PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: EVALUATING THE DEMOCRATIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIA

IBRAHEEM ADEWALE ADEFABI
Department of Political Science Education, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Nigeria.
adefabiia@eauedoyo.edu.ng ORCID ID: 0009-0008-0446-3498

BABATUNDE OLAWALE OGUNSOLA
Department of Political Science Education, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Nigeria.
ogunsolabo@eauedoyo.edu.ng ORCID ID: 0009-0000-3101-4796

BOLAJI OLUMUYIWA OMITOLA
Department of Political Sciences, Osun State University, Okuku Campus, Osun State, Nigeria.
bolaji.omitola@uniosun.edu.ng ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8114-5516

ADEBOWALE IDOWU ADEYEYE
Department of Political Sciences, Osun State University, Okuku Campus, Osun State, Nigeria.
adebowale.adeyeye@uniosun.edu.ng ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6865-0163

OLUMIDE OMODUNBI
Department of Political Sciences, Osun State University, Okuku Campus, Osun State, Nigeria.
olumide.omodunbi@uniosun.edu.ng ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3432-2940

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64633/wissj.v10i2.16

Keywords

Civil Society Organisations, Accountability, Citizen Participation, Democratic Governance, Nigeria

Abstract

Research Problem: *Despite the growing prominence of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Nigeria's democratic trajectory since the return to civilian rule in 1999, there remains a dearth of sub-national empirical evidence demonstrating whether their activities translate into measurable democratic outcomes. While existing studies highlight the importance of civil society, they largely overlook quantitative assessments of CSOs' contributions to public accountability and citizen participation, particularly at the state level, leaving a significant gap in the literature.*

Methods/Theory: *situated around the participatory democratic theory,*

this study posits that democratic governance is strengthened when citizens and civil society actors have access to decision-making processes and the capacity to hold public officials accountable. A quantitative survey design was adopted, using structured questionnaires administered to 120 purposively selected respondents cutting across civil society actors, community leaders, and governance stakeholders in Oyo State. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results: *Findings revealed that CSOs significantly contribute to public accountability ($r = 0.7645$, $p < 0.001$), citizen participation ($r = 0.8286$, $p < 0.001$), and democratic governance through advocacy and civic engagement ($r = 0.7361$, $p < 0.001$). However, their effectiveness is constrained, with elite capture and partisan interference (Mean = 4.20) identified as major challenges.*

Conclusion: *CSOs remain vital to democratic governance in Nigeria, though their impact is limited by political interference and weak institutional autonomy.*

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *The study provides sub-national quantitative evidence and identifies elite capture as the primary constraint.*

Recommendation: *Governments should enforce Freedom of Information laws and institutionalise participatory platforms, while CSOs should strengthen governance structures and accountability mechanisms.*

Introduction

Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999 supposedly marked the beginning of a progressive deepening of democratic practice. More than twenty-five years later, however, this expectation has not been fully realised as the country continues to grapple with weak public accountability, while citizens remain largely excluded from the processes that shape governance outcomes. This persistent disconnect between democratic norm and democratic practice reflects a routine governance challenge and as such, calls for careful scholarly interrogation.

In democratic governance literature, CSOs are widely recognised as crucial intermediaries that connect citizens with the state, articulating societal demands, promoting accountability, and expanding opportunities for civic engagement that formal institutions often fail to provide (Adedibu, Bamidele, &Aliyu, 2025; Gberevbie, 2013).Worthy of note is that, following the transition of Nigeria from prolonged military rule to democratic governance in 1999, civil society organisations have been playing increasingly prominent roles in shaping political discourse and pushing for democratic reforms. Specifically, through activities such as election monitoring, policy advocacy, civic education, and anti-corruption campaigns, CSOs have contributed and perhaps, continue to expand democratic spaces by encouraging citizens to demand accountability from political office holders (Uadiale, 2011; Nandi & Ibrahim, 2021).

For instance, organisations such as Yiaga Africa have been actively involved in promoting electoral integrity, youth participation, and democratic accountability across the country. Similarly, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre focuses on legislative engagement and policy reform aimed at strengthening transparency and citizen participation in governance. These initiatives demonstrate the strategic role of civil society in facilitating interaction between state institutions and citizens in Nigeria (Okutepa, &Yahaya, 2025).

Indeed, the effectiveness of civil society organisations in promoting accountability and citizen participation remains a subject of debate in the academic literature with some scholars stressing their potential in deepening democratic governance and encouraging citizen participation on one hand, with others arguing that constraints such as limited funding, institutional mistrust, and political interference usually undermine their effective contribution to advancing democratic ideals, on the other hand (Ogunwa&Ogunwa, 2023). The increasing presence and activities of civil society organisations (CSOs) especially in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria notwithstanding, the question remains: to what extent do CSOs have effectively translated their activities into measurable democratic outcomes? The fact that the Nigerian state continues to grapple with weak institutional accountability and limited citizen participation in governance processes leading to low turnout of voters during elections justifies such interrogation.

To be sure, much of the existing scholarship tends to emphasise what CSOs ought to achieve rather than rigorously assessing what they actually achieve in measurable terms. Second, where empirical studies exist, they often focus on specific sectors or national-level analyses, thereby overlooking sub-national analyses that may shape CSO effectiveness. Third, there is a limited effort to systematically link CSO activities to quantifiable outcomes in public accountability and citizen participation, leaving a gap between observed activities and demonstrable democratic impact.

This creates a critical gap in the literature: while CSOs are widely acknowledged as indispensable to democratic governance, there remains insufficient empirical clarity on the extent to which their activities translate into tangible improvements in accountability and citizen participation, particularly at the sub-national level in Nigeria. This unresolved tension underpins the present study. Rather than merely reaffirming the importance of civil society, this study seeks to empirically interrogate the contributions of CSOs to public accountability and citizen participation, with specific focus on Oyo State. Through a quantitative analysis with a sub-national focus, the study moves beyond mere qualitative assertions to provide quantitative assessment on how and to what extentCSO activities influence public accountability and facilitate citizen participation in the political process. The study thus addresses an identified gap in the empirical literature, contributing new sub-national evidence on the role of CSOs in advancing public accountability and citizen participation in Nigeria's democratic process.

Statement of the Problem

Since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999, the consolidation of democratic governance has remained a persistent challenge, particularly in ensuring public accountability and appreciable citizen participation. Although, Civil Society organisations (CSOs) are widely regarded as critical actors that help to bridge the lacuna between the state and citizens but concerns persist vis-a-vis their effectiveness in

promoting transparency, responsiveness, and inclusive governance. Again, despite the growing recognition accorded CSOs especially in such areas as election monitoring, policy advocacy, civic education, and anti-corruption efforts, there is limited empirical evidence demonstrating that these activities translate into appreciable improvements in governance outcomes as much of the existing literature has often neglected effort to systematically link CSO activities to quantifiable outcomes in public accountability and citizen participation, thus leaving a gap between observed activities and demonstrable democratic impact.

Furthermore, scholarly attention has been predominantly focused at the national level, with inadequate emphasis on sub-national level. This creates a significant gap in understanding how CSOs operate in a given settings and the extent to which their interventions enhance accountability and citizen participation.This study, therefore, addresses this gap by empirically examining the contributions of CSOs in enhancing public accountability and citizen participation in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the contributions of civil society organisations (CSOs) in promoting accountability and citizen participation in Nigeria while the specific objectives are to:

i. examine the role of civil society organisations in promoting accountability in governance in Nigeria.

ii. assess the extent to which civil society organisations facilitate citizen participation in democratic processes in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

This study tests the following hypotheses:

$H_0$1: Civil society organisations have no significant influence on the promotion of accountability in governance in Nigeria.

H_A1: Civil society organisations have a significant influence on the promotion of accountability in governance in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research design to provide a comprehensive and in-depth evaluation of contributions of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in enhancing accountability and citizen participation in Nigeria, with particular focus on Oyo State. The population of this study comprised civil society actors, community leaders, policy stakeholders, and struggle members of CSOs, from whom one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were obtained as sample size using a purposive sampling technique. Primary data were generated through structured questionnaire, consisting predominantly of closed-ended and Likert-scale items designed to elicit respondents' perceptions of the roles of CSOs in promoting accountability and citizen participation. Secondary data were drawn from academic journals, textbooks, policy reports, and institutional publications relevant to civil society and democratic governance. Quantitative data derived from the survey were analysed using inferential statistics, specifically correlational analysis to establish relationships between variables.

Conceptual Clarifications

Public Accountability

Public accountability refers to the obligation of public officials and institutions to explain, justify, and take responsibility for their actions to citizens. It involves not only setting clear goals but also ensuring transparency, monitoring

performance, and evaluating outcomes in the management of public resources (Benson, 2015). Scholars commonly distinguish between vertical accountability (citizens holding leaders accountable through elections), horizontal accountability (oversight among state institutions), and social accountability, where state and non-state actors such as civil society organisations and the media jointly ensure oversight (Pérez-Durán, 2024). These forms often operate simultaneously within democratic systems.

In addition, accountability encompasses both supply and demand dimensions. While the supply side focuses on the provision of information and justification by public officials, the demand side emphasises the role of citizens and oversight institutions in scrutinising and sanctioning government actions. These dimensions stress that effective accountability depends on both institutional transparency and active civic engagement.

Citizen participation refers to the active involvement of individuals in decision-making, policy development, and governance oversight. It goes beyond voting to include sustained engagement through consultation, advocacy, deliberation, and collaborative initiatives (OECD, 2020; Nabatchi&Leighninger, 2015).

In democracies like Nigeria, where formal accountability mechanisms are often weak, citizen participation is crucial. Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a key intermediary role by mobilising citizens, fostering civic awareness, and creating platforms for public engagement and oversight (OECD, 2020; Nabatchi&Leighninger, 2015).

Thus, citizen participation is both a democratic ideal and a practical tool, reinforcing accountability, promoting inclusive decision-making, and supporting the consolidation of democratic governance.

Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations (CSOs) constitute the organisational space between the state, the family, and the economy, where individuals voluntarily associate around shared interests and common goals (Mavee, 2022). Beyond being politically oriented actors, CSOs perform diverse functions, including advocacy, service delivery, capacity building, community engagement, and resource mobilisation (Riboldi, 2024). They are widely recognised as critical intermediaries that bridge the governance gap between citizens and the state, promoting transparency, facilitating citizen participation, and sustaining civic space (Ogunwa&Ogunwa, 2023; Nwebo, 2024).

In Nigeria, empirical studies indicate that CSOs play vital roles in promoting accountability, civic education, electoral integrity, and participatory governance. For instance, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) has enhanced legislative oversight and public awareness, while CSOs broadly mobilise communities and monitor electoral processes (Olumese, Oke, &Ogbeide, 2025; Onuh & Ike, 2021; Sule, Sambo, Ahmed, & Yusuf, 2021). Yet, their effectiveness is often constrained by limited funding, legal restrictions, government interference, and donor-driven dependencies, thus undermining credibility and impact (Hearn, 2000; Mavee, 2022). These limitations highlight a central challenge: despite their visibility and activity, CSOs do not always translate efforts into measurable improvements in democratic governance or citizen participation.

Theoretical Framework: Participatory Democratic Theory

The theoretical orientation of this study is participatory democratic theory. The theory helps in interrogating the relationship between civil society activity, public accountability, and citizen engagement in governance. Unlike liberal democratic theory, which limits the citizen's democratic responsibility largely to the periodic act of voting, participatory democratic theory insists that genuine democracy demands the continuous, substantive involvement of people in the decisions that shape their lives. Pateman (1970) was one of the earliest scholars who contended that the value of democracy is not exhausted by representation alone but is realised through the practice of participation.

However, the intellectual roots of this theoretical tradition extend to the classical political thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, both of whom stressed that self-governance was inseparable from active civic involvement. For instance, Rousseau's insistence that sovereignty cannot be delegated without being diminished, and Mill's argument that participation in public life cultivates the moral and intellectual capacities essential to democratic citizenship, all of which provided the philosophical foundation on which emerging theorists built. Macpherson (1977) extended this tradition by drawing attention to the structural conditions particularly, economic inequality that obstruct genuine participation, while Barber (1984) argued that modern governance must create and sustain institutionalised arenas for direct citizen deliberation beyond the confines of formal representative structures.

As Fung (2004) argues, extending participation beyond formal institutions such as legislatures and courts to include communities, workplaces, and civil society organisations deepens rather than departs from democratic practice. In this view, governance becomes more democratic to the extent that citizens can meaningfully influence it. Accordingly, participatory democratic theory assigns a central role to civil society organisations, positioning them as key intermediaries that bridge the gap between the state and society. Wampler and Avritzer (2009) further contend that CSOs operationalise participatory democracy by creating deliberative spaces, mobilising communities, and amplifying citizen voices within governance processes.

According to Oni, Fagbadebo, and Yagboyaju (2020), a central implication of this theoretical tradition is its challenge to what might be called the minimalist or elitist model of democracy, associated most prominently with Schumpeter, which defines democratic governance essentially as competition among elites for the popular vote. Against this position, participatory democratic theory asserts that governance systems derive their legitimacy not from the mere fact of electoral competition but from the breadth and depth of citizen involvement in deliberation and decision-making (Oni, Fagbadebo, &Yagboyaju, 2020). However, this theoryprovides a foundation through which the specific activities of CSOs could be examined and understood not as isolated organisational outputs but as contributions to a broader democratic project. It establishes the baseline against which those contributions are assessed.

Results

A total of one hundred and twenty (120) valid responses were analysed, yielding a complete response rate of 100 per cent. The analysis was structured to provide both descriptive and explanatory insights into the study variables. Accordingly, the results are presented in three interrelated stages: descriptive statistics, inferential analysis, and hypothesis testing.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Analysis of Responses on the Role of CSOs in Promoting Accountability in Governance.

S/N	Item Statement	SA(5)	A(4)	U(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	SD	Decision
1	CSOs engage in monitoring government activities to ensure accountability.	33	62	25	0	0	4.07	0.69	Agreed
2	CSOs expose corrupt practices and mismanagement of public resources.	25	71	24	0	0	4.01	0.64	Agreed
3	CSOs advocate for transparent policy formulation and implementation	25	73	22	0	0	4.03	0.63	Agreed
4	CSOs file public interest litigations to hold government accountable	22	70	27	1	0	3.94	0.66	Agreed
5	CSOs use Freedom of Information requests to access government records.	12	72	35	1	0	3.79	0.62	Agreed
6	CSOs track government budgets and expenditure to detect financial irregularities	25	77	16	2	0	4.04	0.64	Agreed
7	CSOs partner with the media to publicise government misconduct	19	79	21	1	0	3.97	0.61	Agreed
8	CSOs conduct scorecards and performance assessments of public officials	28	71	20	1	0	4.05	0.66	Agreed
	Grand Mean						3.99		Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 1 reveals that all eight items recorded mean scores above the benchmark of 3.50, indicating strong agreement among and respondents on the accountability roles played by CSOs. The item "CSOs engage in monitoring government activities to ensure accountability" recorded the highest mean of 4.07 (SD = 0.69), while "CSOs use Freedom of Information requests to access government records" recorded the lowest mean of 3.79 (SD = 0.62), though still within the agreed range.

Table 2: Analysis of Responses on the Extent to which CSOs Facilitate Citizen Participation in Democratic Processes.

S/N	Item Statement	SA(5)	A(4)	U(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	SD	Decision
1	CSOs conduct civic education to deepen citizen awareness of democratic rights	28	70	22	0	0	4.05	0.65	Agreed
2	CSOs mobilise communities to participate in governance processes	33	70	17	0	0	4.13	0.63	Agreed
3	CSOs organise voter registration drives and encourage electoral participation	33	65	21	1	0	4.08	0.69	Agreed
4	CSOs engage youth in political and civic activities	25	72	22	1	0	4.01	0.65	Agreed
5	CSOs promote the inclusion of women and marginalised groups in governance	12	81	25	2	0	3.86	0.60	Agreed
6	CSOs facilitate town hall meetings and public hearings between citizens and government	33	60	26	1	0	4.04	0.73	Agreed
7	CSOs carry out grassroots outreach to stimulate community-level participation	23	75	22	0	0	4.01	0.61	Agreed
8	CSOs serve as an effective bridge between citizens and government institutions	27	75	17	1	0	4.07	0.63	Agreed
	Grand Mean						4.03		Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

As shown in Table 2, all eight items were agreed upon by respondents, with mean scores ranging from 3.86 to 4.13. The item "CSOs mobilise communities to participate in governance processes" recorded the highest mean of 4.13 (SD = 0.63), while "CSOs promote the inclusion of women and marginalised groups in governance" recorded the lowest mean of 3.86 (SD = 0.60).

Inferential Statistics

Testing Hypothesis One

Table 5: CSOs and Promotion of Accountability in Governance.

Statistical Parameter	Value / Result
N (Sample Size)	120
Variable X	CSO Accountability Index
Variable Y	Governance Accountability Outcome Score
Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.7645
Coefficient of Determination (r^2)	0.5845
p-value (2-tailed)	0.000 (< 0.001)
Degrees of Freedom (df)	118

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 5 reveals a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between CSO activities and the promotion of accountability in governance with Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) = 0.7645 and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) of 0.5845 at p -value of 0.001 which is below 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.5845) indicates that approximately 58.5% of the variance in governance accountability outcomes is explained by CSO activities.

Testing Hypothesis Two

Table 6: CSOs and Enhancement of Citizen Participation

Statistical Parameter	Value / Result
N (Sample Size)	120
Variable X	CSO Citizen Participation Index
Variable Y	Citizen Participation Outcome Score
Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.8286
Coefficient of Determination (r^2)	0.6865
p-value (2-tailed)	0.000 (< 0.001)
Degrees of Freedom (df)	118

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 6 shows a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between CSO activities and citizen participation outcomes with Person Correlation Coefficient (r) = 0.8286, and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) of 0.6865 at p -value of 0.001 which is below 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.6865) reveals that approximately 68.7% of the variance in citizen participation outcomes is accounted for by CSO activities.

Discussion of Findings

Research Objective One: Role of CSOs in Promoting Accountability in Governance

The descriptive analysis in Table 1 indicated a grand mean of 3.99, indicating strong agreement among respondents that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play significant accountability roles in Nigeria's governance system. Out of the items assessed, monitoring government activities recorded the highest mean (Mean = 4.07, SD = 0.69), underscoring the prominence of CSOs' watchdog function. This was closely followed by performance assessment of public officials (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.66) and budget tracking activities (Mean = 4.04, SD = 0.64), suggesting that monitoring and oversight remain the most visible dimensions of CSO engagement.Conversely, the use of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests recorded the lowest mean (Mean = 3.79, SD = 0.62). This relative decline, however, points to persistent institutional barriers in accessing public records, reinforcing existing evidence that limited information access constrains CSO effectiveness in Nigeria (Olumese, Oke, &Ogbeide, 2025).

The inferential results further substantiate these findings. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.7645$) and coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.5845$) at $p < 0.001$ indicate a strong and statistically significant relationship between CSO activities and accountability outcomes. This implies that approximately 58.5% of the variation in governance accountability is explained by CSO engagement, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}). The result affirms that civil society intervention remains a critical driver of transparency and accountability. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Sule, Sambo, Ahmed, and Yusuf (2021) who found that civil society organisations played a crucial role in enhancing the credibility of the general elections in Nigeria. Their contributions cover the entire electoral cycle including the pre-election, election-day, and post-election. This is achieved through activities such as election monitoring, voter education, advocacy, and collaboration with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and international partners. These interventions significantly improved electoral transparency and fairness, thus marking a shift from earlier periods when civil society impact was relatively limited.

Research Objective Two: Extent to which CSOs Facilitate Citizen Participation in Democratic Processes

The descriptive results in Table 2 revealed a grand mean of 4.03, indicating strong agreement that civil society organisations (CSOs) significantly enhance citizen participation in governance. Community mobilisation emerged as the most prominent activity (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.63), followed by voter registration and electoral mobilisation (Mean = 4.08, SD = 0.69), and CSOs' intermediary role between citizens and government institutions (Mean = 4.07, SD = 0.63). However, the promotion of inclusion for women and marginalised groups recorded the lowest mean (Mean = 3.86, SD = 0.60), while this fell within the agreement range, the finding suggests that while CSOs contribute meaningfully to participation, inclusivity remains comparatively limited. This observation aligns with existing literature highlighting persistent structural barriers to the participation of marginalised groups in democratic processes (OECD, 2020; Nabatchi&Leighninger, 2015).

The inferential analysis further strengthens these findings. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.8286$) and coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.6865$) at $p < 0.001$ indicate a strong and statistically significant relationship

between CSO activities and citizen participation outcomes. This implies that approximately 68.7% of the variation in participation is explained by CSO engagement, the highest explanatory power observed in the study. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) was rejected.

This result corroborates empirical evidence that civil society-driven mobilisation enhances citizen engagement and democratic participation, particularly through electoral processes and civic advocacy (Sule, Sambo, Ahmed, & Yusuf, 2021). It also reinforces broader theoretical arguments that civic mobilisation by CSOs constitutes a critical pathway for strengthening participatory democracy, especially in contexts characterised by low institutional trust (Gaventa, 2006; Hendriks& Dzur, 2022).

Conclusion

This study examined the contributions of civil society organisations (CSOs) to public accountability and citizen participation in Nigeria, with focus on Oyo State. Two principal findings emerged. First, CSO activities exert a strong and statistically significant influence on governance accountability outcomes ($r = 0.7645$, $r^2 = 0.5845$, $p < 0.001$) with monitoring, watchdog functions, and performance assessment of public officials as the most visible activities. Second, CSO engagement produces an even stronger explanatory relationship with citizen participation outcomes ($r = 0.8286$, $r^2 = 0.6865$, $p < 0.001$) driven by community mobilisation, electoral engagement, and intermediary bridging roles, though witha comparatively weaker record on gender and social inclusion.These findings affirmed the utility of participatory democratic theory, validating the proposition that democratic governance is strengthened when organised civil society actors provide channels through which citizens hold public officials accountable. However, the limited performance on inclusion introduces a critical qualification: expanded participation does not automatically produce inclusive participation. This study thus extends the theoretical framework by contending that participatory democratic theory must incorporate explicit consideration of who participates and under what conditions. The findings broadly corroborate prior studies on CSO contributions to electoral transparency, democratic accountability, and civil society's intermediary role between citizens and the state (Sule et al., 2021; Onuh & Ike, 2021; Ogunwa&Ogunwa, 2023; Mavee, 2022) while departing from them in two respects. First, the study provides sub-national quantitative evidence with correlation coefficients and coefficients of determination, offering a more precise measure of CSO influence on democratic outcomes. Second, by situating findings within Oyo State, it demonstrates that sub-national analysispresupposes independent scholarly attention beyond the national-level analyses.

Recommendation

Based on the two research objectives examined in this study, the following recommendations are directed at governments and civil society organisations respectively:

The findings from Objective One reveal that CSOs are most effective as monitoring and watchdog actors, yet encounter persistent barriers in accessing government-held information despite the existence of the Freedom of Information Act. Accordingly, governments at the federal and state levels including Oyo State should enforce full implementation of the Freedom of Information Act by establishing independent oversight offices mandated to

compel timely compliance by Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). Civil society organisations, on their part, should institutionalise systematic FOI-based monitoring through dedicated transparency desks and formalise collaborative arrangements with the National Orientation Agency, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), and relevant parliamentary committees to amplify accountability outcomes.

Although community mobilisation and electoral engagement ranked as the most prominent CSO participation activities under Objective Two, the markedly weak endorsement of inclusion for women and marginalised groups signals a critical gap that demands deliberate and targeted policy response. It is therefore recommended that governments should establish formal participatory governance platforms including structured community town halls and policy feedback mechanisms that are institutionally linked to decision-making processes rather than being ad hoc and that CSOs should deliberately redesign civic education andmobilisationprogrammeswhich will be gender-sensitive, partnering with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and local government councils to target underserved constituencies in Oyo State.

References

Adedibu, A. A., Bamidele, A. H., & Aliyu, O. A. (2025). Civil society and democratic governance in Nigeria. In *Governance and public administration in Africa* (pp. 281–306). Olabisi Onabanjo University Publishing House. https://kwasuspace.kwasu.edu.ng/handle/123456789/550

Barber, B. R. (1984). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. University of California Press.

Benson, K. S. (2015). Governance and accountability in Nigeria. In F. Omotoso, A. A. Agagu, & O. Abegunde (Eds.), *Governance, politics and policies in Nigeria: An essay in honour of Prof. Dipo Kolawole* (pp. 125–139). SONOU d' Afrique.

Gaventa, J. (2006). Finding the spaces for change: A power analysis. *IDS Bulletin*, *37*(6), 23–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00320.x

Gberevbie, D. E. (2013). Civil society, democratic governance and development in Nigeria, 1999–2012. *Contemporary Journal of African Studies*, *1*(2), 93–116.

Hearn, J. (2001). The "uses and abuses" of civil society in Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, *28*(87), 43–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056240108704534

Hendriks, C. M., & Dzur, A. W. (2022). Citizens' governance spaces: Democratic action through disruptive collective problem-solving. *Politics & Society*, *50*(1), 3–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720980902

Fung, A. (2004). *Empowered participation: Reinventing urban democracy*. Princeton University Press.

Fung, A. (2013). Infotopia: Unleashing the democratic power of transparency. *Politics & Society*, *41*(2), 183–212. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329213483107

Macpherson, C. B. (1977). *The life and times of liberal democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Mavee, S. E. A. (2022). The relevance of civil society participation in democratic governance. *AdministratioPublica*, *30*(3),

171–191. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-adminpub_v30_n3_a11

Munro, A. (2024, December 7). Carole Pateman. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Carole-Pateman

Nabatchi, T., &Leighninger, M. (2015). *Public participation for 21st century democracy*. Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119154815

Nandi, L.A. & Ibrahim, H.A., 2021. Nigeria's Democracy: Civil Society Organization, A Tool for Democratic Consolidation. *United International Journal for Research & Technology* (UIJRT), 2(11), pp.32-37.

Nwebo, O. E. (2024). Legitimacy and role of the civil society in promoting constitutionalism and democratic governance in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *International Review of Law and Jurisprudence*, *6*(1), 127–133. https://nigerianjournalsonline.com/index.php/IRLJ/article/view/4906

OECD. (2020). *Innovative citizen participation and new democratic institutions: Catching the deliberative wave*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en

Ogunwa, S. A., &Ogunwa, F. A. (2023). Revisiting civil society and democratic governance in Africa: Present or absent in Nigeria? *JPPUMA: JurnalIlmuPemerintahandanSosialPolitik UMA*, *11*(1), 36–48. https://doi.org/10.31289/jppuma.v11i1.9261

Okutepa, L., & Yahaya, A. (2025). Civil society organisations and election observation: A case study of Yiaga Africa in the 2023 general elections. *FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(2), 94–108.

Olumese, S. O., Oke, C. I. A., & Ogbeide, F. (2025). The role of civil society organizations in promoting transparency and accountability in Nigeria's public service: A study of Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC). *RJIP — Journal for Social Sciences (JSS)*, *2*(6), 719–732. https://rapidjournals.com/wp-content/uploads/journal/published_paper/volume-2/issue-6/rjip_tW1nhx6D.pdf

Omach, P. (2016). Civil society organisations and local-level peacebuilding in northern Uganda. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *52*(6), 786–802. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909614552916

Onuh, P. A., & Ike, C. C. (2021). Civil society organizations and electoral credibility in Nigeria. *Africa Review*, *13*(2), 233–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/09744053.2021.1941694

Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and democratic theory*. Cambridge University Press.

Pérez-Durán, I. (2024). Twenty-five years of accountability research in public administration: Authorship, themes, methods, and future trends. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *90*(3), 546–562. https://doi.org/10.1177/00208523231211751

Riboldi, M. (2024). A typology of civil society organisation activities: A multi-grounded theory approach to what CSOs do. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *59*(2), 197–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2024.2362211

Smidt, H., Johansson, J., & Richter, T. (2025). Civil society under attack: The consequences for horizontal accountability institutions. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *60*, 81–110. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-023-09423-x

Sule, B., Sambo, U., Ahmed, A., & Yusuf, M. (2021). Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR) and electioneering process in Nigeria (2015–2019). *SAGE Open*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211006708

Uadiale, M. (2011). The role of civil society organizations in democratic consolidation in Nigeria: The birth of a new order. *International Journal of Advanced Legal Studies and Governance*, *2*(1), 1–13. https://icidr.org.ng/index.php/Ijalsg/article/view/340

Wampler, B., &Avritzer, L. (2005). The spread of participatory democracy in Brazil: From radical democracy to good government. *Journal of Latin American Urban Studies*, *7*, 37–52.

Wiebusch, M., Aniekwe, C. C., Oette, L., &Vandeginste, S. (2019). The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance: Past, present and future. *Journal of African Law*, *63*(S1), 9–38. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855319000470