electoral technologies and administrative procedures; generated extensive public and legal discussion.           | INEC, Report of the 2023 General Election; INEC Briefing for Observers |

### *A. The 2011 Election*

The 2011 election represented an important stage in Nigeria's post-1999 electoral development.

INEC maintains official records of the 2011 presidential and legislative elections.

The election demonstrated the importance of electoral institutions in managing competition in a large and politically diverse federation.

### *B. The 2015 Election*

The 2015 general election was particularly significant because it resulted in a change in the political party controlling the federal executive.

INEC's historical election documentation records the presidential election as one of the major electoral cycles of the Fourth Republic.

The peaceful transfer of power illustrated the importance of electoral competition and constitutional procedures in democratic politics.

*C. The 2019 Election*

The 2019 election represented another major electoral cycle.

INEC provides official presidential and legislative results for the election.

The cycle also demonstrated the continued importance of electoral administration, political party organization, campaign processes and judicial dispute resolution.

*D. The 2023 Election*

The 2023 general election was the seventh successive general election since the restoration of civilian government in 1999, according to INEC's official report.

The election incorporated evolving electoral technologies and administrative procedures and generated extensive public and legal discussion.

The 2023 election therefore provides a useful endpoint for examining the interaction between institutional reform, technology, political leadership, citizen participation and electoral trust.

**XIII. INSTITUTIONAL CHECKS AND BALANCES**

A central feature of democratic governance is the distribution of authority. No single institution should exercise unlimited political power.

The Nigerian constitutional system establishes relationships among executive, legislative and judicial institutions. The legislature exercises law-making and oversight responsibilities. The executive implements laws and manages government administration. The judiciary interprets laws and adjudicates disputes. These relationships can produce institutional cooperation but may also produce disagreement.

Such disagreement is not necessarily evidence of institutional failure. In constitutional democracy, disagreement can be part of the process through which institutional boundaries are tested and clarified. The critical issue is whether institutional disagreements are resolved through constitutional procedures rather than through extra-legal methods.

**XIV. LEADERSHIP–FOLLOWERSHIP DISCONNECT**

One of the major themes emerging from the literature is the possibility of a Disconnect between political leaders and citizens.

Arowolo's study argues that the relationship between leadership dispositions and followership behaviour has important implications for Nigerian democracy.

A leadership–followership disconnect can occur where:

- leaders become detached from citizens;

- citizens support political actors without demanding accountability;
- political participation becomes personality-driven;
- public policy becomes disconnected from citizens' priorities;
- political communication becomes dominated by electoral mobilization rather than governance;
- institutions are perceived primarily as instruments of political competition; and
- Accountability mechanisms are weakened.

However, these dynamics should not be attributed solely to individual leaders.

Institutional incentives, economic conditions, political party structures, social identities, electoral rules and civic culture also influence political behaviour.

## **XV. MAJOR CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

The analysis identifies several interrelated challenges.

### *A. Institutional Weakness*

Where institutions lack adequate autonomy, resources or enforcement capacity, formal rules may not translate effectively into practice.

### *B. Political Personalization*

Excessive concentration of political loyalty around individuals can weaken institutional accountability. The literature on Nigerian leadership has specifically raised concerns about personalization of political authority and emphasized the importance of institutional restraints.

### *C. Internal Party Democracy*

Political parties remain central to leadership recruitment. Weak internal democratic processes can affect the quality of candidate selection and citizen participation.

### *D. Electoral Trust*

Public confidence in elections depends on the transparency and credibility of electoral administration. INEC's continuing development of election-result platforms and electoral reporting reflects the importance of information transparency.

### *E. Citizen Apathy*

Where citizens become disengaged from democratic processes, accountability mechanisms may weaken.

### *F. Political Clientelism*

Political relationships based primarily on personal benefits can weaken issue-based political participation.

*G. Misinformation and Political Communication*

The rapid development of digital communication has expanded political participation but has also increased the speed at which inaccurate or misleading information can circulate.

*H. Accountability Deficits*

Democratic governance requires public officials to provide explanations for decisions and to be subject to lawful scrutiny.

## **XVI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study produces five principal analytical findings.

*A. Finding One:*

Institutions provide the foundation but not the complete substance of democratic governance.

Nigeria possesses a constitutional framework that distributes political authority among different institutions. However, formal institutional design alone does not determine political outcomes. The behaviour of political actors operating within those institutions remains important.

*B. Finding Two:*

Leadership and institutions are mutually connected.

Political leaders influence institutional practices, while institutions constrain political leaders. Consequently, democratic governance depends upon both leadership behaviour and institutional capacity.

*C. Finding Three:*

Followership is an essential component of democracy.

Citizens are not merely voters. They are participants, monitors and stakeholders in governance. The Nigerian followership literature reinforces this point by identifying citizens as an important source of democratic accountability.

*D. Finding Four:*

Electoral institutions occupy a strategic position.

INEC's responsibility for administering elections makes electoral governance central to democratic legitimacy. The successive election cycles between 2011 and 2023 illustrate the importance of institutional continuity and administrative capacity.

*E. Finding Five:*

Political parties constitute an important institutional bridge.

Democratic governance depends partly on how political parties recruit leaders and engage citizens. Internal party democracy therefore deserves greater attention in studies of democratic consolidation.

## **XVII. CONCLUSION**

This study examined institutional structures, leadership–followership dynamics and democratic governance in Nigeria between 2010 and 2024.

The analysis demonstrates that democratic governance is a product of interaction among institutions, political leaders and citizens.

Nigeria's constitutional architecture establishes important institutional foundations through the separation and distribution of governmental authority. The National Assembly performs legislative and oversight functions; the executive implements laws and administers government; the judiciary provides legal interpretation and dispute resolution; and electoral institutions administer the electoral process.

However, the effectiveness of these structures depends substantially on how political actors operate within them.

The study also demonstrates that followership should receive greater attention in the analysis of democratic governance. Citizens are not merely recipients of government decisions. Through voting, civic participation, public advocacy, civil society, professional organizations, media engagement and lawful accountability mechanisms, citizens contribute to the functioning of democracy.

The period 2010–2024 illustrates both the institutional continuity and the political contestation characteristic of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 elections demonstrate the continuing operation of electoral institutions and competitive politics.

Ultimately, democratic consolidation requires more than periodic elections. It requires institutions capable of enforcing rules, leaders willing to respect constitutional limitations and citizens prepared to participate constructively and demand accountability.

This study also has limitations, discussed in Section 18.1 below, which should be taken into account when interpreting its conclusions.

### *A. Limitations of the Study*

As a qualitative documentary study, the analysis relies on secondary and documentary sources rather than primary fieldwork, interviews or survey data. It therefore describes institutional patterns and documented events rather than measuring citizen or elite attitudes directly.

The purposive selection of sources (Section 7.5) means the review, while anchored in primary constitutional and INEC documentation, does not constitute an exhaustive systematic review of all scholarship on Nigerian democratic governance during the period.

The study's conceptual model (Section 6.3) is descriptive and has not been tested against quantitative indicators of institutional performance or citizen behaviour; it is offered as a framework for future empirical testing.

The period ends in 2024 and does not assess governance developments after that date.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis, the study recommends the following:

### A. *Strengthening Institutional Independence*

Constitutional and statutory institutions responsible for elections, justice, oversight and accountability should have adequate operational independence and resources to perform their functions effectively.

### B. *Strengthening Legislative Oversight*

The National Assembly should continue to strengthen evidence-based oversight, public hearings, committee investigations and monitoring of public expenditure within constitutional limits.

### C. *Promoting Internal Party Democracy*

Political parties should improve transparency in candidate selection, leadership recruitment, internal elections and decision-making.

### D. *Improving Electoral Administration*

Electoral institutions should continue to strengthen voter registration, election-result management, logistics, technology, transparency and stakeholder communication.

### E. *Expanding Civic Education*

Civic education should emphasize constitutional rights and responsibilities, electoral participation, accountability and peaceful political engagement.

### F. *Promoting Responsible Followership*

Citizens should be encouraged to evaluate political programmes and public performance rather than relying exclusively on personality, ethnicity, religion or partisan loyalty.

### G. *Strengthening Public Accountability*

Public institutions should make information about policies, budgets, projects and institutional performance more accessible to citizens.

### H. *Encouraging Evidence-Based Political Communication*

Government institutions, political parties, media organizations and civil society should promote fact-based public discourse.

### I. *Protecting Lawful Civic Participation*

Citizens should be able to participate peacefully in political and civic processes within the framework of the law.

*J. Developing Leadership Capacity*

Leadership development programmes should emphasize constitutionalism, public ethics, accountability, policy competence, institutional responsibility and citizen engagement.

*K. Contribution to Knowledge*

The study contributes to the literature by bringing institutional analysis and leadership–followership analysis together within a single framework.

Much of the discussion surrounding Nigerian democracy focuses on political leadership, elections or institutional weakness independently.

This study argues that these dimensions should be examined relationally.

The central contribution is the proposition that:

*"Democratic governance is not produced by institutions, leaders or citizens independently; it emerges from the interaction among institutional structures, leadership behaviour and democratic followership."*

This integrated perspective provides a basis for understanding why formal constitutional institutions may coexist with continuing governance challenges.

*L. Suggestions for Further Research*

Future studies may investigate:

- the relationship between political party internal democracy and leadership recruitment;
- citizen trust in electoral institutions in Nigeria;
- social media and political followership;
- legislative oversight and executive accountability;
- youth participation in Nigerian democracy;
- women's participation in political leadership;
- judicial intervention in electoral disputes;
- institutional independence and democratic consolidation;
- comparative leadership–followership dynamics across African democracies; and
- The relationship between civic education and democratic participation among Nigerian youth.

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