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ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

Department of Political Science and Public Administration

**THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC VOTER
ACCREDITATION ON THE CREDIBILITY OF THE
2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

Master Thesis

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Supervisor

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other persons have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

Uyi Christopher IYAMU

..2023



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SUMMARY

This study examines the impact of the deployment of the electronic voter accreditation process on the credibility of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The study was considered worthwhile given the fact that the electoral process in Nigeria has throughout the history of the country been mired in controversy and crisis arising essentially from a complex set of issues such as voter impersonation and multiple voting in the election management process. Three major objectives were identified for the study viz: to determine the reliability and implications of the electronic voter accreditation system in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. To identify the limitations and challenges associated with the introduction of the electronic voter accreditation system Nigeria's 2015 electoral process. To investigate the impact of electronic voter accreditation process on the credibility of the 2015 general election in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the liberal theory of democracy which places emphasis on the quality of the electoral process in ensuring that a state is democratic. This theory was considered appropriate due to its emphasis on the electoral process in the democratic scheme of things. The study also adopted a mixed method; that is; it is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. While the quantitative data was gathered from questionnaires administered across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria, the qualitative data was gathered from the interviews with key personalities central to the issues under investigation. Furthermore, triangulation process which involved the integration of the quantitative and qualitative data was adopted in the analysis in order to provide a holistic appraisal of the issues. Evidence gathered in the course of the study resulted in the following findings: That electronic voter accreditation has no statistically significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria. The study also established that electronic voter accreditation has limitations and challenges in the electoral process of Nigeria. On the basis of this it is recommended that INEC should ensure extensive and through enlightenment on the benefits of the Electronic accreditation process in order to avoid a reoccurrence of the challenges recorded with the deployment of the technology.

Key Words: Elections, Democracy, Electronic Voter Accreditation, Card Reader, Nigeria, INEC, Election Credibility

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, elektronik seçmen akreditasyon sürecinin Nijerya'daki 2015 genel seçimlerinin güvenilirliği üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Nijerya'daki seçim sürecinin, ülke tarihi boyunca, esas olarak seçim yönetimi sürecinde seçmen kimliğine bürünme ve çoklu oylama gibi karmaşık bir dizi sorundan kaynaklanan tartışmalara ve krizlere saplandığı gerçeği göz önüne alındığında, çalışmanın değerli olduğu düşünüldü. Çalışma için üç ana hedef belirlendi: Nijerya'daki 2015 genel seçimlerinde elektronik seçmen akreditasyon sisteminin güvenilirliğini ve etkilerini belirlemek. Nijerya'nın 2015 seçim sürecinde elektronik seçmen akreditasyon sisteminin getirilmesiyle ilgili sınırlamaları ve zorlukları belirlemek. Elektronik seçmen akreditasyon sürecinin Nijerya'daki 2015 genel seçimlerinin güvenilirliği üzerindeki etkisini araştırmak. Çalışma, bir devletin demokratik olmasını sağlamada seçim sürecinin kalitesine vurgu yapan liberal demokrasi teorisine dayanıyordu. Bu teori, demokratik düzende seçim sürecine yaptığı vurgu nedeniyle uygun görüldü. Çalışmada ayrıca karma yöntem benimsenmiş; yani; nicel ve nitel verilerin bir kombinasyonuna dayanır. Nicel veriler, Nijerya'nın altı jeopolitik bölgesinde uygulanan anketlerden toplanırken, nitel veriler, araştırılan konuların merkezinde yer alan kilit kişiliklerle yapılan görüşmelerden toplandı. Ayrıca, konuların bütüncül bir şekilde değerlendirilmesini sağlamak için diğer analizlerde nicel ve nitel verilerin entegrasyonunu içeren çeşitleme süreci benimsenmiştir. Çalışma sırasında toplanan kanıtlar aşağıdaki bulgularla sonuçlanmıştır: Elektronik seçmen akreditasyonunun Nijerya'daki seçim güvenilirliği üzerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkisi yoktur. Çalışma ayrıca elektronik seçmen akreditasyonunun Nijerya'nın seçim sürecinde sınırlamaları ve zorlukları olduğunu ortaya koydu. Buna dayanarak, teknolojinin konuşlandırılmasıyla kaydedilen zorlukların yeniden ortaya çıkmasını önlemek için INEC'in Elektronik akreditasyon sürecinin faydaları konusunda kapsamlı ve yoluyla aydınlatma sağlaması önerilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Seçimler, Demokrasi, Elektronik Seçmen Akreditasyonu, Kart Okuyucu, Nijerya, INEC, Seçim Güvenilirliği

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ABBREVIATIONS

APC	:	All Progressive Congress
ECN	:	Electoral Commission of Nigeria
FEC	:	Federal Electoral Commission
FEDECO	:	Federal Electoral Commission
GNPP	:	Great Nigeria Peoples Party
INEC	:	Independent National Electoral Commission
MAMSER	:	Mass Mobilization for Economic Recovery and Social justice
NDI	:	National Democratic Institute
NEC	:	National Electoral Commission
NNA	:	Nigerian National Alliance
NNDP	:	Nigerian National Democratic Party
NPN	:	National party of Nigeria
NYSC	:	National Youth Service Corpse
PRP	:	Peoples Redemption party
PVC	:	Permanent voter card
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Program
UPN	:	Unity Party of Nigeria

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The conduct of elections has become a very fundamental aspect of the democratization process. Indeed, one of the most critical element of any democracy is the ability to conduct regular, free and fair and credible elections within a multi-party context. Since the late 1970s an increasing number of countries across the globe have held multi-party elections in the attempt to enthrone a democratic order, broaden the legitimacy of regimes and attract recognition within the committee of nations. However, the global democratization process of the late twentieth century which Huntington (1991) describes as “the third wave of democratization” has accentuated problems in the democratization process, particularly in the electoral process of many emerging democracies.

Since the democratization process began in Africa in the 1990s, the electoral process in many countries on the continent has been characterized with irregularities, rigging and outright violence. For example, following the 2008 elections in Kenya, violence erupted as a reaction to the perceived irregularities in the electoral process. Similarly, with the transition to civil rule in 1999, the successive elections conducted in Nigeria has been characterized with varying degrees of irregularities and electoral fraud. In 2003 the European Union described Nigeria’s general elections as “lacking in credibility and not reflective of the wishes of the people” (European Union Observation Report, 2003). Similarly, in 2007, Nigeria’s general elections was described as “one of the worst elections to have been conducted in the history of modern elections” (International Republican Institute Report, 2007). The election was massively rigged. The voter register which at the time was a manual register contained fake names and underage voter. Elections results were declared in places where election did not hold and even where elections held, the result were manipulated such that it never represented the choice of the electorate. Indeed, even former President Umar Musa Yar Adua who was declared winner of Nigeria’s 2007 general elections acknowledged that the elections were marred by various forms of irregularities and fraud, and as a result he went on to constitute and electoral reform committee which

was given the mandate to carry out a detailed review of the problems of Nigeria's electoral process and make recommendation on ways of improvement.

In the 2011 general elections, accusations of vote rigging and other forms of electoral malpractices were also common despite improvements recorded by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In the northern part of Nigeria, the outbreak of post-election violence was a direct reaction the declaration of the election result which was seen as not reflective of the votes of the people. Thus, the history of elections in Nigeria prior to the 2015 general elections has been a history of various kinds of electoral fraud and malfeasance. It is within this context that INEC in the attempt to checkmate issues of electoral fraud decided introduce the novel idea of an electronic voter accreditation system.

1.2. Statement of Problem

The electronic voter accreditation system introduced in Nigeria during the 2015 general elections was characterized by the use of card readers programmed to contain the biometric details of voters. Prior to the introduction of the card readers for accreditation purposes, the accreditation of voters in the elections conducted before the 2015 general elections was done manually with a voter's register which was easily subjected to abuse and manipulation through the insertion of multiple entries and fake names. Thus, INEC's rationale for the introduction of the card readers was that it had the potential of checkmating the issue of multiple voting by deleting duplicate or multiple entries. The introduction of the electronic voter accreditation system was therefore widely expected to impact positively on the credibility of the election. This study therefore investigates the impact of the electronic voter accreditation system on the outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The study seeks to determine if the introduction of the electronic voter accreditation system had any impact on the credibility of the 2015 general elections.

1.3. Objectives of Study

The following are the objectives of this study:

- a) To determine the reliability and implications of the electronic voter accreditation system in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

- b) To identify the limitations and challenges associated with the introduction of the electronic voter accreditation system Nigeria's 2015 electoral process.
- c) To investigate the impact of electronic voter accreditation process on the credibility of the 2015 general election in Nigeria.

1.4. Research Questions

- a. How reliable was the electronic voter accreditation system in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria in relation to the manual accreditation process of previous elections?
- b. What are the limitations and challenges of the electronic voter accreditation process in Nigeria's 2015 general elections?
- c. What is the impact of the electronic voter accreditation process on the credibility of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria?

1.5. Research Hypotheses

H0: Electronic voter accreditation has no significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria.

H1: Electronic voter accreditation has a significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria.

H0: Electronic voter accreditation does not guarantee reliability in Nigeria's electoral process.

H1: Electronic voter accreditation guarantees reliability of Nigeria's electoral process.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The electoral process in general has received significant attention in research focusing on the democratization process. In this regard a number of studies have investigated the factors giving rise to elections and the context under which democratic elections can take place. Still, other studies have focused on the institutional and structural prerequisites of conducting credible elections. However, virtually no comprehensive study has been done on the efficacy or otherwise of the electronic and

technological inputs in the electoral process, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria where the process is just taking off. This study is therefore significant for the following reasons:

- a. It attempts to fill the gap in the studies on the electoral process by highlighting the role of
- b. technology (electronic voter accreditation) in the electoral process.
- c. The study is also significant in the sense that it is a modest attempt to underscore the implications of electronic voter accreditation process for the credibility of elections in Nigeria
- d. The study is also significant in the sense that the evidence contained herein settles the controversy on the appropriateness and reliability of the electronic voter accreditation process.
- e. The study is also significant in the sense that it provides a context for the consideration and implementation of electoral reforms by the INEC and the Nigerian government in general.

1.7. Scope of the Study

The electronic voter accreditation process was introduced for the first time in the history of Nigeria in the 2015 general elections. The process was characterized by the use of smart card readers in accrediting potential voters. This study therefore focuses on the use of the smart card readers in Nigeria's 2015 Presidential election. The rationale for the choice of the presidential elections is hinged on the fact that this component of the elections has been the most controversial in the history of Nigeria.

1.8. Limitation of the Study

One of the major limitations encountered in the course of this study is the dearth of literature on the issue of electronic voter accreditation particularly; as the subject has only recently began to attract scholarly attention. To overcome this challenge however, the study has had to rely on personal observations and inferences from the election administration processes in developing countries including Nigeria. Secondly, finance was also a major constraint. The vast and extensive nature of Nigeria makes the conduct of a study such as this quite expensive. Thus, the researcher had to settle

for a sample from across the country which was considered representative of the population and also within the available budget of the study. The issue of insecurity also posed a challenge to the data collection process, particularly; in the northern part of the country where the Boko-Haram insurgency was ongoing. However, to overcome this challenge the research employed the services of locals who were very familiar with the terrain to serve as research assistants.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the current state of the literature on the key issues under consideration. It begins with a conceptual review of the key concepts of the study, followed by an empirical and theoretical review of the issues arising from the study. The chapter also highlights the gaps in the literature and also presents and discuss the theoretical framework adopted for the study.

2.2. Elections and Democracy: The Conceptual and Theoretical Linkages

The significance of voter accreditation for the credibility of the electoral process derives generally from the close conceptual and theoretical nexus between elections and democracy. It is therefore pertinent to examine the conceptual and theoretical linkages between elections and democracy. Elections generally can be defined as the formal process of choosing candidates to fill political offices. While the conduct of elections was practiced in ancient Athens, its origins in the contemporary world can be traced to the emergence of representative government in the US and western Europe particularly as the idea of representation evolved from a group-based notion to a more individualistic conception. The idea that governments are to be subject to the consent of the governed and the fact that they were expected to seek that consent regularly established the necessity of the institution of elections. Thus, it is now very common to equate elections with democracy. In the light of the above, it is clear that the conduct of elections is central to the realization of democracy. As a matter of fact, the conduct of elections has in accordance with the universal principles of governance, become regarded as key institutional procedures for democratic governance. Thus, elections are indeed a hallmark of every ideal democracy. It is a critical requirement and a litmus test for determining how participatory a democracy truly is. This has become justifiably so, as it is the only legitimate vehicle through which leaders access power and also exit power. It has become even more essential when one put into context the fact that it remains the most patronized activity that enjoys the highest level of citizens' participation in a democracy (Umar, 2019).

Elections are a critical mechanism through which the citizens of a state determine those who will exercise power on their behalf. Mackenzie (1969) notes that elections are “rituals of choice”. Its essence lie in the individual as a key player in the social act which ultimately legitimizes the person who gets chosen. In like manner, Adejumbi (1998), highlights the symbolic character of elections within the concept of popular sovereignty expressing the social pact between the state and its citizens. To him, “it is the Kernel of political accountability and means of ensuring reciprocity and exchange between the governors and the governed” (Adejumbi, 1998, p. 31).

Indeed, it is generally agreed that elections signify a mechanism in which political preferences can be determined and measured. According to Hugh Bone and Austin Ranney, “In a democratic nation...periodic elections of executives and legislators constitute the principal institutional device for making sure that government shall derive its just power from the consent of the governed” (Bone & Ranney, 1971, p. 1). Similarly, Nnoli (2003, p. 220), notes that “elections are so clearly tied to the growth and development of representative democratic government that they are now generally held to be the single most important indicator of the presence or absence of such government”. Nnoli continues that elections are democratic when they are free, fair, participatory, credible, competitive and legitimate. Elections are adjudged to have met a legitimizing criteria: If they are conducted by an independent and neutral body, when the electoral commission is competent and has the capacity to ensure that fraudulent practices are kept in check, when the law enforcement agencies candidates and parties act impartially; when all contestants have a level playing field, when secret ballot is guaranteed, when it does not discriminate against any voter, when the rules of the electoral process are widely known and accepted and when there are reliable procedures for resolving election related disputes (Diamond, 2008, p. 25). A democratic election is thus, a central institution of representative governments where the political leaders are chosen in regular, free and fair and credible elections. Adding voice to the centrality of election to any genuine democratic project, Momoh and Adejumbi underscored this point rightly: Elections are of critical importance in the democratic process due to the animating role they play in representative government. On one hand, they are instruments for legitimization of the state and those who exercise state power, while on the other hand, they guarantee political accountability (1999, p. 142).

Writing in the same direction and superimposing the significance of elections, Obi and Abutu (1991) are of the opinion that elections presents the citizens with the right to demand accountability from the leaders. In the case of Awotokun (2004), he posits that: Democracy does not imply the impressionistic notion of rule of the people or majority. Instead it is a combination of institutions (including the conduct of elections) which permits public control of rulers and their dismissal by the ruled, and which make it possible for the ruled to obtain reforms without using violence, even against the will of the rulers (Awotokun, 2004, p. 131).

The centrality of elections to the democratic process derives from a liberal tradition that has been characteristic of western political science. Liberal democracy represents an ideology and a form of governing society according to the principles of liberalism. Thus, it is characterized by the principle of representativeness, through credible, free and fair, and competitive elections amongst multiple and distinct parties and other freedoms associated with liberalism.

2.2.1. Elections and Democracy in Nigeria

Nigeria's democratic experience particularly with regards to the conduct of elections has until recently been a history of crisis and controversy. Over the years the conduct of elections has been characterized with different forms of election malfeasance and outright violence which threatened the democratic development of the country. This is evident in the history of elections in Nigeria.

2.2.2. The Nature of Elections under Colonial Nigeria

2.2.2.1. The 1922- 46 elections

The first election ever conducted in Nigeria took place in September 1923 in only two cities: Lagos and Calabar. The election was the result of the introduction of the Clifford Constitution in 1922 which introduced the elective principle for the first time in the history of the country. The first political party in Nigeria the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which was led by Herbert Macaulay won the three seats for the Lagos Legislative Council. The remaining one seat for Calabar was won by the Calabar Improvement League. One of the major limitations of the elections was

that it was based on a limited franchise as only British citizens and British-protected persons with a minimum annual income of 100 Pounds could vote.

Furthermore, with the establishment of a central legislature in the country by the Arthur Richards constitution of 1946, four (4) out of twenty-four (24) members were to be elected into the central legislature – three (3) from Lagos and one (1) from Calabar. While the elective principle during the colonial period accelerated the process of the formation of political parties, the elections at the time was highly limited as many Nigerians were disenfranchised.

2.2.2.2. The 1951- 54 elections

Within 1951 and 1954 Nigeria's governmental structure as a federation of three regions became established. Consequently, the 1951 and 1954 federal elections conducted under the McPherson and Lyttleton constitutions of 1951 and 1954 respectively were conducted under different regulations contained in electoral laws separately made for each of the regions by the Governor – General of Nigeria. For example, in the northern region, the elections were indirectly conducted. In the eastern region of Nigeria on the other hand the elections were direct based on universal adult suffrage. In the west, all men aged twenty-one and above could vote if they were natives of the administrative division in which they sought to vote or residents and tax payers for a period of twelve months at the qualifying date. Women could also qualify on the same basis provided that they had paid a tax of over one pound.

Representation in the house of representatives under the 195 and 1954 electoral system was based on nominations from the regional assemblies on a 50-50 formula between the north and the south. A few seats were also reserved for Lagos the federal territory and the southern Cameroons. It is worth nothing that under the colonial period (i.e. from the 1922 to the 1954 election), Nigeria's election management system was in its formative years. As a result, the most important issue in election administration; particularly in light of the on- going nationalist activities at the time was the attainment of political independence and the expansion of the franchise. Indeed, prior to the eve of political independence no single form of election administration existed for the entire country. Thus, there was almost no basis for a consistent assessment of the quality of elections across the entire country (Moveh, 2012, p. 20).

2.2.3. Elections in Post-Independence Nigeria

2.2.3.1. The 1959 general elections in Nigeria

While the 1951/54 federal elections were administered by the regional governments on behalf of the federation under different regulations, the 1959 federal elections were administered under uniform principles and regulations for the entire country following the establishment of the first electoral commission in Nigeria- the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN). The 1959 federal elections became the first nationwide direct election to be conducted in Nigeria. The election ushered the country into political independence. A total of twenty-six political parties were registered by the ECN to contest the 1959 elections. However, a three party system reflecting the dominant ethnic groups and regions of the country emerged. One major problem encountered in the administration of the 1959 federal election- is the phenomenon of “a pregnant woman with ballot papers” -was recorded on polling day. As Kurfi notes: As the ballot paper were not marked but merely dropped into a candidate’s individual ballot box in a polling booth, there was the possibility of party supporters smuggling in extra ballot papers and putting them into a candidate’s box...voting in a cubicle ensured that some voters had the opportunity of not inserting the ballot paper in the ballot box. Instead they brought it out and sold to politicians.

In addition to the foregoing, another problem associated with the 1959 elections was that women in the north were not allowed to vote; albeit at the time this was not considered a problem due to the patriarchal socio- cultural and religious beliefs of the north. In spite of the foregoing problems, the 1959 federal election was generally seen to be credible partly as a result of the fact that the colonialist were preparing to hand over power Nigerians and thus they had no desire to perpetuate themselves (Kurfi, 2005, p. 14).

Furthermore, the senior cadres of electoral officers of the ECN were mostly administrative officers, majority of whom were British with a few Nigerians and this cadre of public servants were highly regarded by the generality of the people as an embodiment of fairness, justice and equity (Kurfi, 2005).

2.2.3.2. *The Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) and 1964 general election*

By 1964, the ECN had been replaced by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC). The mandate of the FEC included amongst others; the conduct of elections into the federal house of representatives. Each of Nigeria's regions (east, west and north) and the capital Lagos nominated members to the commission. From a multi-party system in the 1959 pre-independence elections, Nigeria witnessed the emergence of two major alliances which contested the 1964 elections. These alliances were: the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). Indeed, the desire of the government to succeed itself and the split between the coalition partners (i.e. Northern People's Congress and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens), the split in the AG and the controversy engendered by the publication of the 1963 census figures, made re-alignment of political forces inevitable (Kurfi, 2005).

The 1964 General election administration by FEC was characterized with a lot of problems. As Kurfi (2005) notes: There was the collaboration between some agencies of the regional government and the FEC to frustrate the electoral process. A more ominous problem noted in the election was the assassination of opposition candidates or their nominations to ensure that there was no contested election in the constituency (Kurfi, 2005, p. 23). As a result of the entire crisis leading to the election, the election was boycotted in several areas. In the Eastern region for example, the boycott of the election was total and nearly so in Lagos. Voting was done in some parts of the West and the Mid-western region of the country. In the Northern region, the elections were boycotted only in the Sabon gari areas of Kano and Jos (Kurfi, 2005, p. 23). Indeed, it is yet to be substantiated if subsequent elections in Nigeria have recorded a higher incidence of electoral boycott than the 1964 general elections. In the end, the 1964 General elections conducted by the FEC resulted in the re-election of the NPC for a second term. There were however widespread complaints of fraud, violence and intimidation (Osaghae, 1998, p. 31-54). Post-election violence especially in the western region of Nigeria further complicated the credibility of the election. In the end the military struck and brought the first republic to an end through a bloody coup d'état.

2.2.3.3. *The 1979 general elections in Nigeria*

In November 1976, another electoral commission FEDECO was established by the Murtala/Obasanjo regime. FEDECO conducted the 1979 elections which brought in the second republic in Nigeria. Thus, while the 1964 General election was conducted under the incumbent civilian government which was also a contestant in the election, the 1979 elections was conducted under the supervision of the departing military government. FEDECO's conduct of the 1979 general elections was significantly different from FEC and the conduct of the 1964 elections in the sense that while FEC was constitutionally incapacitated from exercising discretion at decisive moments, section 4 of decree 41, made FEDECO an independent body. However, controversies arising from this provision led to the interpretation that not FEDECO decisions but the act establishing it was immune in its entirety. Following the registration of political parties for the 1979 elections, FEDECO came to the conclusion that five associations satisfied the prescribed condition and accordingly decided to register them as the political parties that would contest the general elections in 1979.

One very controversial issue in the run up to the 1979 elections centered on the criteria for the qualification and disqualification of prospective contestants for the elections. According to FEDECO:

- a) A candidate must have paid fully, as and when due, in respect of each of the three financial years preceding the date of elections income tax anywhere in the country
- b) That a person sentenced to a term of imprisonment for an offence involving dishonesty within the last 15 years (since January 1966) was disqualified from standing as a candidate.
- c) That any person who has been removed from public office on any ground involving dishonesty (or dismissed from such office on any ground) was disqualified.

The first provision relating to tax payments was responsible for the disqualification of many candidates from all the parties including gubernatorial and two presidential candidates. The other two provisions as Kurfi (2005) noted resulted in the compilation by FEDECO of a dossier of discredited Nigerians and listed their

misdeeds for the purposes of screening candidates who wished to contest any of the elections. The fact that such a dossier was in existence made many prospective high office holders feel insecure rightly or wrongly about their positions especially as the contents of the dossier was not made public. In sum, although the Shagari administration which came to power in 1979 was alleged to be the product of a conspiracy by the Murtala/ Obasanjo military government, the judiciary and FEDECO in favor of the NPN, the 1979 election was not as violent as the election of 1964, possibly because the incumbent military government had no apparent vested interest at stake.

2.2.3.4. FEDECO and the 1983 general elections

In 1983 a second General Election was conducted by FEDECO. However, the election unlike in 1979 was conducted under an incumbent civilian regime. As noted by Aderemi: The 1983 elections was a test of the competence and impartiality of FEDECO. Unfortunately, FEDECO failed woefully; and it remains to a large extent one of the most controversial electoral commission constituted in Nigeria (Aderemi, 2005, p. 328).

The 1983 general election was contested by six political parties and various forms of irregularities such as: ballot box snatching, voter impersonation and rigging was widespread. The elections were characterized by violence, thuggery, arson, bribery and corruption, intimidation and other unwholesome acts in almost all states in the country in order to win the election by hook or crook and at all cost. As Kurfi notes with regards to the conduct of the presidential election in Kurfi area: Local bosses of the dominant party –NPN had connived with the electoral officials of FEDECO to share votes amongst the three contending parties of Kurfi area. The NPN candidate got the lion's share of the votes whilst the other two political parties PRP and GNPP were doled out just a few votes. What happened in Kurfi was no exception. The same pattern probably occurred throughout the then north central state and in the remaining eighteen states of the federation (Kurfi, 2005, p. 23).

Indeed, the height of the electoral rigging and the resultant violence in the 1983 elections was epitomized in Ondo state where the offices of FEDECO and the Nigerian police were burnt following the announcement of the governorship candidate of the

NPN as winner of the election in the state. Ondo state had been a UPN stronghold and the NPN had only one member in the outgoing state assembly. Hence, the apprehension of the electorate with the election results. At the end the NPN had to concede Ondo governorship slot to the UPN.

FEDECO together with security agencies were severely criticized for being active participants in rigging the elections in favor of the incumbent: President Shagari and his National Party of Nigeria (NPN). As a result, there was widespread protest following the declaration of the election results and with the government unable to quell the political chaos that ensued the military struck again and brought the second republic to an end.

2.2.3.5. The 1991/1993 Nigerian general elections

In the 1991-1993 general elections conducted by the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the Babangida administration saddled the NEC with carrying out the ban on a number of politicians from participation in the elections. The task of NEC, as noted by Aderemi (2005, p. 328) was complex and the commissions job was unnecessarily complicated ab initio owing to a number of factors which include:

- a. The implicit attempts by the Babangida administration and its agents in undermining the activities of the commission in the conduct of the elections.
- b. The ambitious nature of NEC whereby the commission was saddled with a lot of responsibilities. Aside the conduct of the elections NEC was also mandated to revamp the political culture of Nigeria through collaboration with other government agencies and initiatives such as MAMSER.
- c. The absence of a clearly defined structure of authority within the commission due to the ambiguities in the law relating to who among the chairman and secretary was in charge of the commission, especially given the latter's influence and links to the chief of general staff of the federation.
- d. The complex and suspicious relationship between the public spirited NEC chairman and a perfidious, undemocratic and corrupt supervisory military establishment.

- e. The competing and counterproductive influence of a somewhat parallel organization - the Alfa led transition committee.

Prior to the 1993 presidential elections, the Babangida regime set up a Political Bureau charged with the responsibility of collating public opinion with a view to offering advice to the government on key decisions regarding the transition program. Part of the recommendation of the political bureau was a program towards the promulgation of a new constitution which never came into existence in 1989. One of the key features of the of transition program under Babangida was the creation of two political parties for the country. This development underscores the significant influence of the Federal Military Government in the 1991/1993 electoral process. The governments influence in the design, composition and structures of the two parties was significant. It provided the funds and determined those who were to emerge as leaders of the parties.

Another innovation adopted by the NEC during the 1991-93 election was the controversial open ballot system. The system did away with the ballot box and the ballot papers and secrecy in casting the vote. Instead voters were required to queue up behind their candidates of choice or his symbol as a way of indicating their support. The open ballot system was however problematic in the sense that it allowed for the intimidation and harassment of voters for daring to openly support the candidates of their choice. Eventually the open ballot system was dropped for the secret ballot system. Although the transition program of the Babangida regime has been dismissed on account of being “interminable, designed to fail and bring back the military” (Ake, 2003, p. 66), the NEC under Humphrey Nwosu conducted what has severally been described as the most credible elections in the history of Nigeria. According to Nwosu: Undoubtedly, the June 12 1993 presidential election was adjudged by both national and international observers as the freest, fairest and most peaceful election in Nigerian history...adequate organizational, logistical and security facilities were put in place to enhance the conduct of free and fair elections. No opportunities were allowed for the manipulation of the electoral process and the results were successfully collated without any form of problems (Humphrey Nwosu, 2008, p. 8).

Similarly, following a review of NEC’s activities during the 1993 general elections the National Democratic Institute (NDI) noted: While the relevance of the

restructuring of the electoral process in Nigeria under the Babangida regime in today's Nigeria is debatable, there is no doubt that there are important lessons to be learned and examples to be drawn about logistic competence in organizing elections (NDI, 2008)

The 1993 general election was supposedly organized based on the recommendations of prominent political scientist and technocrats. Yet, one major grey area concerned who was actually in charge in terms of decision making on the electoral administration process. The annulment of the election results by the Babangida regime after two-thirds of the results from the states had been announced and the sudden replacement of the NEC chair left no one in doubt as to who was in control of the election administration process. Opposition arising from the cancellation of the Presidential election results eventually led to the ejection of General Babangida from office.

With the exit of the Babangida regime, the Abacha administration proscribed NEC and created the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON). However, except for elections for the state and national assembly, NECON under Abacha never conducted presidential elections. Indeed, as Aderemi noted: if Babangida's NEC and entire transition was a travesty, General Abacha's NECON and transition program were theatrical, and NECON's chairman chief Summer Dagogo-Jack an unabashed errand boy, whereas it was obvious that General Abacha required a national legislature to fulfill democratic righteousness, it was more obvious to the discerning that there was no vacancy in Aso rock (Aderemi, 2005, p. 329).

All five political parties registered by NECON unanimously adopted General Abacha as their Presidential candidate, in which case an election would become unnecessary and would leave NECON with no option but to declare the general civilian president unopposed. Abacha however, died in June 1998 to pave way for another transition programme and the establishment of INEC.

2.2.3.6. INEC and the 1999- 2011 general elections

INEC is the longest of all election commissions which have existed in Nigeria. The commission came into existence as a result of Section 153 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. INEC is a corporate body and a legal entity expected to be independent in

its activities. The commission has the power to conduct, undertake and supervise elections to the offices of the President and Vice President, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a state and to the membership of the National and state houses of assemblies. Since its establishment INEC has conducted a total of 6 elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019.

The first task INEC had to perform before the 1999 elections was to conduct a voter's registration exercise. Consequently, manual registration held from the 5th to the 19th of October 1998. The registration exercise however witnessed serious logistics problems. As noted by the report of the Carter center: Shortages of materials, delays in the opening of registration centers, poorly trained registration officials and attempts by political party agents to manipulate the registration process were some of the major problems in the voter registration process of the 1999 elections (Carter Center, 1999, p. 21).

Furthermore, the total number of 57,369,560 purported to have been registered by INEC was believed to be far above the eligible voters in the country (Carter Center, 1999, p. 22). In Kaduna state about 97% of the total 3.9 million populations, supposedly registered to vote. Other states also registered highly questionable figures (Carter Center, 1999, p. 23). Indeed, as noted by the AAEA: No form of national identity documentation existed in Nigeria at the time of the voter registration exercise for the 1999 elections. Thus, verifying a person's identity, age, etc. was not an easy matter. This, in combination with the fact that the hand-written register of voters at each registration center was not cross-checked against any other list meant that the potential for multiple registrations was all too real. It is widely believed that the register of voters used for the transitional elections of 1999 contains an innumerable number of duplicate entries. While the INEC has worked to safeguard against the possibility of a voter personally casting more than one ballot, these procedures do not, however, guard against voter impersonation (AAEA, 1999, p. 25).

In addition to the foregoing problems in the voter registration exercise of the 1999 elections, it was also noted that: "the period for making observations and corrections from the resulting list was too short and not functional in most parts of the country" (AAEA, 1999, p. 25). All these problems ultimately contributed to the problems surrounding the credibility of the elections. For the 2003 general elections,

the voter registration process was based on a computerized registry. The decision by INEC to adopt a computerized registry was based on the need to guarantee confidence and also to reduce the problem of multiple registration to the barest minimum. Yet, the whole process of the registration exercise lasted too long and a significant number of people were not captured. INEC noted that a total of 72 million registration sets for an estimated 60 million voters was distributed; but the NDI noted: A reportedly significant number of people nationwide were not able to register despite repeated attempts to do so partisan election officials and political aspirants hoarded voter registration materials, causing a shortage. In addition to withholding materials there was also the buying of voter cards, multiple registration, underage registration, registration by non-citizens, intimidation by party activists inadequately trained election officials and shortages of materials caused by logistical difficulties. To date there has been no public accounting of the distribution of voter registration forms. While the new computerized system was designed to detect cases of multiple registrations, concerns remain about the accuracy and number of voters on the resulting list (NDI, 2003, p. 4).

As a validation of the reports of the problem of multiple registrations in the exercise, INEC later admitted that double entries running into millions had to be deleted from the register. Yet, no one was arrested (Biu, 2010). Furthermore, the NDI noted; as in the registration exercise of the 1999 elections that: It did not appear that Nigerians had an opportunity to properly inspect the list. The few people who could find the lists reported that the display period was much shorter than required by law. In addition, display locations kept irregular hours, precluding many citizens from making complaints or corrections (NDI, 2003, p. 5).

With the publication of the 2006 population census figures in January 2007, 50% of Nigeria's total population were estimated to be eligible voters. As a result, it was decided by INEC that a completely new voter register for the 2007 elections need to be created, more so as the 2003 voters register was seen to be unreliable. As noted by the EU EOM: The 2003 voter registration exercise completely failed in its effort to provide a transparent form of identification for eligible voters, providing instead a fertile ground for massive underage voting and voter impersonation (EU EOM, 2003, p. 23). Thus, in order to avoid a reoccurrence of the problems witnessed in the

registration exercise of the 2003 elections, the commission decided to develop a computerized register based on the Direct Data Capture (DDC) machines. The DDC machines was expected to capture the picture and thumb prints of voter. By capturing the picture and biometric details of the voters, INEC reasoned that the issue of voter impersonation and multiple voting will be eliminated. Thus, while in the 2002/2003 voter registration exercise INEC used a system known as the optical mark registration (OMR) system, the registration exercise for the 2007 elections was based on a more advanced system – the DDC machines. However, there were problems associated with the use of the DDC machines. One of the first challenges with the use of the DDC machines was the delays in acquiring the machines. A total of 33000 DDC machines were needed for the registration exercise according to INEC. Yet, two weeks after the commencement of the registration only about a thousand of the machines had been delivered. (EU EOM, 2007, p. 14). The delays in the release of funds to the commission for the procurement of the machines ultimately negatively affected the registration process. As noted by the chairman of INEC it was only in January, 2007 about a month after the legal date for the termination of the voter registration exercise that the final batch of the 33,000 DDC machines were delivered. Apart from the problems with procurement of the DDC machines, the technical capacity of operating the machine was also a problem. Other problems associated with the use of the DDC machines included lack of battery power and recharge facilities, and a shortage of ink and printers. INEC argued that a special software would detect double entries in the electronic finger print identification system. However, CSOs observed that “INEC had insufficient trained staff and power for the equipment to implement these plans” (Okoye, 2011).

In the meantime, before the commencement of the voter registration process, INEC mentioned that the registration exercise shall be carried out on a piecemeal basis. It noted that the process will begin from October 7, 2006 in a few areas; particularly in areas where there were problems and difficulties with the exercise in 2002. The process was then to be expanded to cover other parts of the country. However, observers who visited some of the ‘special areas noted that: While INEC said registration would start on October 7 and end on October 24 in the “special areas”, the exercise had ended in these areas before October 18. Voters complained that even where registration officials were deployed, registration could not commence because

the officials in some instances did not know how to operate the DDC machines. Some registered voters found that the wrong data had been entered for them, including several cases of pictures of male registrants appearing on female registrants' cards. In many cases, DDC machine batteries depleted quickly, while camera, keyboard and software problems further slowed the exercise. By the time that the nationwide exercise began on October 25th, many voters in the 'special areas' were still unregistered, even though INEC declared that the lists for the special areas had been completed (NDI, 2007, p. 23).

With the commencement of the national voter registration exercise there was a multiplication of the challenges experienced in the special areas registration such that as at 2 weeks to the end of the registration exercise less than one third of the eligible voters had been registered. Eventually, the registration exercise for the 2007 general elections was generally seen to have been poorly conducted than even the exercise for the 2003 and 1999 general elections. In preparation for the 2011 general elections, INEC once again considered the conduct of a voter registration exercise as being very crucial for the delivery of credible elections in Nigeria irrespective of the rather tight schedule that the commission had. Thus, as was the case during the 2006 exercise, DDC machine were again deployed for the exercise. The registration process preparatory to the 2011 elections commenced on the 15th January, 2011 across Nigeria with about a quarter of a million registration officials recruited for the exercise. A notable development with the registration exercise for the 2011 general elections was that virtually all the registration officers recruited for the exercise were from the National youth service corps.

Thus, the category of officers for the 2011 registration exercise were non-partisan, unlike in the case of the 2003 and 2007 exercise where a majority of the registration offices turned out to be partisan members of the major political parties. A key initiative in the exercise was that majority of the registration officers had been recruited from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). In 2003 and 2007 no particular category of individuals was given preference as registration officers; the result as gathered from focused group discussions was that many of the people that became registration officers turned out to be thugs and agents of certain political parties. Another major challenge as noted by the EU EOM (2011, p. 27) is: In the first

days of registration, INEC failed to deliver kits to registration units' country wide or delivered them late. Problems with software in collecting finger prints had to be adjusted and a number of citizens waited for hours to register. Over the first week INEC made progress, addressed the shortcomings and most data capture machines were made operational. As in the case of the 2007 registration exercise, the national assembly reviewed the law to ensure an extension of the registration period for another week.

However as noted by an observer group: Under aged registration appeared to be more pronounced in the north central; east and west, proxy registration was not observed, and the registration process was overall incident and violence free. Unresolved were the overall problems of reconciling the voter register held by INEC on federal and state levels The election administration admitted that there were inaccuracies regarding numbers of registered voters that were not corrected. Omissions of names on the list, a problem apparently widespread and that became patent during election days was more likely due to technical problems rather than a deliberate disenfranchisement effort (swift count project report of January 24th, 2011). With the conclusion of the registration exercise INEC claimed that a total of 67,764,327 voters were registered across the country. A common problem associated with all the voter registration exercises of the elections under study was that the procedures for making observations and corrections of information in the voter's register was not efficient. Indeed, as noted by IFES: The window of time usually devoted for the display of the voter register for observations and corrections is usually too short to allow stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive review of the roll, contrary to electoral best practices (IFES, 2011, p. 12).

2.3. The Concept of Voter Accreditation

One of the most cardinal principles of the electoral process and democracy in general is the principle of "one man one vote". This principle is based on the liberal philosophy of the equality of all men irrespective of sex, race or status. Despite the centrality of this principle in the electoral process and democracy in general, attempts to violate the principle is very common through the phenomenon of voter impersonation and multiple registration and voting. As a matter of fact one of the major

fallout of elections in the developing world in general and Africa in particular has been the increasing attempts and incidents of voter impersonation and multiple voting.

The phenomenon of voter impersonation and multiple voting ultimately gives rise to the need for deliberate attempts in identifying and checking the authenticity of voters before they are allowed to vote in an election. Voter accreditation can thus, be defined as the process of identifying voters who are legally qualified to vote in any election. It is a critical part of the electoral process. Where there is no reliable voter accreditation process in place the credibility and sanctity of the electoral process is likely to be compromised. According to Moveh (2012, p. 5), the voter accreditation process is the first activity on election day which determines if the elections will be credible or not. One of the most common strategies adopted by desperate politicians is to mobilize their supporters to vote massively and repeatedly in their favor whether they are qualified or not. In certain instances, this malpractice is aided and abetted by the election management officials. However, in several instances they are also carried out by all major political parties alone in the attempt to outwit each other in political contests.

2.3.1. Types of Voter Accreditation

The process of voter accreditation can be conducted in several ways. However, generally speaking there are two major types of voter accreditation namely: manual accreditation and electronic voter accreditation.

- a) **Manual Voter Accreditation:** This involves the use of a voters register to manually confirm the name of a potential voter before he or she is allowed to cast his vote. The process usually begins with the voter presenting his voters card which contains his names and personal details such as sex, age and address. The electoral officer then confirms if the name on the voter's card is contained in the voter's register before he is allowed to vote. One major shortcoming associated with the manual voter accreditation is the ease with which it is usually compromised. For example, the Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE) notes that: "a manual voters register which contains no bio-metric details of the voters plays a major role in the issue of electoral fraud. It does not provide any foolproof system of confirming the

authenticity of the voter and there exists no concrete evidence to indicate that the names on the voter's register are the names of actual voters qualified to vote in an election" (ACE, 2010). This fundamental shortcoming of the manual voter's accreditation led to the deployment of electronic accreditation systems.

b) Electronic Voter Accreditation System: As the name implies electronic accreditation systems involves the use of electronic devices and technology in the accreditation of voters before they are allowed to vote in an election. Electronic accreditation systems leverage on the use of technology in confirming the authenticity of voters by matching their biometric details with an already existing database. In recent years, the use of electronic devices and other forms of technology for accreditation purposes has become popular amongst many democracies. As noted by Ajulo (2019, p. 2): The fusion between technology and governance can be seen in many parts of the world, particularly in the electioneering process. The deployment of technology in different countries of the world to the electioneering process has recorded an enormous impact. Most electoral management bodies around the world use new technologies with the aim of improving the electoral process. Some of the technologies employed by these bodies include basic office automation tools such as word processing and spreadsheets to more sophisticated data processing tools, such as database management systems, optical scanning and geographic information systems.

Several countries of the world and in Africa have adopted electronic biometric systems for accreditation purposes with a view to enhancing the credibility of their elections. Such systems contain software and programs which ensure that the biometric details of voters are screened in order to check against multiple and spurious entries. In some cases, mobile voting systems are also included. For example, in Ghana, during the December 2020 general election an automatic biometric identification system (ABIS) was used for purposes of voter registration, de-duplication, and adjudication and in the process it was noted that the ABIS was crucial in the deduplication process of a total of 17,027,641 registrants who were eligible to vote in the general election. By matching fingerprints and/or facial biometrics for each registrant name, the system

successfully identified 15,860 multiple registrations conducted by 7,890 unique individuals who attempted to register more than once using different names (Ajulo, 2019, p. 2).

Similarly, in the 2017 general election in Somaliland the use of iris recognition-based biometric voting systems was used for the accreditation of voters. The process involved the scanning of the eye to verify the identity of registered voters before they are cleared to vote. Other African countries that have deployed the use of this technique in the electoral process include Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, Namibia, Kenya, Liberia and a host of others. In spite of its popularity however, there are some shortcomings associated with the use of the electronic voter accreditation systems. While it prevents multiple registration, it may not affect many other fraudulent strategies such as vote buying. Furthermore, the underdeveloped nature of most developing countries particularly in the use of technology generally has resulted in challenges in the deployment of the technologies. For example, during the Ugandan 2020 general elections, biometric voter identification was abandoned as a result of network failure. Also, given the complexity of the biometric voting processes, many electoral agencies depend on expatriates or the private sector to provide the expertise needed for the seamless deployment and sustainability of the technology. However, this often raises new concerns for government and citizens including protection of voters' data when the system is trusted with a private vendor. Many rightfully raise concerns over what will happen to the personal information and biometric data they provide.

2.3.2. Voter Accreditation in Nigeria

The process of voter accreditation in Nigerian elections has always been a controversial issue essentially due to the fact that the process was always done manually prior to the 2015 general elections. According to Moveh (2015, p. 24): The manual voter accreditation process in Nigerian general election was of no intrinsic value. In the first instance there are no guarantees that the names contained on the voter's register are authentic, similarly, there is in most cases no evidence to indicate that the person presenting himself for accreditation is the actual owner of the voters card he is presenting. Indeed, given the problems associated with the manual process of voter accreditation in Nigeria, INEC sought the deployment of technological innovation to improve the credibility and security of the process. This eventually led

to the introduction of the smart card readers in the accreditation of voters in the 2015 general elections.

2.4. Smart Card Reader: Meaning and Usage

The electronic accreditation process deployed by INEC for the accreditation of voters in the 2015 elections in Nigeria involved the usage of card readers. The deployment of the card reader was a critical element of the 2015 electoral process; and as such it was at the center of the controversies that trailed the electoral process. INEC's rationalization of the deployment of the card readers was based on the belief that the technology would reduce the challenges encountered in the electoral process in Nigeria. These challenges include the issue of multiple registrations, multiple voting and voter impersonation which had hitherto constituted hindrance to the realization of credible elections in Nigeria.

According to INEC, the introduction of the card readers was geared towards the realization of three main objectives:

- a. To authenticate the Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) presented by voters at polling stations.
- b. To determine through the biometric technology if the person who presents a PVC at the polling unit is the legitimate owner of the card.
- c. The Smart Card Readers were also expected to facilitate the process of disaggregating the data on the electorate on the basis of their demographic details and other criteria.

The smart card reader is thus a device programmed to assist in determining the authenticity of voters presenting their Permanent Voter Card (PVC) for voting on election day. The device ultimately seeks to prevent the use of "fake voter cards" by fake voters. The device is based on cryptography technology which is power efficient and also comes with Android operating system (INEC, 2015).

In contrast to the general assumption that it was a voting device, the primary aim of the card reader is for the accreditation of voters. The technology was indeed considered a departure from previous experiences where the accreditation process was done manually through paper work which was rather unreliable. While the introduction

of the Card Reader was welcomed by some, there was widespread argument over the costs and preparedness of INEC to deploy such technology. The supporters of the card reader argued that the innovation will improve the credibility of the elections. The protagonists on the other hand questioned the legality and cost benefits of deploying the technology in the electoral process. Furthermore, apart from facilitating the accreditation process, the card readers were also expected to secure votes and provide avenues for post-election verification. In spite of the controversies and debate engendered by the deployment of the card readers the approval and introduction of the technology was premised on the move to prevent electoral fraud and pave the way for transparency and reliability of elections in Nigeria.

2.4.1. The Concept of Credible Elections

A significant amount of evaluative works has been conducted on election credibility since the late 1970s. Since then scholars have focused on the nature of elections conducted in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa, in the quest to determine the course of the development of democracy in these societies. Thus, apart from case studies focusing on national elections, attempts have been made at multinational comparative analysis of the electoral process and the implication of this development has been the emergence of various standardized assessment criteria; as represented in the notion of “free and fair elections” or “credible elections”. One of the major realities on studies focusing on assessing the quality of elections is the fact that until very recently no generally acceptable assessment criteria existed. While there is generally a very good understanding of democracy and elections, these concepts are often defined imprecisely, and they are often the subject of disagreements and controversy. The United Nations universal declaration of human rights for example talks about people’s right to elect their leaders through genuine elections. Yet, it does not define what constitute genuine elections or the criteria for arriving at such.

While also noting the lack of a generally acceptable assessment criteria, Elklit and Reynolds (2005) suggest that the absence of a critical and generally acceptable criteria for the evaluation of elections has led to the development of two tendencies. First is that election observers tend to make pronouncements on the basis incomplete evidence. Secondly, election observers and other stakeholders tend to also make pronouncement on the basis of sentiments and political correctness. In the light of the

forgoing, attempts have been made by scholars to establish a standardized assessment criterion. This endeavor is premised on the fact that elections are integral to democracy, and for any election to pass the requirement of being democratic certain minimum standard must be met. There is a seemingly lack of consensus on the concept of “credible elections”. However, a major requirement for an election to be deemed as credible is that it must be reflective of the choice of the people. This requires that all eligible voters within a constituency are allowed to vote on the principle of one man one vote, and also that the vote is counted as such. Another fundamental requirement for the credibility of the electoral process is that it must be transparent enough to earn the trust of the citizens and other stake holders. This also requires that the EMBs is seen as a legitimate and neutral umpire. Indeed, EMBSs around the world have been careful to ensure that they earn the trust of the major stakeholders in the electoral process. Electoral credibility therefore represents the normative goals of the electoral reform process. By implication, the existence of election violence is a typical indication that elections have not passed the credibility test; and elections violence almost always represents the fallout of fundamental grievances with the electoral process.

2.5. Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study adopts the liberal democratic theory as the framework of analysis. Liberal democracy implies a system based on representative government elected by popular mandate. As a system of government, liberal democracy rests on the principles of individual liberty, civic equality, popular sovereignty, and government by the consent of the governed. The emergence of liberal democratic ideas goes back as far as the 17th century following the ascendancy of the right and dignity of man. The works of Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke (1632-1704) and J. S. Mill (1806-1873) significantly influenced the development of liberal democratic ideas by emphasizing the view that society existed principally for the benefit of man. According to Hobbes the state is a product of a social contract entered into for the protection of man’s interests. Similarly, John Locke regarded the citizens consent as the foundation of political power. He argued that governments exist on the basis of the citizen’s trust.

By the 19th century contemporary notions of liberal democracy emerged from the foundations laid by Hobbes and Locke. For instance, Bentham and Mills (2000, p.

813) contributed to the development of adult franchise by their advocacy for the right to vote. With the extension of the right to vote to women and the lowering of the age requirement of voting to 18 years in the 20th century, the concept of liberal democracy was further established and made more egalitarian. The emphasis on individual liberties; particularly with regards to individual freedoms essential to the electoral process has been a major preoccupation of contemporary liberal democratic theorists. In essence, what determines the credibility of an election has become the subject of contemporary liberal democratic theorists preoccupied with the conditions under which a country may be seen as democratic; particularly, in the light of the quality of its electoral administration process.

Schumpeter (1975) for example famously identifies a minimum requirement for democracy as the selection of leaders through competitive and regular elections. Schumpeter (1975) continues that democracy is “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples vote” (Schumpeter, 1975, p. 214). Democracy according to Schumpeter does not necessarily mean that the people actually exercise power. On the contrary it implies that they have the power to decide those who exercises power. Schumpeter continues that: “the kind of competition for leadership which is to define democracy entails a free competition for a free vote” (Schumpeter, 1975, p. 217). On his part, Huntington notes in line with the arguments of Schumpeter that democracy entails: A political system that exists to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes, and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote (Huntington, 1991, p. 12). Like Schumpeter, Huntington also notes that political and civil freedoms such as freedoms of association and speech are critical to the concept of elections and democracy in general.

In his submission Sandbrook (2000) describes democracy as a “political system characterized by regular and free election in which politicians organize into parties, compete to form the government by right of virtually all adult citizens to vote and by guarantee of a range of familiar political and civil rights”. Dahl (1989) on the other hand adopts the concept of polyarchy instead of democracy. According to Dahl polyarchy involves the institution of regular and non-violent elections, the primacy of

electoral officers in the exercise of state power and the existence of rights and freedoms essential for the success of the electoral process. By way of summary, liberal democracy basically consists of the following:

- 1) General participation of all adult citizens irrespective of status, racial, ethnic, religious, or linguistic affinities.
- 2) Secrecy of the ballots and regularity of elections;
- 3) freedom of association
- 4) a legitimate government with the capacity to alter, interpret, and enforce laws.

Indeed, from the foregoing theoretical postulations credible elections is best understood as an imperative of the concept of liberal democracy in which the outcome of the electoral process is expected to be a reflection of the will of the people.

2.6. Relevance of the Liberal Democratic Theory

The liberal democratic theory was considered the most appropriate theory for this study due to the reason that the concept of credible election which is the dependent variable of the study has been studied essentially within the conceptual and theoretical framework of liberal democracy. Indeed, the global democratization process that ensued within the last quarter of the 20th century represented a triumph of liberal democracy against other forms of political ideologies. The liberalization of the political space in many emerging democracies led to the emergence of the conduct or regular elections albeit with challenges. Thus, the challenges arising from the institution of regular elections are best understood within the theoretical premise of liberal democracy.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the method of data collection and analysis adopted in this study. It consists of the location of the study, the research design, population, sample size and sampling technique. Other issues discussed in this chapter includes: sources of data and the method of data analysis.

3.2. Location and Description of the Study Area

The study Area of this research is Nigeria. Nigeria is situated in the West of Africa, and it is the most populated country in Africa. Nigeria came into being in 1914 as a British colonial creation. The country gained political independence from the British in 1960 and since then several attempts at democratic governance have failed as a result of a combination of factors including problems associated with the electoral process. The present fourth republic which is the longest in the history of the country came into being in 1999 after a protected period of military rule; and since then the country has had five quadrennial general elections in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 respectively. In all these elections, it was only during the 2015 general elections that the electronic voter accreditation process was adopted for the first time in the country.

There are thirty-six states (36) in Nigeria and six (6) geopolitical zones. According to the National Population Census of Nigeria, which was conducted in 2009, the total population of Nigeria stands at two hundred and one million (201 million) out of which eighty-two (82) million are of voting age. Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has recorded an average of 30% voter turnout in all the elections conducted in the country since 1999. Thus, roughly 24 million Nigerians out of over 80 million eligible to vote actually participate in the elections conducted in the country since 1999. As shall be seen in the subsequent section, questionnaires were administered to a sample of the electorate drawn from the six geopolitical zones in the country.

3.3. Research Design

The research design adopted in this study is descriptive survey research design. The study is on the impact of the electronic accreditation system on the credibility of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The choice of descriptive/survey design is based on Brown's (1985) succinct argument that the descriptive survey research has the potentials to make identification of variables, description of relationships among variables, as well as the identification of existing factors between them. Therefore, the descriptive/survey is adopted on the ground that what is being studied is the relationship between electronic accreditation system and election credibility.

3.4. Population, Sample Technique and Sample

The population of the study consists of INEC and Nigerian voting age citizens. As the institution charged with carrying on activities in the electoral process in Nigeria and the initiator of the electronic accreditation process, INEC is a key source of data for the study. A purposive sample consisting of the chairman and three national commissioners from INEC was therefore made for purpose of interview. These categories of respondents were selected due to the significant roles they played in the process of the introduction of the electronic voter accreditation system. Secondly, a sample of 60 respondents from the electorate was also selected using the cluster sampling technique. The country was divided according to the 6 geo-political zones of the country and a total of 10 questionnaires were administered in each of the 6 geo-political zones. The sample size of 60 was considered adequate for purposes of triangulation with the qualitative data gathered from interviews with the respondents from INEC.

Other categories of respondents from whom data was generated include officials of the political parties, and political office holders. Efforts was also made to ensure that the administration of questionnaires to the selected respondents reflected gender equality principles by considering both males and females. All respondents regardless of gender were adults within the age of voting capacity which is 18 years and above.

3.5. Research Instrument

There are basically two major research instruments adopted for these study: questionnaires and interviews. A total of 60 questionnaires were administered and four key informant interview were conducted with the chairman and staff of INEC. The questionnaire that was used comprised of standardized questions on the independent variable of the study. That is, the questions on the questionnaire revolved around the electorates experience with the electronic accreditation process in the 2015 general elections. The questionnaire also sought to capture the bio-data of respondents such as gender, age, qualifications, and occupation; in addition to questions that relate to the impact of the electronic accreditation system on election credibility in Nigeria.

3.6. Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

This research made sure that the reliability and validity of data was not only assured but consistently fortified against any measurement errors. To achieve this great care was taken in the design of the research instruments (questionnaires and interview schedule). Earlier drafts of the research instruments were submitted to experts on methodology for observations and suggestions to ensure that the correct variables of interest to the study is actually what is being measured. After all the consistent scrutiny, the research instruments were all in tandem with the major variables of the study. This was crucial in other to accurately answer the research questions and also the test the validity or otherwise of the hypothesis of the study.

3.7. Source and Types of Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaire and interviews; which as earlier noted were derived from a sample of the electorate from across Nigeria and from key members of INEC were the primary data for this study. The Secondary data on the other hand were derived from textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines, internet and other online repositories.

Furthermore, the data generated were of two types: qualitative and quantitative data.

3.7.1. Techniques of Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected for this study was analyzed with the instrument of the statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS). This involved the application of statistical methods like Chi-Square (χ^2); which was used for testing the significance of the relationship between electronic voter accreditation and election credibility. This was particularly useful for the testing and verification of the hypothesis. Simple percentages were also employed in computing aggregates of the responses of the respondents. The analysis of data with the use of the simple percentage provided the researcher with abundant capacity and a wide range of informed opinions on the assessment of the respondents on the issues under investigation.

The formula for chi-square (χ^2) is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum (f_o - f_e)^2$$

Where:

χ^2 = Chi-square

f_o = Observed frequency

f_e = Expected frequency

Simple percentage:

$$\% = \frac{PC}{N} \times 100$$

$$N = 100$$

Where

PC = Percentage compliance

N = Total number of respondents

100 = Common base of simple percentage

3.7.2. Method of Analysis of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data gathered in the course of this study from the interviews conducted were analyzed thematically. The themes central to this study such as why the electronic accreditation process was introduced and its implications for the credibility of the elections served as the framework discussing the qualitative data.

Furthermore, a process of triangulation was used to complement the quantitative data with the qualitative data. This mixed method was considered crucial towards having a rich and comprehensive discussion of the issues under consideration.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is a presentation and analysis of the data gathered in the course of this study. The key themes arising from the objectives of the study are identified and presented as the sub-headings to guide the process of analysis. Following the presentation of data, the quantitative and qualitative data are weaved together in the discussions and analysis through a triangulation process in order to achieve a comprehensive analysis of the issues under consideration.

As earlier noted, the quantitative data was gathered from the administration of a total of 60 questionnaires across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria out of which 30 was retrieved. This 30 questionnaires representing 50% of the total questionnaires was considered adequate due to the fact that it was required essentially for complimenting the qualitative data which was gathered from key informant interviews.

4.2. Bio Data of Respondents

Table 1. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency of response	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid MALE	20	66.7	66.7	66.7
FEMALE	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021

Table 1 represents the gender distribution of the respondents. Out of the total number of 30 respondents, 20 respondents representing 66.7 percent of the population are male while 10 of the respondents which represent 33.3 percent of the population are female.

Table 2. Age Distribution of Respondents

	Age	Frequency of response	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	BELOW 20YEARS	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	21-30YEARS	5	16.7	16.7	26.7
	31-40YEARS	2	6.7	6.7	33.3
	41-50YEARS	7	23.3	23.3	56.7
	51-60YEARS	8	26.7	26.7	83.3
	ABOVE 60YEARS	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021.

Table 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents. 10.0 percent of the respondents were below the age of 20 years. 16.7 percent are between 21-30yrs. 6.7 percent are between 31-40yrs. 23.3 percent of the population are between 41-50yrs, while 26.7 percent of the population are between 51-60yrs and 16.7 percent of the population are over 60years.

Table 3. Marital Status of Respondents

	Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SINGLE	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
	MARRIED	15	50.0	50.0	83.3
	DIVORCED	3	10.0	10.0	93.3
	WIDOWED	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021

Table 3 presents the marital status of the respective research respondents. 33.3 percent of the total of 30 respondents were single, while 50.0 percent of the respondents were married and 10.0 percent were divorced. 6.7 percent of the respondents were also widowed.

Table 4. Educational Qualification of Respondents

	Qualification respondents	of Frequency of response	of Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	WASSCE/SSCE	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	OND/HND/BSC	15	50.0	50.0	66.7
	PGD/MSC/PHD	7	23.3	23.3	90.0
	OTHERS	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021.

Table 4 presents the educational qualifications of the research respondents. 16.7 percent of the total respondents had secondary school education, 50.0 percent of the respondents had first degrees, while 23.3 percent of the respondents had PhD. Furthermore, an additional 10.0 percent of the total respondents had additional educational or skill acquisition certificates.

Table 5. Years of Working Experience

	Years experience	of Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	1-3YEARS	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	4-7YEARS	10	33.3	33.3	60.0
	8-11YEARS	9	30.0	30.0	90.0
	ABOVE 11YEARS	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021.

Table 5 presents the number of years of the working experience of the respondents 26.7 percent of the respondents have between 1-3years of working experience, 33.3 percent of the population had between 4-7years of experience, while 30.0 percent of the respondents had between 8-11years of experience. Lastly, 10.0 percent of the total respondents had above 11 years of working experience.

Table 6. Job Placement of the Respondent

Position	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid JUNIOR STAFF	22	73.3	73.3	73.3
SENIOR STAFF	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021.

Table 6 presents the employment status of the respondents in government policy making cadre. 73.3 percent are junior staff while 26.7 percent are senior staff.

4.3. The Reliability of the Electronic Voter Accreditation System in the 2015 General Elections

The electronic voter accreditation process was introduced in Nigeria's 2015 general elections for a number of reasons which includes the need to overcome the challenges associated with the manual accreditation process. Prior to the introduction of the electronic accreditation process involving the use of card readers, the manual accreditation process was prone to abuse specifically through the increasing phenomenon of voter impersonation, multiple voting and other forms of electoral fraud. In an interview with the chairman of INEC it was noted for instance that: When we came to INEC as a commission we noticed that 80 to 90% of all forms of electoral malpractice in Nigeria stemmed from the lack of a credible voter register and a foolproof process of ensuring that only qualified and eligible voters are allowed to vote in Nigerian elections. We then resolved to conduct a bio-metric registration process and to institute an electronic or computerized procedure for the verification of the authenticity of voters before they are actually allowed to vote. This decision eventually led to the deployment of the card readers in the 2015 general elections. So the use of technology in the electoral process was essentially to improve the reliability and credibility of our elections (Interview with Jega, 2020).

The position of the chairman of INEC is corroborated by a national commissioner of the commission who also noted that: The only way elections in Nigeria can be reliable is if we have a credible voters register and we are able to ensure that only those who are qualified to vote and are actually captured in the register can vote.

Furthermore, the position of the Chairman and Commissioner is corroborated with data gathered from the electorate as indicated in table 7.

Table 7. Electronic Voter Accreditation as a Guarantee of the Reliability of Election in Nigeria

Opinion		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	STRONGLY AGREE	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	AGREE	15	50.0	50.0	76.7
	DISAGREE	4	13.3	13.3	90.0
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey May 2021.

Table 7 indicates that 26.7 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and a majority of 50 percent of the respondents agreed that electronic accreditation of voters can guarantee reliable elections in Nigeria. 13.3 percent of the respondents were undecided, while only 10.0percent of the respondents strongly disagreed that electronic voter accreditation is a guarantee for reliable elections in Nigeria.

4.3.1. Limitations and Challenges Associated with the Introduction of the Electronic Voter Accreditation system Nigeria’s 2015 Electoral Process.

There were significant challenges associated with the introduction of the electronic accreditation process in the 2015 general elections. In the first instance there was a lot of controversies on whether the commission was legally empowered to introduce such reforms and, if Nigeria was actually prepared for the application of such technology in the electoral process. Critics argued that INEC was not legally empowered to introduce e-voting, but the commission argued that the electronic accreditation process did not amount to e-voting as the voters were still expected to cast their ballots manually. The commission maintained that it was just the accreditation of voters and not the voting process that was to be affected with the innovation. Secondly, political parties were also suspicious of the INEC when the

decision to introduce electronic accreditation process was made. The opposition party -the All Progressive Congress in particular accused the commission of attempting to rig the election through the use of technology. However, when the commission did a presentation of the deployment of the card readers for the political parties some of their doubts was assuaged (Interview with Member of APC, 2020).

The operation of the card reader device which was the principal mechanism for the electronic accreditation process also posed considerable challenges for the electoral process as many of the polling officers did not demonstrate mastery in the use of the device. In fact in few instances the device was abandoned due to the incompetence of some of the polling officers in operating the device. As noted by Alebiosu (2016) “the training given to ad hoc and INEC staff on the use of the card reader was inadequate”. A significant number of the polling officers did not demonstrate an understanding of the use of the device as the training done by INEC was quite unsatisfactory. In many of the training venues very few of the trainees had the opportunity of a hands on practice of the use of the device.

In some instances, even the trainers did not appear to have mastery of the operation of the device. Furthermore, there was an extremely limited number of card readers for the training purpose; even though there was a significantly large number of ad hoc polling staff that turned up for the training exercise. To compound the situation a significant number of polling officers who attended the training exercise were dropped on the elections day and replaced with people who did not attend the trainings.

Indeed, the foregoing challenges associated with the use of the card readers was also corroborated by a majority of the electorate who strongly agreed that there were challenges and limitations associated with the use of the smart card readers.

Table 8. Electronic Voter Accreditation has limitations and challenges in Nigeria’s Electoral process

Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid STRONGLY AGREE	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
AGREE	5	16.7	16.7	50.0
UNDECIDED	5	16.7	16.7	66.7
DISAGREE	4	13.3	13.3	80.0
STRONGLY DISAGREE	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021

Table 8 indicates that a majority of the respondents are of the view that electronic voter accreditation has limitations and challenges in Nigeria’s electoral system; as 33.3 percent of the respondents strongly agreed, while 16.7 percent of the respondents agreed. Another 16.7 percent of the population were undecided while 13.3 percent of the population disagreed and 20.0 percent of the population strongly disagreed.

4.3.1.1. The Impact of Electronic Voter Accreditation Process on the Credibility of the 2015 General Election in Nigeria

It is generally accepted that in spite of the challenges encountered in the electronic voter accreditation process through the use of the smart card readers, the deployment of the technology impacted positively on the credibility of the elections. The outright voter impersonation, multiple voting and other forms of electoral fraud which had hitherto characterized the electoral process were largely minimized. A number of civil society organizations which monitored the election for instance described the device in interviews conducted as “a game changer”. The civil society situation room noted that part of the reasons for the reduction in the incidences of electoral malpractices in the elections was as a result of the fact the most politicians and the citizens alike were not sufficiently familiar with the operation of the card readers. This reality limited their capacity to manipulate the electoral process.

The implication of this development was an increase in public confidence in the electoral process. With the crisis and controversies in previous elections in Nigeria as

well as the negative verdicts on the elections, particularly the 2007 general elections, Nigerians lost interest and confidence in the electoral process. However, with the deployment of the electronic accreditation process for the 2015 general elections, the elections were widely described as the most credible elections conducted in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the evidence gathered from quantitative data as indicated in table 9 also indicates that the electronic voter accreditation process impacted on the credibility of the 2015 general election.

Table 9. The Impact of Electronic Voter Accreditation on the credibility of elections in Nigeria

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid STRONGLY AGREE	2	16.7	16.7	16.7
AGREE	15	50.0	50.0	66.7
UNDECIDED	8	26.7	26.7	93.3
DISAGREE	5	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Field survey, May 2021.

Table 9 indicates that the electronic accreditation process has a significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria as 16.7 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 50.0percent of the respondents agreed. 26.7 percent of the population were undecided. While only 6.7 percent of the population strongly disagreed.

4.4. Research Hypotheses Confirmation

H0: Electronic voter accreditation has no significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria

H1: Electronic voter accreditation has a significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria

H0: Electronic voter accreditation does not guarantee reliability in Nigeria's electoral process.

H1: Electronic voter accreditation guarantees reliability of Nigeria's electoral process

Level of significance: 0.05

Decision Rule: there is rejection of the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than the level of significance, while there is acceptance of the null hypothesis if the result is otherwise.

Table 10. Test Statistics

Electronic voter accreditation has no significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria	
Chi-Square	26.333 ^a
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells is .0% and have expected frequencies of less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 6.0.

4.4.1. Statistical conclusion based on the decision rule:

Based on the p-value, we accept the hypothesis that electronic voting has no significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria.

T-Test

Table 11. Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	The Card Reader is a reliable voting machine but has no significant impact 30 on election credibility in Nigeria.	.781	.000

Table 12. Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Card Reader is a reliable voting device, but does not guarantee credibility of election in Nigeria because it has challenges despite the benefits	.067	.828	.151	-.242	.376	.441	29	.000

Table 11 proves sufficiently that there is no correlation between electronic voter accreditation and election credibility in Nigeria if we apply the Pearson correlation coefficient “r” of 0.781.

Table 12 presents equal proof in a sufficient and comprehensive way through the t test analysis is infallibly conducted, that there is no significant relationship between the card reader being a reliable voter accreditation system and the 2015 Nigerian general elections credibility. This conclusion can be seen from the fact that the p-value of 0.000 is less than the level of significance required to establish significance of relationship.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

The electoral process in Nigeria has throughout the history of the country been mired in controversy and crisis arising essentially from a complex set of issues in the election management process. These issues include multiple voting, voter impersonation, under aged voting and various other forms of electoral malfeasance. Irrespective of the reforms that have over the years been introduced by the successive election management bodies in the country the problem of voter impersonation and multiple voting in particular have persisted. This reality is what motivated INEC to deploy an electronic voter accreditation process; which supposedly leverages on the use of technology towards addressing the issue of voter impersonation, multiple voting and thereby improving the credibility of the 2015 general elections. Yet, in spite of the advantages of deploying such technology in the accreditation process of the 2015 general elections, the process was the subject of a great deal of controversy and crisis.

While INEC argued that the electronic voter accreditation system was crucial towards eliminating the problems of multiple voting and voter impersonation, critics some of which were political parties were of the opinion that Nigeria's electoral process was not ready for the deployment of such technology and that it was a mechanism for the manipulation of the outcome of the electoral process. This study therefore set out to investigate the impact of the deployment of the electronic voter accreditation process on the credibility of elections in Nigeria. The study was thus, also ipso facto set to identify the limitations and challenges of the electronic voter accreditation system in Nigeria's electoral process. The study had three major objectives namely:

- a. To determine the reliability and implications of the electronic voter accreditation system in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.
- b. To identify the limitations and challenges associated with the introduction of the electronic voter accreditation system Nigeria's 2015 electoral process.
- c. To investigate the impact of electronic voter accreditation process on the credibility of the 2015 general election in Nigeria.

The study was anchored on the liberal theory of democracy. Liberal democratic theory places emphasis on the quality of the electoral process in ensuring that a state is democratic. They argued in support of the existence of competitive elections where certain liberal values such as freedom of association and speech are crucial for elections to be credible and by implication, for a state to be democratic. The theory was therefore considered appropriate due to its emphasis on the electoral process in the democratic scheme of things. The study also adopted a mixed method; that is; it is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. While the quantitative data was gathered from questionnaires administered across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria, the qualitative data was gathered from the interviews with key personalities central to the issues under investigation. Furthermore, triangulation process which involved the integration of the quantitative and qualitative data was adopted in the analysis in order to provide a holistic appraisal of the issues.

Evidence gathered in the course of the study resulted in the following findings:

- a. That electronic voter accreditation has no statistically significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria
- b. That electronic voter accreditation has limitations and challenges in the electoral process of Nigeria

Conclusion

Following the completion of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, the country witnessed the historic defeat of the incumbent Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) by the major opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) in an election that was widely acclaimed to be free, fair and credible and reflective of will of Nigerians. Given that the historic outcome of the election coincided with the deployment of the electronic voter accreditation process, it was believed that the electronic accreditation process significantly contributed the outcome of the 2015 general elections. Findings however indicate that the electronic voter accreditation process had no statistically significant impact on the credibility of the election. Indeed, this finding reflected the responses of some key stakeholders interviewed; who generally noted that while the electronic accreditation process may have contributed in the credibility of the 2015 general elections, one cannot rule out the influence of other factors such as the de-

politicization of the electoral process by the incumbent government of President Goodluck Jonathan who ensured that INEC was given the necessary support to guarantee its independence, as well as the transparency of INEC under the chairmanship of Prof. Attahiru Jega in the actual process of conducting the elections.

Recommendation

In the light of the findings made in the course of this study recommendations are made: INEC needs to ensure extensive and thorough enlightenment on the benefits of the Electronic accreditation process in order to avoid a reoccurrence of the challenges recorded with the deployment of the technology.



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QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE STUDY

INSTRUCTION: Kindly and carefully complete the questionnaire by ticking the correct answer(s) from the options or supply the information required where necessary.

SECTION A (Personal Information section)

1. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

2. Age Grade

- a. Below 20yrs
- b. 21-30yrs
- c. 31-40yrs
- d. 41-50yrs
- e. 50-60yrs
- f. Above 60yrs

3. Educational Qualification

- a. WASCE/SSCE/NECO
- b. OND/HND/BSC
- c. PGD/MSC/PHD
- d. Others

4. Marital status

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Widowed

5. Years of experience.

- a. 1-3yrs
- b. 4-7yrs
- c. 8-11yrs
- d. Above 11yrs

SECTION B: questions on the impact of electronic voter accreditation on election credibility in Nigeria.

6. To what extent do you agree that the card readers deployed for the 2015 general elections in Nigeria has no significant impact on election credibility?

- a. Strongly agreed
- b. Agreed
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagreed
- e. Strongly disagreed

7. Do you agree that the card readers don't not have significant impact on election credibility in Nigeria because the system has limitations that can affect its transparency performance?

- a. Strongly agreed
- b. Agreed
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagreed
- e. Strongly disagreed

8. Do you agree that tech-know-how level issues of Nigeria is one of the limitations and reasons why electronic voter accreditation does not guarantee accuracy in Nigeria' s electoral process?

- a. Strongly agreed
- b. Agreed
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagreed
- e. Strongly disagreed

9. Do you agree that there is no significant relationship between electronic voter accreditation and transparent electoral process in Nigeria because of INECs lack of true independence?

- a. Strongly agreed
- b. Agreed
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagreed
- e. Strongly disagreed

10. Do you agree that reliability of Nigeria' s electoral system does not depend on the electronic voter accreditation Strongly agreed?

- a. Strongly agreed
- b. Agreed
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagreed
- e. Strongly disagreed

11. What are the limitations and challenges in the electronic voter accreditation process in Nigeria?

12. What are the factors that limit the transparency performance of the electronic voter accreditation system in Nigeria?

13. What are the factors that can transform Nigeria's electoral system for high-rate electoral transparency performance?



