THE ROLE OF HUMAN TRANSFORMATION IN CURBING ELECTORAL MALPRACTICES: ANALYZING THE LIMITATIONS OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESS

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Abstract
The prevalence of electoral malpractices in Nigeria has remained a significant concern for democracy and governance. While technological interventions have been introduced to mitigate electoral fraud, such as electronic voting systems and biometric voter identification, the deep-seated issues of human corruption, manipulation, and moral decay persist, limiting the efficacy of these innovations. This article argues that human transformation rooted in ethical reform, value reorientation, and civic responsibility is essential for addressing the root causes of electoral malpractices. By analyzing the limitations of technology in the Nigerian electoral process, this paper highlights the complementary role of human transformation alongside technological advancements to foster transparent, free, and fair elections. The theory adopted is Transformative Learning Theory. Drawing from theoretical frameworks on governance and human development, the article discusses the necessity for a holistic approach that emphasizes character formation, leadership ethics, and civic education. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of institutionalizing these transformations for sustained democratic progress. The methods of data collection in this research is both primary and secondary sources, such as previous works of foreign and local authors who have written on the relevant issues in journals, books of reading, internet documentaries and lecture notes. The primary sources include both participant and non-participant methods of observation.
Keywords: Human Transformation, Electoral Malpractices, Technology, Nigeria, Governance, Ethical Reform

Introduction
Electoral malpractices have long been a significant challenge to the integrity of democratic processes, particularly in Nigeria, where issues such as vote buying, ballot box snatching, and manipulation of electoral outcomes persist. Electoral malpractices have plagued Nigeria's democratic processes since independence, manifesting in various forms such as ballot stuffing, vote-buying, and voter intimidation (Alemika, 2015). Despite the introduction of technological innovations aimed at improving the electoral process, these tools have not eradicated malpractices. Instead, they often expose underlying vulnerabilities within the electoral system that technology alone cannot address. Therefore, understanding the role of human transformation is crucial in the quest to curb electoral malpractices effectively. Human transformation encompasses changes in attitudes, behaviours, and values among individuals and groups within society, including voters, electoral officials, and political actors. While technology can enhance transparency and efficiency in the electoral process, the success of these systems largely depends on the integrity and accountability of the human agents who operate them. In the Nigerian context, the historical context of political patronage, a lack of civic education and entrenched corrupt practices present significant obstacles that technology alone cannot overcome.

This study aims to analyze the limitations of technology in the Nigerian electoral process while highlighting the critical need for human transformation as a complementary strategy. By examining the interplay between technological advancements and human behavior, this research seeks to identify effective approaches for fostering a culture of integrity and accountability in electoral practices. Ultimately, it advocates for a holistic approach that emphasizes the necessity of transforming human attitudes and behaviors to achieve meaningful and lasting improvements in Nigeria's electoral system.

Conceptual Clarification
Human Transformation
Human transformation has been defined in various ways, reflecting its complexity and multidimensional nature. According to Rogers (1961), human transformation is a process through which individuals undergo self-actualization, realizing their full potential and improving their contributions to society. Mezirow (1991) describes it as a shift in worldview, where individuals critically reflect on their experiences, leading to a new understanding and way of being.

Loder (1981) defines human transformation as a change in the inner structures of consciousness that enables people to act with greater compassion, integrity, and social awareness. According to Wilber (2000), it involves transcending one's ego to embrace broader perspectives, fostering personal and collective growth. Dirkx (1998) views transformation as a deep and emotional journey, rooted in understanding one's identity, values, and place in society. Tisdell (2003) argues that human transformation requires embracing cultural and spiritual elements, shaping individuals' ethical and moral perspectives. Freire (1970) emphasizes critical consciousness in human transformation, which allows people to recognize and challenge oppressive systems. Kegan (1982) defines it as the developmental progression through increasingly complex ways of thinking, relating, and interacting with others. Scharmer (2009) discusses human transformation as the capacity to shift from "ego-system" to "eco-system" awareness, where individuals move from self-centered to community-centered thinking. Finally, Cranton (2006) asserts that human transformation involves questioning assumptions, leading to new ways of thinking and acting, with a focus on societal change.

Electoral Malpractice
Electoral malpractices refer to illegal or unethical actions that undermine the fairness, transparency, and credibility of elections. Schedler (2002) defines electoral malpractices as violations of democratic principles aimed at manipulating electoral outcomes. Birch (2011) sees it as any action that compromises the integrity of the electoral process, including vote-rigging and voter intimidation. According to Lehoucq (2003), electoral malpractices include fraudulent activities that distort the electoral process, such as ballot stuffing and falsification of results. Kuehn (2018) defines it as coercion or manipulation of the voting process to achieve a desired result. Goodwin-Gill (2006) highlights that electoral malpractices can range from subtle forms of influence to overt actions of fraud that deprive citizens of their democratic rights. Munck (2006) describes it as deliberate attempts to disrupt the electoral process by those in power. Norris (2014) defines electoral malpractices as breaches in electoral integrity, including abuses by political parties, candidates, and election officials. Elklit and Svensson (1997) argue that electoral malpractices result from insufficient institutional frameworks, allowing manipulative behaviors. Simpser (2013) discusses the use of systemic corruption and patronage networks in electoral malpractices to maintain control. Levitsky and Way (2010) argue that electoral malpractices weaken democratic institutions, reducing citizen trust in governance and fostering political instability.

In the context of "The Role of Human Transformation in Curbing Electoral Malpractices: Analyzing the Limitations of Technology in the Nigerian Electoral Process," human transformation is essential for fostering a culture of integrity, ethical awareness, and accountability among both the electorate and political actors. Despite advances in technology intended to address electoral malpractices, human transformation is indispensable, as technology alone cannot eliminate the deep-rooted cultural and ethical challenges that enhanced electoral misconduct. Technology, such as biometric systems, aims to enhance transparency and reduce fraud in Nigeria's electoral process. However, without a corresponding transformation in the values, beliefs, and behaviors of stakeholders, technological interventions are insufficient in creating sustainable change. The human transformation of citizens, election officials, and political leaders entails developing ethical values and a commitment to democratic principles that deter corrupt practices. For example, civic education programs can empower citizens to understand their rights, resist electoral manipulation, and hold their leaders accountable. Ethical leadership is crucial in setting standards of behavior and demonstrating integrity, which can inspire similar conduct within the wider society. Human transformation promotes active engagement, encouraging citizens not only to vote but to participate in electoral oversight, such as volunteering as election monitors or joining advocacy groups that push for reforms. Furthermore, it helps build resilience against electoral manipulation and fosters trust in the democratic process, making it more challenging for corrupt individuals to influence electoral outcomes. While technology has the potential to detect and prevent certain types of electoral malpractices, such as multiple voting and voter impersonation, it cannot address issues like vote-buying, intimidation, and misuse of public resources. These issues are deeply embedded in the political culture and require human transformation to effectively counteract. A transformative approach to addressing electoral malpractices includes cultivating ethical values, fostering civic responsibility, and promoting a sense of collective identity and accountability. The limitations of technology in combating electoral malpractices in Nigeria illustrate the need for a more holistic approach that combines both technological and human-centered solutions, aiming to reshape the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to electoral corruption.

Theoretical Framework
The theory adopted is Transformative Learning Theory. This theory was propounded by Jack Mezirow in 1978. Mezirow introduced transformative learning as a process by which individuals undergo a profound shift in their perspectives and beliefs, ultimately leading to changes in their actions and behaviors. According to Mezirow, transformative learning involves critical reflection, which enables individuals to question previously held assumptions and biases, leading to new understandings and more autonomous thinking (Mezirow, 1991). He argued that transformative learning is central to adult education and personal growth, especially in helping individuals develop a broader worldview and improved decision-making skills.

The Transformative Learning Theory is highly relevant to understanding human transformation's role in addressing electoral malpractices in Nigeria. Despite advancements in electoral technology, such as the use of biometric systems and electronic voting, these tools alone cannot entirely curb the entrenched cultural and behavioral issues associated with electoral malpractices. Human transformation guided by transformative learning principles can enable both voters and political stakeholders to reflect critically on their attitudes, ethics, and practices related to elections. This reflective process can shift values toward integrity, accountability, and transparency, essential for building a democratic culture that resists manipulation and corruption. Through the fostering a transformative learning experience, educational programs, civic engagement workshops, and ethical leadership training can encourage Nigerian citizens and officials to recognize the long-term implications of electoral malpractice. Such transformation is necessary for sustaining a fair and credible electoral process, as it motivates people to reject corrupt practices and hold leaders accountable beyond what technology alone can achieve. Transformative Learning Theory underscores the need for personal and societal change, which complements technological measures, ensuring that the limitations of technology in curbing malpractice are offset by an ethically transformed electorate.

The Nigerian Electoral Process and the Adoption of Technology
In response to the pervasive electoral irregularities, Nigeria has adopted various technological solutions aimed at improving election transparency. They include the following:

Smart Card Reader (SCR)
The Smart Card Reader (SCR) has emerged as a pivotal tool in the Nigerian electoral process, representing a significant advancement in efforts to enhance the integrity, transparency, and efficiency of elections. Its primary function is to verify the identity of voters through biometric data. By scanning fingerprints stored on the smart cards, the device ensures that only registered and eligible voters can access the polling stations. This capability addresses long-standing issues of voter impersonation, which have plagued Nigerian elections (INEC, 2015). By ensuring that each vote is cast by a legitimate voter, the SCR plays a critical role in enhancing the overall integrity of the electoral process. The SCR facilitates real-time verification, significantly reducing the time required to check voters' identities. This efficiency helps minimize queues at polling stations, leading to a smoother voting experience (Odugbemi and Ojo, 2016). By expediting the verification process, the SCR contributes to a more organized electoral environment, ultimately encouraging higher voter turnout and participation. Equipped with advanced security features, the SCR also protects against unauthorized access and manipulation of voter data, which is crucial for building public confidence in the electoral process (Ogbimi, 2020). The transparency offered by the SCR through accurate voter verification fosters trust among the electorate, ensuring that election results are seen as credible and reflective of the people's will.

Moreover, the SCR is part of a broader technological ecosystem in Nigeria's electoral framework, integrating with other technological tools and systems, such as electronic result transmission systems (Akpan, 2019). This interconnectedness allows for a more comprehensive and efficient electoral process, where data flows seamlessly between different stages of the election, from voter registration to result announcement. The adoption of the SCR directly addresses historical challenges faced by the Nigerian electoral system, including corruption and lack of accountability. By incorporating technology into the voting process, the SCR helps mitigate opportunities for electoral fraud, thereby fostering a more democratic and transparent political environment (Oloyede, 2021).

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)
Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are increasingly being considered in Nigeria's electoral process as a means to modernize and enhance the efficiency of voting. Although their implementation is still in the pilot stage, EVMs have the potential to streamline the voting process and ensure accurate counting of votes. These machines allow voters to

cast their votes electronically, reducing the reliance on paper ballots, which are often prone to manipulation and human error (Akpan, 2019). The introduction of EVMs could address several persistent issues in the Nigerian electoral process, such as ballot box snatching and the miscounting of votes during manual tallying. With EVMs, votes are recorded electronically and can be transmitted directly to central servers for immediate aggregation, promoting transparency and expediting the result announcement process. While the adoption of EVMs may face resistance due to cultural preferences for traditional voting methods, their benefits in enhancing electoral integrity are significant.

Biometric Data Capture
Biometric data capture has become a cornerstone of Nigeria's electoral reform efforts, providing a secure and reliable means of voter registration. During the voter registration process, biometric systems are employed to collect fingerprints and facial images of prospective voters. This data is critical in creating a robust voter registry that minimizes the chances of fraud and ensures that only legitimate voters participate in elections (Oloyede, 2021). The biometric registration system also addresses the challenge of duplicating voter registrations, as each individual's biometric data is unique and can be accurately verified (Ogbimi, 2020). The introduction of biometric data capture has significantly improved the accuracy of the voter registry, thereby enhancing the integrity of the electoral process. However, challenges such as inadequate technology infrastructure and the need for widespread public education on biometric processes remain (Odugbemi and Ojo, 2016).

Online Voter Registration
The advent of online voter registration in Nigeria marks a significant leap toward increasing electoral participation and accessibility. Initiated by INEC, this digital platform allows citizens to register as voters from the comfort of their homes, eliminating the need for physical visits to registration centers (INEC, 2021). The online voter registration system not only simplifies the registration process but also enhances the efficiency of data management and storage. Through enabling a wider range of citizens to participate in the electoral process, online voter registration is expected to increase voter turnout and engagement. This initiative has proven especially beneficial in reaching young voters who are more comfortable with technology and online platforms (Oloyede, 2021). Nevertheless, challenges such as internet accessibility and digital literacy remain significant barriers that need to be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of online voter registration.

Electronic Result Transmission Systems
The implementation of electronic result transmission systems in Nigeria represents a crucial step toward enhancing electoral transparency and efficiency. This technology allows for the immediate transfer of election results from polling units to INEC's central server, facilitating quicker result aggregation and reducing the potential for manipulation during the result collation process. The electronic result transmission system addresses historical challenges associated with manual result counting, such as delays and discrepancies in reported results. By ensuring that results are transmitted electronically, INEC can provide timely updates to the public, thus increasing transparency and public confidence in the electoral process (Akpan, 2019). However, concerns about the reliability of internet connectivity in remote areas and potential cyber security threats remain critical issues that must be addressed to ensure the system's effectiveness.

Social Media and Mobile Apps
Social media and mobile applications have emerged as powerful tools for engagement and information dissemination during elections in Nigeria. These platforms allow electoral bodies, civil society organizations, and political parties to communicate directly with the electorate, providing real-time updates, information about polling locations, and reminders about election dates (Odugbemi and Ojo, 2016). Moreover, social media serves as a platform for citizens to report electoral malpractices, thereby enhancing accountability and transparency within the electoral process. By leveraging social media and mobile apps, stakeholders can mobilize voters, educate them on their rights, and encourage civic participation (Oloyede, 2021). However, challenges such as misinformation, cyber bullying, and the digital divide must be managed to harness the full potential of these technologies in the electoral context.

Limitations of Technology in Addressing Electoral Malpractices
The integration of technology in Nigeria's electoral process has shown promise in enhancing transparency and efficiency; it also comes with significant limitations that can undermine its effectiveness in addressing electoral

malpractices. Understanding these limitations is crucial for policymakers, electoral bodies, and stakeholders aiming to improve the integrity of elections. Here are some key limitations of technology in addressing electoral malpractices:

Technical Infrastructure and Reliability: One of the primary limitations is the **technical infrastructure and reliability** of technological tools. Many regions in Nigeria face inadequate technological infrastructure, which can hinder the effective deployment of electronic voting systems, biometric verification, and result transmission technologies. Frequent power outages, limited internet access, and lack of adequate training for election officials on these technologies can lead to malfunctions during elections. For instance, during the 2019 general elections, issues with the Smart Card Readers were reported, with many failing to function correctly due to poor internet connectivity and power supply (Odugbemi and Ojo, 2016). Such technical failures can disenfranchise voters and diminish confidence in the electoral process.

Cyber Security Threats: This represents another significant limitation. As electoral processes become more digitized, the risk of cyber-attacks increases. Malicious actors can exploit vulnerabilities in electronic voting machines, online voter registration systems, and data transmission networks to manipulate results or compromise voter data. The 2016 U.S. presidential election highlighted how foreign interference could undermine electoral integrity through cyber operations, and similar risks exist in Nigeria's electoral landscape. A successful cyber-attack could lead to widespread misinformation, loss of voter data, and manipulation of election outcomes, further eroding public trust in the electoral system.

Moreover, there is the issue of **digital literacy and accessibility**. A significant portion of Nigeria's population, particularly in rural areas, lacks access to digital technologies and the internet. This digital divide can disenfranchise certain groups of voters, particularly the elderly and those from low-income backgrounds, who may be less familiar with using technology for voting and registration (Oloyede, 2021). Even with the introduction of online voter registration and digital voting systems, a lack of inclusivity can lead to unequal participation in the electoral process, perpetuating existing inequalities.

Resistance to change is another limitation. Many citizens and political actors in Nigeria are accustomed to traditional voting methods and may be skeptical of new technologies. Concerns about the reliability and security of electronic voting systems can lead to resistance from both voters and political parties. This skepticism can hinder the widespread acceptance and adoption of technological innovations that are critical for improving the electoral process (Akpan, 2019). Furthermore, political parties may exploit these fears to manipulate public opinion and delegitimize the electoral process.

The potential for **political interference and manipulation** is also a critical concern. Despite technological advancements, the influence of powerful political actors can compromise the integrity of electoral processes. For example, the introduction of biometric verification and electronic voting does not guarantee immunity from political machinations, such as vote-buying, intimidation, and coercion. Political actors may find ways to manipulate or obstruct technological systems to favor their interests, thereby undermining the intended benefits of technological innovations.

Lack of legal and regulatory frameworks: Lastly, there is the challenge of **legal and regulatory frameworks** that govern the use of technology in elections. Nigeria's electoral laws may not adequately address the nuances of technology-driven processes, leading to ambiguity and loopholes that can be exploited. Without a robust legal framework to govern the deployment and use of technology in elections, it becomes challenging to hold accountable those who might engage in malpractices (Oloyede, 2021). Clear regulations regarding the use of technology in elections are essential to ensure compliance and safeguard the integrity of the electoral process.

Human Transformation as a Solution to Electoral Malpractices in Nigeria
Addressing electoral malpractices in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses not only technological innovations but also significant human transformation. This transformation involves cultivating a culture of integrity, accountability, and civic responsibility among citizens, electoral officials, and political actors. Fostering such change is crucial to establishing a credible electoral process that reflects the will of the people.

One of the fundamental aspects of human transformation **is education and awareness.** Educating voters about their rights, the electoral process, and the importance of their participation can empower them to resist malpractices such as vote-buying and intimidation. Civic education initiatives can help create a more informed electorate that understands the significance of their votes and the implications of electoral malpractices on democracy (Nwokedi, 2021). Furthermore, enhancing awareness among electoral officials regarding ethical standards and the implications of their actions can promote accountability within the electoral system.

Another essential element is fostering **ethical leadership** among political actors and electoral bodies. Leaders must demonstrate integrity and commitment to democratic principles to inspire similar behaviors among their constituents and subordinates. Political parties should prioritize the selection of candidates who adhere to ethical standards and are committed to upholding democratic values. Implementing stringent codes of conduct for electoral officials can also reinforce ethical behavior and deter corruption (Akpan, 2019).

The promotion of **active citizenship** is crucial for human transformation. Citizens should be encouraged to participate actively in the electoral process, not just during elections but throughout the political cycle. This includes engaging in dialogue about electoral issues, holding representatives accountable, and advocating for reforms that enhance electoral integrity. Grassroots movements and civil society organizations can play a pivotal role in mobilizing citizens and fostering a sense of ownership over the electoral process (Oloyede, 2021).

Collaboration among stakeholders is vital for creating a robust framework to combat electoral malpractices. This includes partnerships between governmental bodies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international organizations. Such collaborations can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources, and best practices for promoting electoral integrity. By working together, stakeholders can develop comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of electoral malpractices and implement effective interventions.

Finally, fostering a **culture of accountability** is essential for sustaining human transformation in the electoral process. Mechanisms should be established to hold individuals and organizations accountable for their actions during elections. This could include transparent reporting systems, whistleblower protections, and independent monitoring bodies that oversee electoral conduct. When individuals understand that there are consequences for engaging in malpractices, they are less likely to do so.

Conclusion/Recommendations
Electoral malpractices in Nigeria necessitate a comprehensive approach that goes beyond technological solutions. Human transformation plays a critical role in fostering a culture of integrity, accountability, and active citizenship, which are essential for ensuring credible and transparent elections. By prioritizing education and awareness, promoting ethical leadership, and encouraging active participation among citizens, stakeholders can empower individuals to resist malpractices and demand a higher standard of electoral conduct. Moreover, collaboration among various stakeholders including government bodies, civil society organizations, and the private sector is vital for creating a robust framework that addresses the root causes of electoral malpractices. Through collective efforts, resources can be pooled, knowledge can be shared, and effective strategies can be developed to enhance electoral integrity.
To further this research, several recommendations can be made. First, there should be an intensified civic education campaign to raise awareness about the electoral process, voters' rights, and the importance of participation. Educational programs targeting both youth and adults can help cultivate an informed electorate. Second, establishing and enforcing stringent ethical guidelines for political parties and electoral officials is crucial. This can include mandatory training programs focused on ethics and accountability. Third, fostering a culture of active citizenship should be prioritized, encouraging citizens to engage not only during elections but throughout the political process. Supporting grassroots movements and civil society initiatives can help galvanize public participation. Finally, establishing independent electoral monitoring bodies can enhance transparency and accountability in the electoral process, ensuring that violations are reported and addressed effectively. The pathway to curbing electoral malpractices in Nigeria lies in harnessing the transformative power of human agency. By fostering an environment where integrity and civic responsibility are prioritized, Nigeria can move closer to achieving a democratic process that genuinely reflects the will of its people, thereby strengthening its democratic institutions and promoting sustainable governance.

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