

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

Department of Political Science and Public Administration

**DIGITAL DEMOCRATIZATION: THE PLACE OF  
SMART CARD READERS IN THE 2019 GENERAL  
ELECTION IN ENUGU WEST SENATORIAL ZONE,  
ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.**

Master Thesis

**Chilee Cynthia UGO**

Supervisor

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mohammad Bashir DIOP

**Istanbul – 2023**



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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.

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## SUMMARY

Nigeria's electoral malpractices since 1999 have reduced electorates' chances of changing government, leading to fraud accusations and a need for improvement. Post-election violence and tribunals have exacerbated these anomalies, highlighting the need for improvement in the electoral process. INEC must align electoral system with global innovations for digital democratization in Nigeria, addressing anomalies in previous elections. The study used Davis' Technology Acceptance Model for a cross-sectional survey in Nigeria, involving 255 electorates in the 2019 election, using mean and standard deviation. In 2019, Nigerian election utilized smart card readers, simplifying voting and promoting INEC's online presence, reducing double registration and accreditation issues.

**Keywords:** Tribunal, INEC, Global innovation, Digital democratization, Electorate, Online, Accreditation

## ÖZET

Nijerya'nın 1999'dan beri seçimle ilgili yanlış uygulamaları, seçmenlerin hükümeti değiştirme şansını azalttı, bu da dolandırıcılık suçlamalarına ve iyileştirme ihtiyacına yol açtı. Seçim sonrası şiddet ve mahkemeler, bu anormallikleri şiddetlendirerek seçim sürecinde iyileştirme ihtiyacının altını çizdi. INEC, önceki seçimlerdeki anormallikleri ele alarak Nijerya'da dijital demokratikleşme için seçim sistemini küresel yeniliklerle uyumlu hale getirmelidir. Çalışma, Davis'in Teknoloji Kabul Modelini Nijerya'da 2019 seçimlerinde 255 seçmenin dahil olduğu, ortalama ve standart sapmayı kullanan bir kesitsel anket için kullandı. 2019'da Nijerya seçimlerinde akıllı kart okuyucular kullanıldı, oylamayı basitleştirdi ve INEC'in çevrimiçi varlığını destekleyerek çifte kayıt ve akreditasyon sorunlarını azalttı.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Mahkeme, INEC, Küresel yenilik, Dijital demokratikleşme, Seçmenler, Çevrimiçi, Akreditasyon.



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>SCR</b>	:	SMART CARD READER
<b>TAM</b>	:	TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL
<b>INEC</b>	:	INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION
<b>ICT</b>	:	INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
<b>PVC</b>	:	PERMANENT VOTER'S CARD
<b>FCT</b>	:	FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY



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## **PREFACE**

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## INTRODUCTION

The ongoing instances of electoral fraud that have occurred in Nigeria since 1999 have only served to crush voters' hopes of changing the government through elections. The electorate is uninterested with voting in elections and always claims that their vote will not matter because the election's winners have already been decided. The Nigerian voting system has finally come to be recognized as a fraud as a result of this persistent misconception. Nevertheless, this has also made INEC, the election body, into a political puppet. The majority of the time, post-election violence and court proceedings follow any irregularities in the electoral process, therefore, the need for enhancement in the whole electoral processes. This has persisted for decades and has been successful in creating a number of ineffective leaders in the past.

The best INEC can do, however, is connect the electoral system with current developments to comply with global best practices in a world where innovation and technology advancement prevail. As a result, Nigeria's entire voting process needs to be digitally democratic. In many various ways, digital democratization has already gotten underway throughout the world, including in Nigeria. Elections are still the mainstay of a democratic society, thus this is where the height of digital democracy begins. Due to the aforementioned anomalies witnessed in previous elections and the efforts of INEC to ameliorate these anomalies, this study sought to investigate the role of Smart Card Reader in promoting digital democratization process in Nigeria.

The study was guided by three research questions and hypotheses. Theoretically, the study is anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1989). The design of the study was a cross-sectional survey design. It adopted a mixed method research approach. The study was conducted in Enugu West Senatorial Zone of Enugu state. The sample of the study was 255 electorates from the study area who participated in the 2019 election. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire and a structured interview. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.005 level of significance. The findings showed that the use of smart card readers (SCRs) in the 2019 election made the election of Nigeria internet based and the election process made easier. It also made INEC to be seen as a global oriented institution in Nigeria that is ready for adopting online voting. The use of SCRs showed that digital/electronic/online democracy has become stronger in Nigeria unlike in the 2011 and 2015. This is even more obvious now that

fewer people are double registering to vote, be accredited, and participate in elections. If Nigeria uses the SCR, obstacles including internet issues and a lack of technical expertise on the part of INEC's ad hoc employees are some of the setbacks in the path of digital democratization.





# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1. Background of the Study

A democratic government has many advantages especially relating to development over undemocratic government. A democratic government has the tendency of peacefully transiting power from some individuals/groups to another. These individuals/groups have different qualifications, personality traits and interest for the nation. With such diversity, when periodically changed through election, they will contribute differently in their nation's national development. Therefore, periodic election is a true depiction of a democratic government. No democracy can stand without period elections (Nwangwu, Onah & Out, 2018). This is because, democracy is a government system that allows the people to choose their leaders through election, partake in national decision making and permit the people to participate in political matters of their nation. According to Sule, Sambo and Saragih (2021), election is a peaceful way of transferring power from one person to another based on the majority choice of the citizens. Thus, without being able to change leaders periodically, people living in a democratic society could be said to have been denied of their democratic right as enshrined in their constitution. However, due to power tussle and unbridle desire to hold power, many politicians, especially in sub-Saharan Africa tend to pursue their intention of wining an election with a dexterity that in some cases, fall below the requirement of natural law, international law, and their national law by killing people. In this case, the cases of electoral violence have been seen to be at the base of Nigerian elections system since 1999 (Nwangwu, et al, 2018; Omotosho & Udeoji, 2020).

In Nigeria, instead of election being a source of changing power from one hand to another, it has remained, due to its irregularities, a means by which political figures showcase their level of wealth by sharing money that are seen as a means to get to the top. These politicians could be seen as political entrepreneurs who are bent on nothing else if not to regain their spent money after the election. In this situation, they may end up executing no meaningful developmental project for the nation. Rather, they will be concerned on how to enrich their individual pockets from the public fund in preparation of the next election. These are negative effects of electoral malpractices. Nigerian electoral malpractices and violence is not a child birth of the Fourth Republic. It has been a reoccurring event in Nigeria right from 1960. For instance,

Igboechesi (2019), asserted that elections in Nigeria since post-colonial Nigeria has been characterised with numerous level of irregularity. This ranges from multiple registration of voters, multiple voting, thuggery and rigging, snatching of ballot boxes, mutilation of election results, disenfranchisement of eligible voters and voting by minors and many more. These were evident in the 1965, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections. Therefore, it could be argued that while election is a true sign of democracy, in Nigeria, it seems to be a true sign of political intimidation.

Elections are very important in the growth and development of every nation. According to Nwangwu, et al (2018), as a very important element in a representative government in modern times, elections ought to be done in a way that it would promote the peace and security of the nation for national development. This is because, elections solely represent a true democratic process; but they are more meaningful when they are conducted in a free, fair, credible, healthy competitive and legitimate manner (Nwangwu, et al, 2018). Diamond (2008) cautioned that for a free and fair election to be witnessed, it must be conducted by a neutral body that does not favour any of the candidates or political party over the rest. Thus, in this situation, every candidate should be treated equally and none of them or their supporters should be molested by either the police, the military or any other armed force.

However, since 1999 that democracy returned to Nigeria, it looks like these criteria have not been met in its electoral process. Although, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is an electoral body that conducts elections in Nigeria, yet their legal functions are undermined by some impracticable political realities in Nigeria such as intimidation and sharing of money bags by politicians. Therefore, Nwangwu, et al (2018) argued that this is because INEC lack autonomy especially in its administrative and financial aspects and they lack that high level of professionalism required to conduct a free and fair election.

However, far from that, the reason behind the electoral malpractices may be because INEC have not integrated innovations in its electioneering process. The reoccurring electoral malpractices in Nigerian general election have become a national issue that has made many electorates to lose faith on INEC. However, in a world ruled by technology and innovation, to rewrite the narrative, INEC introduced the use of Smart Card Readers (SCRs) in its Elections in 2015. The use of SCRs in election was a stepping stone towards digital democratization of

Nigeria (Simon, Bass, Boelman & Mulgan, 2017) and that process was to be consolidated in the subsequent election in 2019 (Ifegwu, Okeagu, Godslight & Daniel, 2019).

The process of digitalizing the democratic process of election in Nigeria had taken different forms before SCRs were introduced in 2015, such as advanced finger print registration and biometric registration to digitalize voters' data for retrieval on election day (Ifegwu, Okeagu, Godslight & Daniel, 2019). However, digital democratization process in Nigeria is a very important innovation that ought to be adopted fully owing to the recent global technological realities. It is important to state that digital democratization/democracy is a concept that implies many things to different authors. Simon et al (2017) maintained that digital democratization is a process as well as an act that involves the practice of democracy using digital applications. It could be seen from the side of political participation using digital devices. Also, it could be seen from the angle of enhancing political information dissemination through many different online means such as social media, emails, etc. Digital democracy manifests in different ways. It could be through blockchain technology for voting, use of digital biometric system for voter accreditation, use of chip-readable machines for election, online crowdsourcing platforms and electronic voting (Sgueo, 2020).

The idea of digital democratization has a long history which is basically linked to the history of technology in the world. As the technological innovation of the world increased, its political system followed suit and democratic process was not left out. Therefore, as information and communication technology (ICT) became a dominant tool in virtually all human endeavours in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, digital democracy was also ushered in to allow people embrace the technological change in all ramifications. The process of digital democratization moved from the ancient times of crude political participation, where only selected few had franchise, to a more fashionable way of politicking. According to Sgueo (2020), from Aristotle to facebook, people have moved from staying at a particular place together listening to the political orator to staying in their comfort zones listening and sharing ideas with political figures. He went further to argue that social networking sites remain new public space where virtual gatherings are made for discussion of political matters and mobilization of people for some social course relating to politics. Therefore, digital democratization, as a matter of fact, has revolutionized the democratic practices of many nations including Nigeria. This is because, people now share their views about

political matters online and are very free to express themselves without fear of victimization. Thus, the importance of digital democratization in ensuring free and fair elections is overwhelming owing to the presence of the internet where electorates could post and retrieve political information, thus show their high level of political literacy and participation.

In Nigeria, digital democratization using the SCRs has also been positively felt. According to Simon, et al (2020), globally, the fraud in election has made electorates' turnout for election to be very low because people are already lacking confidence in the credibility of the election umpires to conduct a free and fair election. Yet, in Nigeria, in the 2015 and 2019 general elections unlike in the past when elections could be rigged without trace, the emergence of smartcard readers which is a digital technology has strengthened the foundation of conducting a free and fair election in Nigeria. Therefore, digital democracy has become a sine qua non for Nigeria and many nations across the globe in order to align with the recent global realities especially in the electoral process. Omilusi (2018) argued that due to the problem of manual accreditation of voters and election result manipulations, many nations across the globe now embrace digital democratic means through the use of technology based voter accreditation. In this case, the Nigerian nation has recently keyed into this train through the introduction of SCR. Unlike in the past when the professionalism of INEC to conduct a free and fair election in Nigeria was questioned as argued by Nwangwu, et al (2018), Imosemi, Taiwo and Nzeribe (2019) argued then that much more recently, elections conducted in Nigeria by INEC suggest that they have the professional wherewithal to conduct a free and fair election due to the level of digital democratization of the electoral process of Nigeria by INEC.

However, the outcome of the 2019 election still suggested that many challenges still face INEC in fully digitalizing the election process through the SCRs. For instance, while the 2015 only confronted the problem of SCRs, the 2019 general election was faced with numerous logistic problems that even led to the postponement of the election by a week from 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 to 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2019 (Onapajo & Babalola, 2020). It could be argued that although the process of digitalizing the Nigerian democracy through the use of SCRs is a welcomed one, yet the nation is still faced with numerous challenges that could mar its full utilization in subsequent elections if not checked. Also, although digitalizing democracy will develop Nigeria, yet, it will widen the gap of digital divide in the nation. This is because of high level of computer illiteracy

and poor network and others. It is based on this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate how digital democratization through the use of smart card readers in the 2019 general election enhanced electoral credibility in Enugu West Senatorial Zone of Nigeria.

## **1.2. Problem of the Study**

Digital technologies across the globe have revolutionized many aspects of human endeavours and ushered in a paradigm shift in the mode of doing business, learning and leadership. Its impact in the political sphere is very outstanding as it has transformed the leadership of many nations. The upsurge of social media and other digital technologies have expanded the horizon of democratization process across the globe by educating citizens and giving them ample opportunity to partake in their government decision making process. In Nigeria, digital technology has also had its wave of influence in its democratization process especially in its election process.

Election remains the strongest determining factor of a true democratic society. It is the best way or avenue in which citizens show their involvement in their democratic government. However, in Nigeria, in most cases, election processes are faulted with many irregularities (vote buying and rigging of election results) and pre-election, election and post-election violence. This anomaly continues to question the democratic process of Nigeria since 1999. This reoccurring ordeal has continued to produce many incompetent administrations, led to voter apathy, reduced the confidence of the masses on the electoral process of the nation and reduced Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (the election umpire) to a political stooge of the politicians.

However, with the advent of digital technologies, the introduction of Smart Card Readers (SCRs) in the 2015 general election in Nigeria became a stepping stone towards achieving digital democracy and curbing electoral fraud in Nigeria. This nonetheless, was greeted by many challenges. In 2019, SMRs were used again in the election, but this time, it could be argued that there were some improvements that could ensure smooth transition into digital democratization. Although, the use of SCRs have been greeted by many critique that argued against its legality and credibility in ensuring free and fair election (Nwangwu, Onah & Otu, 2018), yet, it could be argued in this study that the SMRs is a wake-up call for digital democratization process in

Nigeria. Though, digitalizing the democratic process through election in Nigeria is very pertinent, yet this could be surmounted by numerous challenges such as digital illiteracy especially among adults living in the rural areas and many more. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate on the place of smart card readers in the 2019 general election in ensuring digital democratization and electoral credibility in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is basically to find out the role of SCRs in promoting digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. Basically, this will help the study to ascertain how SCRs gave the electorates more opportunity to participate in the democratic process of election and how it enhanced electoral credibility. Specific objectives are:

1. To investigate on how the use of SCRs promoted digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain how the SCR helped to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria.
3. Find out the challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. Did the use of SCRs promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria?
2. To what level did SCR helped to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs?

### **1.5. Study Hypotheses**

The basic assumptions of this study are stated below:

Ho<sub>1</sub>. The use of SCRs did not promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Ho<sub>2</sub>. The use of SCR did not help to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria?

Ho<sub>3</sub>. There are no challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs.

### **1.6. Significance/Importance of the Study**

This study will be important to INEC, electorates, leaders, scholars and political analysts. It will make INEC to understand the challenges that need to be addressed if digital democratization using the SCR must be achieved in the subsequent elections. It will also make the electorates to see the reasons for them to registrar for the permanent voters' cards to be able to cast their votes on election days.

It will also make leaders to initiate policies and enact laws that will allow for the sustainability of digital democracy using the SCRs. It will help scholar and political analysts to be much more exposed concerning the progress made so far in digitalizing democracy in the conduct of election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

### **1.7. Scope of the Study**

The geographical scope of the study will cover only areas in Enugu West Senatorial Zones of Enugu state. These areas will be the five local government areas in the senatorial zone which are Aninri, Agwu, Ezeagu, Oji-River and Udi local government areas. In the content scope, the study will basically focus on finding out the level of digital democratization of Nigeria using SCRs in election. It will also focus on finding out the positive impacts of SCRs in ensuring credible election in the 2019 general election. It will then look at the challenges that confronted the use of SCRs in conducting the 2019 general election. These challenges are going to be the blue print in which the step for consolidating digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs in election could be made.

## **1.8 Limitations**

The study is hoped to be confronted by many challenges. First, to access the respondents in their local terrains could pose a problem. Two of the five local governments areas (Awgu and Aninri) are located in hilly areas, thus, mobility may be a challenge. There could also be some financial challenges that may limit the geographical coverage of this study. Also, the problem of illiteracy on the part of the respondents may be witnessed especially in responding to the questionnaire and interview. This is because the senatorial zone is a made up of both urban and rural local governments areas.

## **1.9 Operational Definitions**

### **Election:**

Election is the periodic exercise conducted to change a government through majority voting by the electorates.

### **Digital democratization:**

This is the use of electronic media such as the social media, internet, e-voting, smart card readers, permanent voters' card and others to enhance democratic process. It is the use of electronic devices to practice democracy such as public opinion or poll in the internet, social media and uploading and downloading of political information.

### **Smart Card Reader (SCR):**

This is a machine reads permanent voter's card which has a built-in chip for authentication of electorates in the polling unit during election.

### **2019 General Election:**

This is the last all-national election conducted in Nigeria between the month of February and March 2019 where president, national assembly members, governors, state house of assembly members were elected to stay for a period of four years in office.



**Election Malpractice:**

This includes all electoral irregularities that are done before, during and after election by the candidates, their supporter and electorates. It includes vote buying, rigging, mutilation of election result, intimidation of electoral officers, proxy voting, double voting, voting by the minor, and many others.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, effort will be made towards reviewing some of the underlying concepts that make up the background of this study. Therefore, in the review of existing literature, the study shall adopt the thematic style. In this context, the study shall review principally the divergent views of scholars on the major variables in its sub theme; it shall cover the conceptual review, the theoretical framework, empirical review and the gap in existing knowledge. In the conceptual review, the concepts to be reviewed are digital democratization, election, smart card readers (SCRs).

#### **2.1. Conceptual Review**

In this segment, the study shall broadly and extensively review the works of scholars on the various concepts in the three research questions. The essence of this review will be to have background and adequate knowledge of operational variables as disused in the study and to enhance general understanding of the subject matter under study. To that end, this study shall review according to scholars in extant literature, the following concepts from the two research questions:

- Digital Democratization
- Election, Electoral Credibility and Electoral Malpractices
- Smart Card Readers (SCRs)

##### **2.1.1. Concept of Digital Democratization**

To talk about digital democratization without talking about democracy/democratization and digital as separate entities will entail that that the concept would be improperly explained. Therefore, democracy could be seen as a government system whereby people otherwise called electorates choose their leaders to represent them in the administration of the society through a majority agreement. Thus, it is a government system that is initiated by the people and which is meant to serve the interest of the people and it is characterised by periodic elections through which they change the government. Democracy education is done in different ways starting from the home, the school, and in the internet (which is fast replacing many other aspects). In this

case, democracy education can be done using digital means. Democratization therefore is a concept distinct from democracy, and it connotes the process of bringing about democracy: through institutionalization of democratic principles and attitudinal change. It is the ways and means of developing democracy, and entrenching democratic institutions, values and practices over time. Shehu (2015) maintained that democratization is about the entrenchment of responsible leadership and good governance in a country by making sure that democracy is institutionalized and deeply rooted within the ideals of its basic tenets.

Digital encompasses a variety of electronic (wired and wireless) means of information storage and retrieval. Therefore, in a simple sense, digital democracy could be seen as the democracy practiced using digital means. Since there are many aspect of democracy, digital democracy can therefore be seen in different forms. It could manifest in individual participation in policy making and public opinion or through electoral process. Burke (2010) opined that digital democracy could be seen as the use of computer technology such as the internet and other applications to facilitate the process of governance which could be in voting or participation in public hearings. The term digital democracy is represented with different names by many authors. It could as well be called electronic democracy (E-democracy) (Aziz & Hasna, 2020). Therefore, the term digital democracy or E-democracy could be used interchangeably in this study.

Digital democracy is particularly part of the information communication technology revolution process in the world. This is because, digital democracy is basically democracy that is taken to the cloud system using different digital facilities. Thus, this will ensure massive political participation of majority of the citizens in the democratic processes of their nations. Therefore, to understand digital democracy, we try to point out a fact that establishes a relationship between collective self-government and mediating digital infrastructures. In this instance, digital democracy was opined by Berg and Hofmann (2021), to mean the influence of digital technologies in the political engagement and democratic governance of nations. On another note, Hennen, van Keulen, Korthagen, Aichholzer, Lindner and Nielsen (2020) argued that E-democracy is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in political debates and decision-making processes by complementing or contrasting traditional means of communications, such as face-to-face interaction or one-way mass media. Aziz and Hasna (2020) in a different note observed that digital democracy is the support of democratic process

using electronic means. Thus, digital democracy stands as one of several strategies for supporting democracy, democratic institutions and democratic processes and spreading democratic values. It is additional, complementary, and interlinked with traditional processes of democracy. Each process has its merits; none is universally applicable.

Information is very important in every democratic space. Therefore, Akmal (2017), opined that digital democracy is the use of digital channels to engage in political activities that will entail information dissemination and increase political participation or public support. According Rawls (1971) as cited in Akmal (2017), the importance of information to democracy is called information-based justice. Therefore, in this digital era, the embodiment of information-based justice gets opportunities and challenges as the development of communication and information technology continues. In a world ruled by globalization and quest to ensure the observance of rule of law, digital democracy has given edge to many nations in achieving these. This is particularly because digital democracy allows people to participate actively in the democratic process of their nation and it serves as radical means of political education to many citizens. Thus, Uwaoma and Quinette (2020), argued that digital democracy has opened new opportunities especially political participation and civic engagements in advanced and emerging democracies. This is further manifested by the internet-enabled mobile phones that allow youths to go online to participate in politics. This new mode of virtual political interaction is creating a new space for accelerated engagements between politicians and citizens in most democratic cultures across the globe.

One of the political activities that can be done through the media of digital information is political education. It cannot be denied that the popularity of social networking in the current era of globalization has become an outstanding phenomenon, especially among young generations. The internet has become a new medium for the young generation in obtaining information and even participating in some political activities through the polls offered by several political events that occurred in the globe. Therefore, among the young generations, a new space of learning about the political history and political gymnastics of a nation like Nigeria remains the social networking site which is enhanced by the internet. This therefore, shows that digital democratization has ever remained a concept that has been in Nigeria and it has had a strong base. However, the extent at which the Nigerian government utilizes this opportunity created by the internet is still questionable. Nonetheless, through its electoral institution, the Nigerian

government in recent years has keyed into this ever outstanding political radicalization of its democracy using digital technologies. This is why they now adopt electronic means in registration of voters and even retrieving the data of electorates and accrediting them for elections on the election days using the Smart Card Readers. Therefore, it could be argued that the process of digitalizing the democratic process in Nigeria is not only through the internet or social media in which only few electorates use, but the application of digital procedures in the election process in Nigeria. Therefore this showcased a high level of readiness of INEC to digitalize the democratic process (election) of Nigeria even though such process was greeted by many critiques especially in 2015 when it was first applied (Obiora, Nwanolue & Enemoh, 2019).

Based on the foregoing ideas, it could be argued that digital democracy has both an analytical and a normative dimension. As an analytical lens, Berg and Hofmann (2021), argued that digital democracy investigates how the use of digital technologies may influence the conditions, institutions and practices of political engagement and democratic governance. As a normative concept, it enables us to think about democracy as an open, alterable form of political organisation that is always in the making. Its dynamics are on the one hand due to conflicting principles, interpretations, and aspirations endemic to the democratic idea, like freedom, equality, or popular sovereignty. On the other hand, these dynamics also reflect a changing media landscape, which brings about new possibilities of imagining, realizing, and practicing political self-determination. Therefore, digital democracy should neither be seen as a utopian model of an imminent future nor as a mere disintermediation of the existing democratic institutions. Instead of relying on mono-causal linear explanations, digital democracy should be studied and seen as a contingent, open-ended phenomenon that interconnects two evolving areas, that of democratic self-government and that of digital infrastructures.

Digital democratization could therefore be seen as the process of expanding and practicing the democratic principles of nations through the use and help of digital facilities which could be cloud based such as social media, internet, television, radio, or, data management based such as voter registration and census through biometric means, or via the use of electronic materials such as computer systems, mobile phones, smart card reading machines and others to do these. In this situation, digital democratization could be felt in different aspects of the democratic process of the nation such as in election. Election which is the bane of a democratic

society therefore, could be facilitated using digital means. Such means could and have led to e-voting, e-campaign, e-registration of electorates and many others. Digital democratization as noted earlier could be in different forms. Particularly, digital democratization of Nigerian is found in its electoral system where digital technologies are used in the electoral process to facilitate service delivery and ensure electoral credibility.

### **2.1.2. Concept of Election**

As a free word, election could be seen as a process of selecting leaders to lead a group of people. Election is basically a future of governance found in a democratic society. In a society that does not have democracy, they use coup or monarchical hereditary system to change government. Therefore, in these two, the masses do not have any part in selecting who governs them or not. Nonetheless, election is a process that allows the adults of a society who have their franchise to select leaders through a majority poll. The category of adults who participate in this process could therefore be dependent on the constitution of the society. On the other hand, election can be seen to represent the act performed by citizens of society in participating indirectly in policy formulation in their society through their representatives who they selected to do that for their sake. Therefore, election is a period in which citizens in a democratic space participate actively in the decision making and shaping of the future of their society through their conduct in the selection process of their leaders.

According to Udu, Nkwede and Ezekwe (2015), election, could be described as a widely and universally accepted means through which, by voting, individuals are openly and methodically chosen to represent a body or community in a larger entity or government. Mohammed (2015) sees election as a competitive way of selecting public office holders who would control power and become accountable to the society. Therefore, election could be viewed as a technical means of guaranteeing popular participation in governance by citizens who choose their representative in tandem with the dictates of modern democracies. In this case, political candidates compete for votes of the electorates with the manifestoes and previous works done for the society. This means that election is a means through which the most popular candidate becomes selected by the people. However, this is obtainable only when free and fair election is done.

Elections are better done in a free and fair manner. This is because, when fairly conducted, elections have the capacity to promote transparency and accountability in governance. This is because the fear of defeat at polls forces those in power to conduct themselves properly and make public interest the primary concern in their policies and political decisions. Election is critical to the sustenance of a nation's democracy. When it is done with credibility, it can spur national development and peace. The vitality of election with integrity in any society therefore, is seen in a way in which such election allows the electorates to select competent people who can occupy political offices at local, state and federal government. Truly, if the elementary definition of democracy is accepted as the government of the people, by the people and for the people, then elections would seem to be the only mechanism through which a democratic government can be realized and entrenched (Udu, Nkwede & Ezekwe, 2015).

Previous and current efforts by Nigeria to institute liberal democracy as a system of government have always been either scuttled or severely constrained by the problems arising from elections. The issue has not been whether or when to hold elections, since that fact and necessity of elections are taken for granted in the practice of liberal democracy. Rather, the issue has been how to ensure and guarantee credibility and acceptability of elections and their outcomes. With election so critical in a democratic political system, it is understandable why one should be concerned with its fairness and freeness. As argued by Mohammed (2015), without elections being held regularly and seen to be conducted in a transparently free and fair manner, democracy remains a sham, a forlorn hope, indeed and empty shadow of itself. It is precisely because of this fact, that virtually every analyst who comments on democratic elections, particularly in Nigeria, always stresses the issue of freeness and fairness; hence, credibility issues in election. It is common knowledge that elections, particularly in Nigeria, are often characterized by all manners of malpractices with their attendant, socio-political, economic and security challenges facing Nigeria as a nation.

### **2.1.3. Electoral Credibility**

A credible election is that election that could be attested to have been free and fair with its results not manipulated or changed. It is that election that is free of violence, free of intimidation, and where the election officers stand neutral in the whole process. Moreover, elections are said to be credible, when rules, regulations and laws governing the electoral process

are followed and ultimately, credible candidate are freely and fairly selected to represent the electorates (Udu, et al., 2015). In other words, a free and fair election legitimizes an electoral outcome. According to Diamond (2002) cited in Udu, et al., (2015), there are four major variables on which the concept of free and fair elections rests. These are:

- (i) the political parties;
- (ii) the individuals;
- (iii) the voting process, and;
- (iv) the election outcome.

Starting with the political parties, for an election to be considered as free and fair, the: parties must be free to compete, to organize, to recruit members, to articulate policies, to stage rallies and to solicit votes. The less the political system restrains opposing parties from the business of organizing and campaigning, and the less it systematically, favours a particular party (typically the ruling party), the freer and fairer the election may be said to have been.

By the same logic, for an election to be free and fair, the individual must be free to participate in the political process – to join the party of their choice, to campaign for it, to seek political office in its platform and of course, to vote for it (or not to vote at all). Furthermore, on the voting process: each person should have one and only one vote, and each person should be counted equally no one who satisfies some limited set of conditions (such as minimum age and sound mind) should be refused registration, no registered voter should be prevented from voting, nor should anyone be allowed to vote more than once, nor should any votes be counted for a party except those individuals legally cast, nor should any legally and properly cast votes be discarded or disregarded. On the election outcome, Udu, et al (2015) argued that an election would be free and fair if the results are accurately reported without manipulations. Accordingly, when all the conditions germane to the four variables as defined above are observed in the process, conduct and outcome of an election, that election could be considered to be free and fair; hence, credible. However, it is common knowledge that the above outlined conditions are hardly possible in any election particularly in Nigeria. The activities of such bodies or group like the Electoral Commission, the behaviour of politicians and security agents often determine how far, such conditions as highlighted can be possible.

Therefore, a credible election could be understood from the angle of free and fair election. Ideally, the concept of “freedom” contrasts with coercion. Freedom entails the right and



the opportunity to choose one thing over another. Coercion implies the absence of choice, either formally or in reality: either all options but one are disallowed, or certain choices would have negative consequences for one's own or one's family's safety, welfare, or dignity. On the other hand, fairness means impartiality. However, the opposite of fairness is unequal treatment of people, whereby some people (or groups) are given unreasonable advantages. Thus fairness involves both regularity (the unbiased application of rules) and reasonableness (the not-too-unequal distribution of relevant resources among competitors). In election context, Sule, Sambo and Saragih (2021) pointed out that the freedom dimension should include elements of participation of citizens in the process (voting and running for office), without any coercion. On the other hand, fairness deals mainly with the rules of the game. For Elkit and Sevension (2017), freedom should be given the priority, because it is a precondition for democracy and for elections as a means to that end. Without rules granting formal political freedoms, the question of the fair application of rules is meaningless, and the question of equality of resources will be irrelevant.

#### **2.1.4. Electoral Malpractice**

In absence of a credible election, electoral malpractice is bound to occur. Therefore, electoral malpractice is the derailing of electorates, candidates and election officers from the standard principles of a credible process of electing representatives to practicing a lawless and uncivil way of choosing representatives. By this, electoral malpractice is the conduct of election without fairness and truth. Basic feature of this kind of situation is alteration of election results, proxy voting, multiple voting, vote buying, intimidation of electorates and many others. When there is electoral malpractice, it usually haunts the democratic process and development of the nation. Thus, electoral malpractice remains a cankerworm that eats up the efforts of democratization of many nations including Nigeria.

Similarly, it should be noted here therefore, that elections determine the methods and manner through which changes in the socio-political order of a nation does occur. This method of change in the socio-political order of the society needs to be free from all forms of illegalities otherwise called malpractices. This is because, as shown in the election history of Nigeria since 1964, the failure of each electoral body in each of the Republics to conduct an election free of malpractices always leads to either political instability or other forms of crisis. According to Ejue

and Ekanem (2011), where free and fair election is not obtainable, its opposite is certain and that is usually break down of law and order including assassination, coup d'états, revolutions, insurgency and guerrilla warfare just to clinch to the seat of power and many electoral petition which normally distract the elected from concentrating to work. This fact, more than anything else, makes a discourse on the subject of voter rights and credible elections in Nigeria so crucial today. As evidently shown by historical documents, it was the controversial election of 1965 that contributed to the coup d'état of 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966. Also, the flawed electoral process of 1983 was employed as a means of rationalization for the military coup of December 1983 by Buhari. Again, Babangida's flawed elections of 1993 led to its annulment and paved way for another palace coup by in November, 1993. The failed and flawed elections of 2003, 2007 and 2011 have raised serious questions about the future of democracy in Nigeria and the country's future as a whole. These therefore, show that electoral malpractice is basically a clarion call to political instability and underdevelopment and a hindrance to democratization process of any nation such as Nigeria.

There are many factors that could lead to electoral malpractices in Nigeria. One of them is weak electoral institution to act independently in the conduct of elections. Secondly, poverty which renders the masses fugitives in the hands of politicians due to their money bags that they share for the sake of winning election. Another is "Godfatherism" which has eaten deep into the Nigerian electoral and political space. This is because "Godfatherism" has continued to produce incompetent leaders who end up syphoning public fund for personal use without being checkmated. These factors influence elections negatively and result to election malpractice of different forms and degrees. For instance, the Godfathers impose candidates against the popular choice of the masses during party primaries and in the actual elections in Nigeria. Udu, et al (2015) are of the opinion that this situation is attributable to weak institution and high level of poverty, disregard of the constitutional requirements, disheartening abuses of citizens' rights and the rule of law which a times, usher in the most dishonourable candidates to assume power often to the detriment of the masses. Consequently, public functionaries occupying exalted leadership positions in Nigeria have failed to apply appropriate leadership techniques in addressing the perennial challenges facing the country. Hence, rather than assisting the country with their acclaimed wealth of knowledge to develop, they have succeeded in aggravating the country's woes (Nwagboso & Duke, 2012). As bad as the Nigerian electoral system has been, the

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) a body in charge of conducting periodic elections in Nigeria, has taken some steps to assuage some of the problems that emanate from it. Such as the problem that has to do with data authentication and management. This, they do through the adoption of technological means such as the introduction of Smart Card Readers (SCRs).

### **2.1.5. The 2019 Nigerian General Election: An Appraisal**

The conduct of election in Nigeria since the fourth republic began in 1999 has been greeted with many challenges. These challenges range from election result rigging, vote buying, ballot box snatching, thuggery and molestation of voters and candidates by security agents, as well as other numerous violence that lead to disruption in of peace and security of the nation. These violence in most cases are ethno-religiously oriented and they lead to many post-election killings. Therefore, the act of election in Nigeria has been a progressive movement towards democratization of Nigeria, yet many important setbacks continue to draw it back. However, while some improvements have been recorded in some of the elections, yet some of them remain the shadow of themselves. It could then be argued that elections in Nigeria have not been free or fair and never has there been a credible election conducted in Nigeria since 1999. However, as the years go by and as the world revolves and as technology continues to dominate all spheres of human endeavours, the use of technology in the election process has to an extent instilled some sort of sanity in the electoral process in Nigeria. However, this has not really represented what election should be. Apart from the fact that in recent time, the issue of snatching of ballot boxes has been dismantled from its high place, the issue of vote buying orchestrated by high level of poverty in the nation has become another pattern of negatively influencing the votes of electorates. The INEC on its own has been reported in different elections conducted so far to be a culprit that liaises with the politicians to alter the outcome of the elections in favour of, especially, the ruling party (Sule, Adam, & Sambo, 2020). No wonder after every election periods, officials of INEC use to become richer as observed by the researcher.

Nonetheless, the 2015 general election saw the introduction of SCRs in the conduct of the election and this has reduced to an extent the instances of vote rigging. However, as a new technology that was introduced by INEC in the electoral process in 2015, it was greeted by many challenges ranging from network problem to lack of technical know-how by the INEC Ad Hoc

staff, malfunctioning of the SCR machines, and many others. However, the use of such technology could be adduced to be the reason behind the historical outcome of the election. According to Onapajo and Babalola (2020), the 2015 elections in Nigeria generated positive perception of the electoral process for a number of reasons especially as for the first time in Nigeria's electoral history, a winner emerged from the opposition party, and there was a successful alteration of power. The 2015 elections saw remarkable improvements in the incorporation of technology into the electoral process, which contributed to strengthening the integrity of the elections. However, as this landmark achievement was recorded in the democratization process of Nigeria, the 2019 general election witnessed achievement that could be tagged 'below expectations' of the masses.

Being the fact that the 2015 election saw a U-turn in the election process in Nigeria especially in the use of SMRs and the outcome of the election, the 2019 election was expected to have overcome the challenges witnessed in the 2015 general election. The postponement of the planned election of 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 election barely six hours to the election due to reason based on logistics pictured the level at which INEC was prepared to deliver a free and fair election to the nation. The postponement of the election by a week time made the electorates to lose hope and doubted the readiness of INEC to deliver a free and fair credible election. This also reduced, drastically, the voter turnout of electorates in the election more than other years. Moreover, Onapajo and Babalola (2020) lamented that the elections were followed with reports of disenfranchisement as a result of arbitrary cancellation of poll results by INEC due to many reasons that were suspected to be detrimental to the victory of the opposition parties. This is more pronounced as most of the cancellations occurred in areas considered as strongholds of the opposition parties. The state security personnel, responsible for securing the environment for a credible election, were again at the centre of controversies. Allegations of partisanship trailed the conduct of the security agencies to such extent that the public perceived the large presence of the security agencies as a calculated strategy to intimidate voters and favour the ruling party. Despite the huge presence of security officials, the election was still marred by violence that led to a number of deaths and destruction of INEC facilities such as burning of INEC offices in many parts of the country such as in Anambra state.

Even with the use of SCRs the electorates yet were dissatisfied with the general conduct and result of the election. This is an indication that the 2019 was a ghost of the actual substance

that the nation should have gotten during the election such as free and fairer election and proper functioning of the SCRs as against the malfunctioning of the SCRs in 2015. Conversely, SCRs malfunctioning was still witnessed in the process of the 2019 general election and this calls for a question concerning the digital democratization process of the electoral system of Nigeria. Even with these facts, election observers and analysts concluded that these challenges of the 2019 election did not significantly affect the results this was even as courts nullified many of the election results on the grounds of irregularities (Onapajo & Babalola, 2020; Sule, et al, 2020). Moreover, at the electoral tribunal, it was argued that the use of SCRs for transmission of online election results was illegal and not in accordance with the electoral act. Painfully, INEC also vehemently denied their use of SCRs for transmission of election results in the 2019 election (Onochie, 2019); a sign showing their lack of neutrality in the conduct of election related matters. Thus, no case could be made in court by the People's Democratic Party (opposition party) using the online transmitted election results using the SCRs. Therefore, the conduct of 2019 general election witnessed challenges that could question the essence and the effort of INEC in ensuring digital democratization in Nigerian election process using the SCRs.

## **2.2. Concept of Smart Card Readers (SCRs) in the Conduct of Election in Nigeria**

Smart Card Reader (SCR) is a machine that reads Permanent Voters Cards for the retrieval of voters' data for accreditation during election. It provides an electronic backup for accredited voters' bio-data on Election Day. It is an electronic machine that reads chip-based cards that are used in voting in Nigeria since 2015. The machine is a chargeable machine that uses external battery and is configured to read cards registered for a particular pooling unit during election time. The SCR functions as a machine that accredits voters and as a machine used to upload election results to the INEC data base. The device uses a cryptographic technology that has ultra-low power consumption, with a single core frequency of 1.2GHz and an Android 4.2.2. Operating System (Ugwuozor, 2021). In other words, the INEC card reader is designed to read information contained in the embedded chip of the permanent voter's card issued by INEC to verify the authenticity of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and also carry out a verification of the intending voter by matching the biometrics obtained from the voter on the spot with the ones stored on the PVC (Jonah, 2018). The ability of the card reader to perform the above-described functions as well as keeping a tally of the total numbers of voters accredited

at the polling unit and forwarding the information to a central database server using a cloud based network via SIM cards makes the card reader most reliable in dismantling the problem of logistics associated with manual accreditation of voters in Nigeria. Therefore, as a new technology that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced in 2015, the SCR has remained a symbol of digital democratization process in Nigeria and the representation of the drive by INEC to ensure credible elections in Nigeria. According to Ifegwu, Okeagu, Godslight and Daniel (2019), the use of the voter's card reader for the purpose of voters' accreditation during an election is an INEC reform and a critical component of the 2015 general elections that was intended to revolutionize the future election processes in Nigeria.

It is pertinent to point out that the use of smart card reader (SCR) for the authentication of biometric Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs) and the accreditation of voters was necessitated by the fact that reliable voter registration and identification mechanism are among the preconditions for free, fair and credible elections globally (Nwangwu et al., 2018). However, the legality of the use of SCRs have been questioned in the successive elections that they were used. For instance, in 2019, the use of the electronic election results provided by SCRs for evidence against the ruling party in the electoral tribunal was jettisoned on the account that INEC does not have the legal backing to use electronic transmission of election result system. However, worthy to note is that the SCR is a form of identification of voters on the election day and not a means of casting vote. Thus, it is merely used to curb multiple voting and proxy voting and not really for casting the actual vote as could be seen in some developed liberal democracies like USA. This shows that the actual voting result could still be re-written in favour of who so ever sought for it if the election umpires are corrupt to do so.

Prior to its use in the 2015 general elections under the leadership of Prof Attahiru Jega, a number of technologically based reforms among which are biometric register of voters and advanced fingerprints identification system were introduced by INEC – The Nigerian Election Management Body (EMB). The first step taken by INEC towards using SCRs in election was in 2011. The automated finger print identification system was used in the 2011 general elections to eliminate multiple registrations from the voters list, but it was not capable of verifying the identity of voters at the polling stations (Jonah, 2018). In view of this, INEC adopted the use of the permanent voter's card (PVC) system and introduced Smart Card Reader technology, a device used to scan PVCs to verify the identity of voters at the polling booths. The Smart Card

Reader has remained one of the greatest innovations of the biometric verification technology and a controversial but crucial aspect in the conduct of elections in Nigeria since 2015 till date. Its usage had been witnessed in other African nations such as Ghana, Kenya and Somaliland and others.

The essence of using SCRs in election of 2015 and 2019 according to Jonah (2018) is to curtail the massive electoral fraud witnessed in past general elections in Nigeria, thus to ensure credible, transparent, free and fair elections. This however, has helped to deepen the Nigeria's electoral democracy and enhance digital democratization of the electoral system in Nigeria. It was also believed that it will prevent electoral malpractices in the 2015 general elections and subsequent elections in Nigeria. It has been observed that the proper application of this and other technologies to the process can increase administrative efficiency, improve political transparency, and reduce long-term costs of conducting elections (Ifegwu, et al., 2019). The card reader units have been widely subjected to quality assurance, integrity and functionality testing, and found reliable in terms of ease of use, battery life and speed of processing. For instance, it takes an average of 10 seconds to authenticate a voter. The card readers were also subjected to stress testing in the 36 States and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) ahead of the 2015 elections. The results and experiences gained in the 2015 election became therefore, the basis on which INEC improved in the services and functionality of the SCRs in the 2019 general election. However, reports showed that the use of SCRs in the 2019 election, although showcased the level of digital democratization of the Nigerian electoral system by INEC, yet numerous challenges were witnessed in using them. Nonetheless, instead of fighting electoral fraud, the INEC had been criticized for their collaboration with some party and candidates, especially the ruling candidate to alter the election outcome (Onapajo & Babalola, 2020; Sule, et al., 2020). Therefore, the importance of this study lies on the fact that there is need to verify the claims of previous studies concerning the credibility of the 2019 election using the SCRs especially in Enugu West Senatorial Zone.

## **2.3. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.3.1 Technology Acceptance model (TAM) by Davis (1989)**

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was first introduced by Fred Davis in 1986 for his doctorate proposal. In 1989, Davis used TAM to explain computer usage behavior. TAM

however, was an adaptation of the Theory of Reasonable Action (Lai, 2017). TAM specifically is concerned with modeling users' acceptance of information systems or technologies otherwise called innovation. TAM posits that individuals' behavioral intention to use a technology or innovation, is determined by two beliefs. These are: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which a person believes that using an innovation will enhance his or her job performance. While perceived ease of use, is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using an innovation will be free of effort in its usage (Lai, 2017).

Also, the model posits that the effect of external variables (e.g., design characteristics of the innovation) on behavioral intention will be mediated by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. This means that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of an innovation such as Smart Card Readers could influence the way and manner at which electorates accept to adopt such innovation. Some external variables could have little or no effect on such perception because naturally, humans do things for the gain part of it. Secondly, most people would not like to be stressed in adopting a new idea, thus, when an innovation is seen to be useful (with prospects) for the user, such user will likely adopt it. Also, when the innovation is seen to be used without much effort put in place, such individual may also adopt it and vice versa. Perceived usefulness and ease of use of an innovation would shape the attitude of users toward using the innovation as well as their intention for using the innovation. When the attitude toward using the innovation and the intention of using it is positive, it will then lead to actual use of the innovation.

Thus, in this study, digital democratization in Nigeria using SCRs is seen as an innovation. Until now, the usefulness of such innovation is still questioned as well as its ease of use due to many challenges that faced its adoption in the 2015 and 2019 general elections. Yet, the theory will help the study to underscore the opinions of the electorates regarding the perceived usefulness of the SCRs and their ease of using them for voting.

### **2.3.2. Application of the Theory**

The use of smart card reader machine in the digital democratization process of Nigerian electoral process can be best understood in line with the Technology acceptance model. Hence



an understanding of the Nigeria electoral system which is characterized with all kinds of irregularities such as rigging, intimidation, ballot paper stuffing, over voting and total violence it is extremely important to introduce measures that will bring about credibility of elections and legitimacy of any government in power. The TAM theory could better be used to understand the extent at which the electorates are confident in INEC due to their use of SCRs in conducting election. It will help the study to assess the extent at which the electorate saw the effectiveness of SCRs in ensuring electoral credibility in the Nigerian electoral process. Thus, with that, their readiness to have increased political participation could be ascertained. If the use of SCRs in the 2019 general election is seen to be an effective way of digital democratization by the electorates, the study could then recommend better ways of adopting the use of SCRs to wade-off the challenges that are confronted by it in elections times.

#### **2.4. Empirical Review**

Nwangwu, et al., (2018) conducted a theoretical review of the possibilities of digital technologies in ensuring electoral credibility in Nigeria using the 2015 as a case study. The authors concluded from their review that the introduction of SCR in the 2015 general election helped to expand the voters' confidence on INEC to conduct a credible election. Thus, they advised that e-voting should be adopted as a tool for curbing electoral fraud in the country. The outcome of this study implies that the use of SCR is a source of improvement in the electoral system of Nigeria, thus, the need to continue to use it in election and even adopt electronic voting to further substantiate the credibility of the whole electoral system in Nigeria. This study is different from this study because the present study focuses mainly on the use of SCR in the 2019 general election and its implication to the digital democratization process of the electoral system of Nigeria. However, their central thrust is on the use of digital innovation in the conduct of election in Nigeria.

Similarly, Iwuoha (2018) tried to underscore the possibilities of adopting digital democratization in the electoral process of Nigeria in a rural area where many factors could play in favour or against the process. Accordingly, the study which was a qualitative study observed that digital democratization using Biometric Voting Technology in the rural areas could be poorly adopted among rural voters. The study further argued that public perception of biometric technology, the availability of proper infrastructure, and the distance between polling stations

and the dwellings of rural voters affect rural dweller's level of adoption of biometric technology. All these as a group shape voting behaviour and general political culture of rural dwellers. This study therefore implies that even though the drive of digital democratization of the electoral system in Nigeria by INEC is a novel and welcomed one, yet many challenges such as infrastructural availability for the effective running of SCRs in the rural areas and network could still pose as a problem. Therefore, the study is related with the present study in a way that they seek to verify the challenges they may face or that face the digital democratization of the electoral process of Nigeria using the SCRs. They both focus on the impact of SCRs in the election process of Nigeria in rural areas. But they differ in a way that the previous study did not specify any of the elections that it was studying; moreover it was a qualitative study without major empirical evidence to back up its claims, while the present study will focus on the 2019 general election with empirical evidence to be generated from the field study.

Furthermore, Alebiosu (2016) investigated on the use of Smart Card Reader in the 2015 general election and its effectiveness in the electoral process. The study reported that the use of SCRs increased the confidence of electorates in the election process. This is because the use of smart card reader curtailed many electoral frauds in the election in 2015, thus the voters had more reasons of participating in the election. The study also reported that the SCR drastically reduced the electoral fraud in the election being a game changer that the politicians could not easily manipulate due to its novelty in the 2015 election. In addition, the card reader reduced the post electoral litigations as the SCR ensured a rather much freer and fairer election. The study differs from the present study because the focus is on the 2015 general election and the present study is on the 2019 general election and the digital democratization process.

Tobi (2020) assessed the effectiveness of the use of digital technologies in the conduct of election in Nigeria from 2015-2019. The study was a qualitative study. Its findings showed that the electoral malpractices witnessed in Nigeria were the reasons why INEC adopted technology based electoral processes. Moreover, the use of technological devices such as permanent voter's cards and smartcard readers has made the electoral process more transparent and credible. Nevertheless, some challenges ranging from lack of technical know-how and inadequacy of internet facilities still hinder the full digitalization process of the election process in Nigeria. This nonetheless has not stopped all electoral fraud in Nigeria but has given birth to new forms of

electoral fraud such as vote-buying, underage voting, and lack of internal democracy among the political parties. The study is related to the present study because they both seek to find out the effectiveness of SCRs in ensuring electoral credibility in the 2019 election. However, they differ in a way that present study will also seek to find out the role of SCRs in promoting digital democratization of the electoral process of Nigeria.

Ugwuozor (2021) evaluated that impact of electronic card readers on Nigeria general elections from 2015-2019. The study was a qualitative study. It found out that the electronic card readers used in the conduct of Nigeria's election malfunctioned in several polling units. This caused undue stress to the electorates and delayed their accreditation. Such challenge also led to the disenfranchisement of many voters since some of them couldn't be accredited as a result of the inability of the smart card to detect their thumbprints. This study showed that the use of SCRs reader even though has a way of expanding the digital democratization process in Nigerian electoral system, yet this has many challenges.

## **2.5. Gap in Literature**

In this chapter, efforts were geared towards reviewing some underlying concepts for the easy comprehension of the topic under discourse. By this, the study reviewed some authors' views concerning the concept of digital democracy and elections. Electoral malpractice and credibility was also reviewed as well as the concept of smart card reader. The chapter saw digital democracy as the act of democratization using digital technology. That is, digital democratization is the use of digital materials to expand, propagate and improve the democratic process of a state such as in election, public opinion, and others. It saw the term as an amalgam of two different concepts that deal with the idea of practicing democracy with the help of digital materials such as the internet, social media or electronic devices. The idea of election was seen to be the bane of every democratic state. It saw election as the act of selecting few leaders to represent the interest of a majority in a political setting. It saw election as a prerequisite in every democracy without which such democracy cannot develop or stand. Thus, the review maintained that election is the act of changing government periodically through a majority decision.

Further, the study assessed the level of credibility of the Nigerian electoral system and concluded that since 1999, the electoral process has been devoid of credibility where there has

not been free and fair election until much recently with the introduction of SCR. The review saw electoral credibility as an electoral process that is free, fair and just where by the electoral umpires are not biased or being partisan in the discharge of their duties. However, electoral malpractice was seen as an electoral process that is not free or fair; where there exists many instances of electoral irregularities such as result inflation, vote buying, snatching of ballot box, proxy voting, multiple voting and others. The review then concluded that the electoral process of Nigeria had been marred with electoral malpractice and was to be corrected with the introduction of smart card reader in the 2015 election and it was repeated in the 2019 general election.

Thus, smart card reader was seen as an electronic machine that is used to read the details of electorates as contained in their chip-based permanent voters card. It is a novel innovation implemented by INEC that has revolutionized the electoral process of Nigeria. Therefore, the chapter argued that SCRs remains childbirth of necessity in the 2015 and 2019 general elections. This is because, its introduction was due to the rising cases of electoral fraud in Nigeria, hence to stop it, SCR was inconsequential. Based on the empirical reviews done, even though many studies have been done concerning either the challenges of using SCR in election or the effectiveness of SCR in ensuring credible election in Nigeria, not any one was focused on ascertaining the digital democratization process therein in the use of SCRs in the conduct of 2019 general election in Nigeria. Therefore, the present study seeks to delve into this to find out the place of SCRs in digital democratization process of the Nigerian electoral system and its effect on the credibility of electoral process in Enugu West senatorial zone of Enugu state, Nigeria.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This chapter presents the methods/procedures that will be adopted in carrying out this study. These methods are captured under the following sub-headings: research design, study area, population of the study, sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, validation of instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The design of the study will be cross-sectional survey. A cross-sectional survey design is that design that collects data from different individuals or subjects at the same time or period in order to describe their traits without influencing them. In a cross sectional study, the researcher is at the liberty of collecting data from a sampled number of respondents from the entire population at the same point in time. According to Martin (2018), cross-sectional study is usually seen as a national survey in which the researcher uses representative sample of the population with different individual characteristics to collect data for a study at the same time and at once. This design is apt for this study because the study intends to gather information concerning the effectiveness of SCRs in promoting digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu west senatorial zone of Enugu state, Nigeria from some selected representatives of the entire population which could not be accessed by the researcher.

#### **3.2. Study Area**

The study will be conducted in Enugu west senatorial zone of Enugu state, Nigeria. Enugu west is one of the three senatorial zones in Enugu state. It comprised of five different Local Government Areas namely Awgu, Aninri, Ezeagu, Oji-River and Udi. It is bordered by Anambra state at its' Western parts, with Ebonyi and Abia states at its Southern part. The area was chosen because of the prevalence of electoral fraud and violence witnessed in the area before the introduction of SCRs to ascertain if the SCRs had any effect in the digital democratization process in the area, thus curbing the electoral fraud.

### **3.3. Population and Sample**

The population of the study will comprise of all the 601,300 registered voters in the 2019 general election in Enugu west senatorial zone of Enugu state (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2020).

### **3.4. Sample and Sampling Technique**

The study will sample a total of 255 respondents from the study area. This will be comprised of 51 respondents from each of the local government that make up the senatorial zone. The study will use multi-stage sampling technique to gather data from these respondents. At the first stage, the study will use purposive sampling technique to sample only the respondents (electorates) who were up to 18 years as at 2019. This is because the study seeks to get information only from such group of adults who partook in the 2019 general election. At the second stage, the study will use accidental sampling technique to sample the respondents. This is because, the respondents may not be able to gather the respondents at a particular place at the same time to share questionnaire. Thus, whoever that the researcher meets the researcher will issue the questionnaire to the person provided the person met to the criteria stated above. In an event that they are not learned, the researcher will use an interpreter who would ask them the questions that are contained in the questionnaire and then fill the questionnaire on their behalf.

### **3.5. Instrument for Data Collection**

Two instruments will be used for data collection for this study. They are a structured questionnaire and a structured interview. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A seeks to get the demographic information of the respondents, such as gender, age, occupation. Section B contains three clusters that sought to answer the research questions. Cluster 1 contains 8 items that sought to find out if the use of SCRs promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. Cluster 2 contains 8 items that seek to find out the level at which SCR helped to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria. Cluster 3 contains 10 items that seek to determine the challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs.

The questionnaire will be graded on four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)/Very high extent (VHE) =4, Agree (A)/High extent (HE) =3, Disagree (D)/Low extent (LE) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very low Extent (VLE) =1. Therefore, the total item in the questionnaire is 26 items.

### **3.6. Validation of the Instrument.**

The instrument for data collection will be validated by the project Supervisor and one other lecturer from the department.

### **3.7. Reliability of the Instrument**

The instrument for the study (questionnaire) was trial tested to determine the level of its internal consistency. To do this, the researcher administered the instrument to thirty (30) electorates in Enugu North Senatorial Zone of Enugu state, Nigeria. Their responses were subjected to trial testing using the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test. The reliability coefficient gotten from the three clusters were .77 for cluster one, .86, for cluster two and .82 for cluster three. The total reliability coefficient for the 26 items was .83. These figures are above 0.50, thus show that the instrument is reliable for the study.

### **3.8. Data Collection Technique**

The study will adopt a mixed method research approach. It will make use of primary and secondary data. The primary data will be quantitative data from the questionnaire and interviews and the secondary data will be reviews from literature (journals and articles). Meanwhile, for the quantitative data, the researcher will make use of research assistants who will go into the five local governments to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. A total of 255 questionnaires will be distributed to the respondents by the research assistants. They will be filled and returned to the research assistant at the spot for further analysis by the researcher.

### **3.9. Method of Data Analysis**

Mean analysis will be used to analyze the collected data based on the three research questions. The grading of the data will be on a four point rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA)/Very high extent (VHE) =4, Agree (A)/High extent (HE) =3, Disagree (D)/Low extent (LE) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very low Extent (VLE) =1. Decision will be taken based on the real

limit numbers of:

$$0.50 - 1.49 = \text{SD/VLE};$$

$$1.50 - 2.49 = \text{D/LE};$$

$$2.50 - 3.49 = \text{A/HE and};$$

$$3.50 - 4.00 = \text{SA/VHE}.$$

The three null hypotheses will be tested using t-test on a 0.05 level of significance. Any result that is above 0.05 will be seen as not significant, but any result from 0.50 below will be seen as significant.



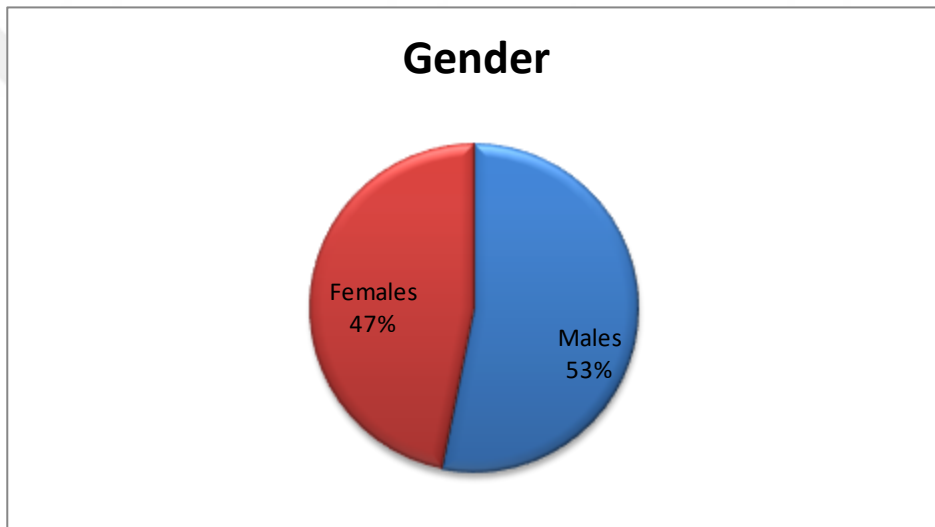
## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the result of the study. The results of the study however are presented in figures and tables based on the research questions and hypotheses that the study was anchored on.

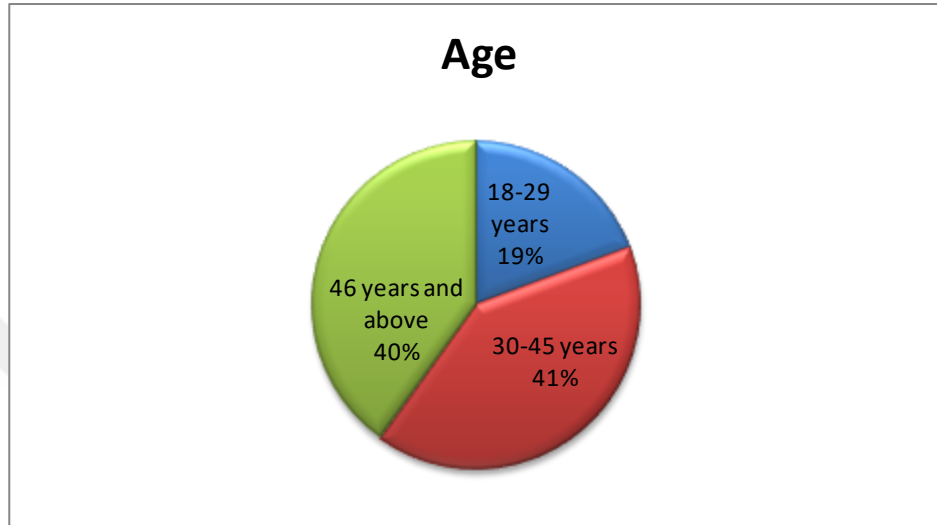
#### 4.1. Demographic Information about the Respondents

Figure 1 represents the gender of the respondents. From the figure, out of the total of 255 respondents, 134 (53%) are males, while 121(47%) are females.



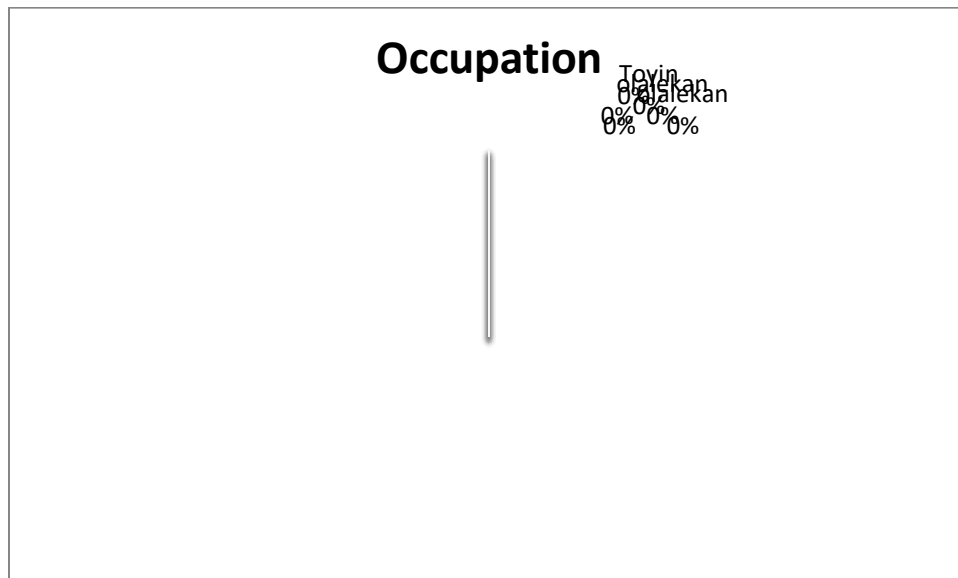
**Figure 1.** Gender of the Respondents

Figure 2 represents the age of the respondents. From the figure, out of the total of 255 respondents, 40(19%) are between the ages of 18 – 29 years, 84(41%) are between the ages of 30 – 45 years, while 83(40%) of the respondents are 46 years and above.



**Figure 2.** Age of the Respondents

Figure 3 shows the state of origin of the respondents. From the figure, 150(72%) of the respondents are from Benue state, while 57(28%) of the respondents are from other states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



**Figure 3.** Occupation of the Respondents

Figure 3 shows the occupation of the respondents. From the figure, out of the total of 255 respondents, 99 (39%) respondents are students, 73(29%) are civil servants, 34(13%) are artisans, 31(12%) are traders, 13(5%) are farmers and 5(2%) are retirees.

#### 4.2.0. Presentation of answers to the Research Questions

**4.2.1. Research question 1:** Did the use of SCRs promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Mean rating of respondents on whether the use of SCRs promoted digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria (n =255).

S/N	Item statement	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Remarks
1.	The use of smart card readers (SCRs) in the 2019 election made the election of Nigeria internet based.	2.98	.93	A
2.	The use of SCRs made the INEC (electoral body) to be seen as an advanced technology-based election body instead of a crude based election body.	3.06	.75	A
3.	The SCRs made the electioneering process easier due to the digitalized information about the electorates.	2.68	1.09	A
4.	The SCR made INEC to be seen as a global oriented institution in Nigeria.	2.77	.79	A
5.	The use of SCRs is a good sign of the readiness of Nigeria towards adopting online voting.	2.68	1.06	A
6	The SCRs made the 2019 election to be judged as internet-based election.	3.21	.79	A
7	The use of SCRs showed that digital/electronic/online democracy has become stronger in Nigeria unlike in the 2011 and 2015.	3.18	.63	A
8	The use of SCRs made the 2019 election is to be judged as meeting up to international standard in digitalization of democracy.	1.91	1.06	
<b>Grand Mean</b>		2.80	.94	<b>A</b>

**Keys:**  $\bar{X}$  = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; A = Accept; R =Reject N = Number of Respondents

The results in table 1 shows that responses of the respondents on whether the use of SCRs promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. From the table, it shows that the respondents agreed to all the items in the table except item 8. This shows that the use of SCR in the 2019 general election helped to digitalize the democratic process of Nigeria through elections. It made that election of Nigeria internet based and it shows the readiness of Nigeria in adopting e-voting and that digital/electronic/online democracy has become stronger in Nigeria unlike in the 2011 and 2015 (see table 1 for details).

The grand mean and standard deviation scores of ( $M = 2.80, SD = .94$ ) showed that the use of SCR further increased the digital democratization process of Nigeria. It is an indication that the nations' electoral process is fast tilting towards digitalization of every aspect of voting including the introduction of e-voting.

**4.2.2. Research question 2:** To what level did SCR help to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria?

**Table 2:** Mean rating of respondents on the level at which SCR helped to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria

S/N	Item statement	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Remarks
1.	The smart card reader reduced the cases of double registration for election.	2.79	.73	A
2.	The SCR reduced the cases of multiple accreditation of electorates on election day.	2.73	1.09	A
3.	The use of SCRs reduced the rate of multiple voting in the 2019 election.	2.96	.94	A
4.	The SCRs made the peoples' choice to be elected in the 2019 election.	3.57	.60	A
5.	The use of SCR gave the electorate more confidence to participate in voting.	2.62	.74	A

6	With the SCRs, there was reduced rate of ballot box snatching.	2.60	.77	A
7	The SCRs reduced the cases of excess voting (voting more than the accredited number).	2.90	1.37	A
8	Smartcard readers reduced the rate of manipulation of election results.	2.79	.73	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>		2.79	.93	<b>A</b>

**Keys:**  $\bar{X}$  = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; A = Accept; R =Reject N = Number of Respondents

The results in table 2 show the responses of the respondents concerning the level at which SCR helped to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria. The results indicated that the respondents agreed to all the items in the cluster. This shows that the SCR reduced the cases of multiple accreditation of electorates on election day, reduced the rate of multiple voting in the 2019 election, reduced rate of ballot box snatching use of SCR in the 2019 election was an innovation and its usefulness is outstanding in the electoral process of Nigeria.

The grand mean and standard deviation scores of ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = .93$ ) indicated that the use of SCR in the 2019 general election helped to improve the credibility of the election by reducing the malpractices and irregularities that had greeted the electoral system of Nigeria for the past two decades.

**4.2.3. Research question 3:** What are the challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs?

**Table 3:** Mean rating of respondents on the challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs

S/N	Item statement	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Remarks
1.	Internet problem.	2.79	.73	A
2.	Incompatibility of the SCRs with the traditional election process.	2.73	1.09	A
3.	Lack of technical know-how by INEC ad-hoc staff.	2.96	.94	A
4.	Lack of enough digital devices.	3.57	.70	A
5.	Lack of mobile devices for internet access.	3.65	.84	A

6	Lack of preparedness by INEC.	2.60	.97	A
7	Malfunctioning of SCRS.	2.90	1.7	A
8	Digital illiteracy among the electorates.	3.20	.73	A
9	Illegal reconfiguration of the SCR machine to a pooling unit by INEC ad-hoc staff.	3.40	.53	A
10	Non-accreditation of eligible voters due to factors relating to faded permanent voters' card.	3.70	.90	
<b>Grand mean</b>		3.10	.78	

**Keys:**  $\bar{X}$  = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; A = Accept; R =Reject N = Number of Respondents

The results in table 3 show the responses of the respondents concerning the challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs. The respondents agreed to all the items in the table. That means challenges that could prevent the use of SCRs in the election process in Nigeria could be internet problem, lack of preparedness by INEC, malfunctioning of SCRs in most cases and others (see table 3 for details).

The grand mean score of ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) indicated that the use of SCR in the 2019 although was important and effective, yet some national, environmental, logistics, human factors could render its effective usage null and void.

#### 4.3.0. Hypotheses Testing

**4.3.1. Hypothesis 1:** The use of SCRs did not promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

**Table 4:** t-test analysis of no statistical significant difference in the mean rating of male and female electorates whether the use of SCRs did promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Male electorates	134	2.77	.37	-	22	.193	NS
Female electorates	121	2.99	.45	1.342			

**Keys: Sig. = Significant; NS = No Significant**

The result in tables 4 shows the t-test analysis of no statistical significant difference in the mean rating of male and female electorates whether the use of SCRs did promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. The table reveals that  $t(-1.342) = 22, p > .193$ . Since the probability figure (sig.2-tailed) of .193 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis therefore is not rejected. Thus, there is no statistical significant difference in the mean rating of male and female electorates whether the use of SCRs did promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. This further affirms their responses in Table 1 that the use of SCRs in the 2019 presidential elections is a part toward full digital democratization of electoral process in Nigeria since male and female electorates in Enugu West Senatorial Zone do not have divergent view about this.

**4.3.2. Hypothesis 2:** The use of SCR did not help to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria

**Table 5:** t-test analysis of no statistical significant difference in the mean rating of male and female electorates whether the use of SCR did help to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Male electorates	134	2.79	.42	.975	22.008	.034	Sig.
Female electorates	121	2.59	.58				

**Keys: Sig. = Significant; NS = No Significant**

The result in tables 5 shows the t-test analysis of no statistical significant difference in the mean rating of male and female electorates whether the use of SCR did help to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria. The table reveals that  $t(.975) = 22.008, p < .034$ . Since the probability figure (sig.2-tailed) of .034 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there was no statistical significant difference in the mean rating of male and female electorates on whether the use of SCR did help to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria is therefore rejected. Thus, the use of SCR helped to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the

election process in Nigeria. This falls in line with the general responses of the respondents as contained in table 3.

**4.3.3. Hypothesis 3:** There are no challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs.

**Table 6:** t-test analysis of no statistical significant difference between the mean rating of male and female electorates on whether there are no challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Male electorates	134	2.92	.82	.685	22.40	.044	NS
Female electorates	121	2.78	.78				

**Keys:** *Sig.* = *Significant*; *NS* = *No Significant*

The result in table 6 shows the t-test analysis of no statistical significant difference between the mean rating of male and female electorates on whether there are no challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs. The table reveals that  $t(.685) = 22.40, p < .044$ . Since the probability figure (sig.2-tailed) of .044 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis therefore rejected. Thus; there are challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs and these challenges are viewed by the electorates differently based on their gender, hence the statistical significant difference in their response.

#### 4.4 Presentation of Interviews

Five different learned people were interviewed in the five local government areas to represent each of the local governments. Some of them were civil servants, while some of them are still civil servants. They are named A-E.

##### Interview with a Teacher in Oji-River LGA, Enugu State

Question1: What do you have to say about digital democratization and the use of SCR in the 2019 election?

Answer: It was adopted in the 2019 election through the use of SCR machines and permanent voters' card.



Question 2: What do you have to say about the readiness of INEC to use digital democracy in its election activities?

Answer: They are not fully ready for digital democracy in elections.

Questions 3: What do you have to say about INEC's performance and result collation in 2019 in terms its reflection of digital democracy?

Answer: The results were collated physically and not digitally. So there was some irregularities especially the presidential result.

Question 4: What future do you think that the use of SCR has for Nigeria in terms of online voting seen in other parts of the world?

Answer: With time, INEC may adopt online voting that is done in USA. This is because they have started with online accreditation of voters and gradually, they will use electronic means for casting of votes.

Question 5: What do you have to say about the role of SCR in election malpractice in 2019.

Answer: It reduced malpractice but gave birth to vote buying instead.

Question 6: Would you say that the SCR as a game changer in the conduct of election in Nigeria?

Answer: Well, it really changed the electoral narrative of Nigeria by making it impossible for politicians to increase the number of vote cast.

Question 7: What weaknesses can you point out that confront the use of SCR for digital democratization in Nigeria.

Answer: Internet problem, battery problem, hacking of the INEC site.

#### **Interview with a Nurse in Aninri LGA, Enugu State**

Question1: What do you have to say about digital democratization and the use of SCR in the 2019 election?

Answer: The use of SCR in the election shows that INEC is becoming more technology oriented electoral body.

Question 2: What do you have to say about the readiness of INEC to use digital democracy in its election activities?

Answer: They still need more time.

Questions 3: What do you have to say about INEC's performance and result collation in 2019 in terms its reflection of digital democracy?

Answer: In my pooling unit, result collation was done fairly.

Question 4: What future do you think that the use of SCR has for Nigeria in terms of online voting seen in other parts of the world?

Answer: The use of SCR is good start that shows the vision of INEC towards engaging diaspora people to vote online.

Question 5: What do you have to say about the role of SCR in election malpractice in 2019.

Answer: With the SCR, we had more trust in the credibility of INEC in conducting free and fair election.

Question 6: Would you say that the SCR as a game changer in the conduct of election in Nigeria?

Answer: Yes. At least, it stopped the constant cases of ballot box snatching and voting before election date.

Question 7: What weaknesses can you point out that confront the use of SCR for digital democratization in Nigeria.

Answer: Mainly, lack of commitment on the part of some INEC officers to use SCR effectively as well as the problem of poor internet and reconfiguration.

### **Interview with a Retired Head Master in Ezeagu LGA, Enugu State**

Question 1: What do you have to say about digital democratization and the use of SCR in the 2019 election?

Answer: digital democracy is infiltrating into Nigeria gradually through the use of SCRs in the elections.

Question 2: What do you have to say about the readiness of INEC to use digital democracy in its election activities?

Answer: They are ever ready to welcome digital democracy.

Questions 3: What do you have to say about INEC's performance and result collation in 2019 in terms of its reflection of digital democracy?

Answer: SCR fastened the result collation process.

Question 4: What future do you think that the use of SCR has for Nigeria in terms of online voting seen in other parts of the world?

Answer: They will one day use online voting, but that will still be very far.

Question 5: What do you have to say about the role of SCR in election malpractice in 2019?

Answer: It curtailed rigging to the lowest level.

Question 6: Would you say that the SCR is a game changer in the conduct of election in Nigeria?

Answer: It revitalized the voting process.

Question 7: What weaknesses can you point out that confront the use of SCR for digital democratization in Nigeria.

Answer: Many INEC staff were seen battling with the SCR machines and there was lack of power to charge the batteries of these machines in the pooling units.

### **Interview with a Business man in Udi LGA, Enugu State**

Question 1: What do you have to say about digital democratization and the use of SCR in the 2019 election?

Answer: INEC is fast making Nigeria to be like America in terms of voting.

Question 2: What do you have to say about the readiness of INEC to use digital democracy in its election activities?

Answer: INEC is going to fully ready for digital democracy, maybe in the next election, but not in this particular election.

Questions 3: What do you have to say about INEC's performance and result collation in 2019 in terms of its reflection of digital democracy?

Answer: They did not really use the services of the Registration Area Technicians (RaTechs) in the collation process, so it was still marred by result manipulation.

Question 4: What future do you think that the use of SCR has for Nigeria in terms of online voting seen in other parts of the world?

Answer: With SCR, it shows that INEC is becoming ready to adopt online voting soonest.

Question 5: What do you have to say about the role of SCR in election malpractice in 2019?

Answer: It reduced it and made many of the results called at the pooling units.

Question 6: Would you say that the SCR is a game changer in the conduct of election in Nigeria?

Answer: It made many politicians to loose bearing in their efforts to rig the elction results as they used to do before.

Question 7: What weaknesses can you point out that confront the use of SCR for digital democratization in Nigeria.

Answer: Internet problem, bad configuration of the SCR machine, lack of preparedness on the part of INEC to start election on time, when it is supposed to be.

### **Interview with a Medical Doctor in Awgu LGA, Enugu State**

Question 1: What do you have to say about digital democratization and the use of SCR in the 2019 election?

Answer: The effort of INEC in that is encouraging and is commendable.

Question 2: What do you have to say about the readiness of INEC to use digital democracy in its election activities?

Answer: INEC is doing a test run of their ultimate goal of online voting and collation of result as contained in the new electoral act.

Questions 3: What do you have to say about INEC's performance and result collation in 2019 in terms of its reflection of digital democracy?

Answer: The use of SCR made INEC to reduce the rate of rejection of election results by party agents in the pooling units.

Question 4: What future do you think that the use of SCR has for Nigeria in terms of online voting seen in other parts of the world?

Answer: INEC is bent on stopping election malpractices, therefore, I see them adopting online voting soon once they are able to conquer some notable challenges such as internet access and digital illiteracy among the electorates.

Question 5: What do you have to say about the role of SCR in election malpractice in 2019?

Answer: SCR is a welcomed technological innovation in the electoral system of Nigeria that has proven its role in reducing vote rigging, ballot box snatching and made physical presence in on the voting centre very important.

Question 6: Would you say that the SCR is a game changer in the conduct of election in Nigeria?

Answer: SCR has given more confidence to many voters who now feel safe that their votes count.

Question 7: What weaknesses can you point out that confront the use of SCR for digital democratization in Nigeria.

Answer: Internet problem, digital illiteracy, hacking of INCE data base, physical security problem at the election ground.

#### **4.5. Summary of Findings**

The summary of the findings of the study are as follow:

1. The use of smart card readers (SCRs) in the 2019 election made the election of Nigeria internet based and the election process made easier.
2. The use of SCR made INEC to be seen as a global oriented institution in Nigeria that is ready for adopting online voting
3. The SCRs made the 2019 election to be judged as internet-based election.
4. The use of SCRs showed that digital/electronic/online democracy has become stronger in Nigeria unlike in the 2011 and 2015.
5. The smart card reader reduced the cases of double registration for election, accreditation and voting.
6. With the SCRs, there was reduced rate of ballot box snatching; and it reduced the rate of manipulation of election results.
7. Challenges that affect the use of SCR in elections in Nigeria are based on internet problem, lack of technical know-how by INEC ad-hoc staff.
8. Other challenges are lack of mobile devices for internet access, lack of preparedness by INEC, Malfunctioning of SCRs, digital illiteracy among the electorates and Non-accreditation of eligible voters due to factors relating to faded permanent voters' card.

#### **4.6. Discussion of Findings**

The electoral processes in Nigeria have undergone many processes of change. These changes have experienced some level of technological improvement, while some have not. The evolutionary trend in the electoral process of Nigeria is that one that has witnessed elections filled with numerous electoral malpractices such as rigging, ballot box snatching, explosion of election results and killings that are witnessed during and after the elections. These are not features of Nigerian electoral system only in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but have been there even in the 1960s. Thus, efforts have been geared towards improving the electoral process of Nigeria from crude to more advanced technological level. For this reason, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) has introduced many measures towards curtailing these electoral anomalies. Hence the introduction of technology based electoral registration system in 2011. In 2015, the Smart Card Reader (SCR) machines were introduced. This although was greeted by many

challenges that year, yet its improvement in the election system was felt as reported by Ifegwu, Okeagu, Godslight and Daniel (2019). In 2019, the SCR machine was again used. This time around, it did improve the electoral system but was set back by lack of proper litigation for its usage as reported by Onapajo and Babalola (2020) Sule, et al (2020).

Meanwhile, the findings of this study revealed that the use of SCRs in the 2019 election ushered Nigeria into the international trend of digital democratization. This is evidently seen in the responses of the respondents male and female electorates alike who maintained that the use of smart card readers (SCRs) in the 2019 election made the election of Nigeria internet based and the election process made easier. The findings further showed that the use of SCR made INEC to be seen as a global oriented electoral institution in Nigeria that is ready for adopting online voting. Moreover, the SCRs made the 2019 election to be judged as internet-based election. This also shows that the digital/electronic/online democracy of Nigeria is fast becoming stronger unlike in the 2011 and 2015. Moreover, both male and female electorates had the same perception and judgment for the digital democratization process of Nigeria using the SCR. Hence, there is no statistical significant difference in the mean rating of male and female electorates whether the use of SCRs did promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

These findings are in concordance with Tobi (2020) who reported that the use of digital technologies in the conduct of election in Nigeria from 2015-2019 greatly cleared the path of the nation towards digital democratization of the electoral process in Nigeria. This is evidently felt in its capacity in making the electoral process more transparent and credible. The findings further aligns with Ugwuozor (2021) who reported that the introduction of SCRs in the voting process of Nigeria in 2019 is a clear indication of the readiness of the nation toward adopting a clearer stance in digital democratization process. The study further reported that the digital democratization of Nigeria through the use of SCR is a welcomed development in the nation even though it comes with many challenges that still confront its full applicability.

The study further reveals that the use of SCRs in the electoral process of Nigeria really improved the electoral credibility and the national outlook of INEC in conducting a free and fair election. Basically, the use of SCR reduced the cases of double registration for election, accreditation and voting. It also reduced the rate of ballot box snatching and manipulation of election results. The use of SCRs further gave the electorates more confidence to participate in

voting. For this reason, they were able to elect their preferred candidates. This is because the use of SCRs reduced the cases of excess voting and manipulation of the electoral results. These findings were further supported by the corresponding hypothesis that recorded, although, significant difference in the response of the respondents by gender, yet their mean ratings were in support of the credibility of the SCR in curtailing the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria.

These findings are in line with previous studies such as Tobi (2020) and Alebiosu (2016). Tobi (2020) found out that the introduction of SCR in the conduct of elections in Nigeria at first place was as a response to the regularly rigging of election results witnessed in Nigeria before 2011. The study further hinted that the introduction of SCR therefore, played a crucial role in making the electoral process more transparent and credible. On his own part, Alebiosu (2016) maintained that the use of SCRs increased the confidence of electorates in the election process. This is basically due to the fact that SCRs curtailed many electoral frauds in the election in 2015, and increased the reasons of the voters to participate in the election. Basic thing that increases political participation among electorates is the fairness of the electoral institution in conducting election with the safety of the electorates assured. It makes them to devote time and resources to participate in voting exercise and also to defend their vote through peaceful agitation. Alebiosu (2016) further maintained that the SCR was a game changer in 2015 when it was firstly introduced in the election process because of its novelty that did not allow manipulation among the politicians. As a game changer, Alebiosu (2016) argued that the SCR therefore, reduced the post electoral litigations as the SCR ensured a rather much freer and fairer election with clearer evidence of the voting and report collation process. Nwangwu, et al., (2018) also reported that the introduction of SCR in the 2015 general election helped to expand the voters' confidence on INEC to conduct a credible election.

The study also found out that many challenges confront the full digitalization of the democratic process of Nigeria using the SCR in the conduct of elections. Some of the basic challenges that affect the use of SCR in elections in Nigeria internet-based problem, lack of technical know-how by INEC ad-hoc staff, lack of mobile devices for internet access, lack of preparedness by INEC, malfunctioning of SCRs, digital illiteracy among the electorates and non-accreditation of eligible voters due to factors relating to faded permanent voters' card. The findings are in line with Ugwuozor (2021) who reported that SCR malfunctioned in several

polling units causing undue stress to the electorates and delayed their accreditation. This also led to the disenfranchisement of many voters since some of them couldn't be accredited as a result of the inability of the smart card to detect their thumbprints. The study is also in line with Tobi (2020) who found out that lack of technical know-how and inadequacy of internet facilities still hinder the full digitalization process of the election process in Nigeria. Similarly, Iwuoha (2018), reported that factors related to the availability of proper infrastructure, and the distance between polling stations and the dwellings of rural voters affect rural dweller's level of adoption of biometric technology in election. These factors are very challenging to the effective digitalization of the democratic process of Nigeria.

### **5.7 The Study's Limitations**

Constraints relating to time and finance limited the scope of the study to only Enugu West Senatorial Zone with only 255 electorates. Not just that, it was a great tasking activity for the research assistants to access the respondents owing to the interior terrains and topographic outlook of many of the local governments such as Awgu and Aninri. Moreover, the research assistants could only have access to few respondents who were willing to respond to the questionnaire and interviews. In some places, English language illiteracy was eminent, and interpreters were employed to interpret the questionnaire to the respondents.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study assessed the digital democratization process of Nigeria in the 2019 election using the smartcard readers. The study therefore, concludes that the use of SCR exposed Nigeria to digital democracy more than in 2011 and 2015. It also found out that the use of SCR more than anything else reduced electoral malpractices in Nigeria and it improved the electoral confidence of the electorates in participating in elections. There are challenges that affect the use of SCRs however. These are internet based challenges, digital illiteracy and lack of preparedness of the INEC in conducting digital based elections in Nigeria.

Going forward these are the recommendations of the study;

1. The Independent Electoral Commission should diversify their tentacles in the digitalization process of Nigerian democracy to include e-voting.
2. The use of SCR should be encouraged in subsequent elections by INEC for digitalization of the electoral process.
3. The Nigerian government should adopt other means of digital democratization such as public opinion via social media.
4. INEC should maintain the digital status quo it had in 2019 election in the 2023 election to ensure digital democratization is propagated properly in the electoral process of Nigeria.
5. The use of SCR should be strictly adhered to in the subsequent elections in Nigeria especially in the 2023 election owing to new electoral act signed.
6. The Nigerian government should ensure that the new electoral act which is a legal backup to the use of SCR in the conduct of election is strictly adhered to in subsequent elections.
7. The number of SCR per pooling unit should be increased to at least two to assuage the effect of malfunctioning of SCR during elections.
8. INEC should train its ad-hoc officers on how to best use the SCR in the conduct of elections to avoid poor usage of the SCR as a result of digital illiteracy.
9. Stronger internet connections should be provided in pooling unit. If it warrant providing local area networks (LAN) within the pooling units.
10. INEC should provide more mobile devices for internet access in pooling units.
11. INEC should supply each pooling units with enough extra batteries of the Smart Card Machine (SCM) to avoid disenfranchising some people due to low battery of the SCM.

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## APPENDIX A

### ELECTORATES' QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PLACE OF SMART CARD READERS IN THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTION IN ENSURING DIGITAL DEMOCRATIZATION AND ELECTORAL CREDIBILITY

Dear respondent,

This instrument was designed to find out the “place of smart card readers in the 2019 general election in ensuring digital democratization and electoral credibility”. Your honest response is highly required.

**Instruction:** Please tick (✓) in the column provided to indicate your desired option.

Use these keys in ticking your opinion: **Strongly Agree =SA; Agree =A; Disagree=D; Strongly Disagree=SD.**

#### SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA OF RESPONDENTS

**Sex:** Male  Female

**Age:** 18-25  26-35  36-45  46 and above

**Occupation:** Student  Civil servant  Artisan  Trader  Farmer

Retiree

**Cluster1:** Did the use of SCRs promote digital democratization in the 2019 general election in Enugu West Senatorial Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria?

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	The use of smart card readers (SCRs) in the 2019 election made the election of Nigeria internet based.				
2	The use of SCRs made the INEC (electoral body) to be seen as an advanced technology-based election body instead of a crude				

	based election body.				
3	The SCRs made the electioneering process easier due to the digitalized information about the electorates.				
4	The SCR made INEC to be seen as a global oriented institution in Nigeria.				
5	The use of SCRs is a good sign of the readiness of Nigeria towards adopting online voting.				
6	The SCRs made the 2019 election to be judged as internet-based election.				
7	The use of SCRs showed that digital/electronic/online democracy has become stronger in Nigeria unlike in the 2011 and 2015.				
8	The use of SCRs made the 2019 election to be judged as meeting up to international standard in digitalization of democracy.				

**Cluster 2:** To what level did SCR helped to curtail the electoral malpractices witnessed ab initio in the election process in Nigeria?

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	The smart card reader reduces the cases of double registration for election.				
2	The SCR reduced the cases of multiple accreditation of electorates on election day.				
3	The use of SCRs reduced the rate of multiple voting in the 2019 election.				
4	The SCRs made the peoples' choice to be elected in the 2019 election.				
5	The use of SCR gave the electorate more confidence to participate in voting.				

6	With the SCRs, there was reduced rate of ballot box snatching.				
7	The SCRs reduced the cases of excess voting (voting more than the accredited number).				
8	Smartcard readers reduced the rate of manipulation of election results.				

**Cluster 3:** What are the challenges that could obstruct digital democratization in Nigeria using the SCRs?

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Internet problem.				
2	Incompatibility of the SCRs with the traditional election process.				
3	Lack of technical know-how by INEC ad-hoc staff.				
4	Lack of enough digital devices.				
5	Lack of mobile devices for internet access.				
6	Lack of preparedness by INEC.				
7	Malfunctioning of SCRS.				
8	Digital illiteracy among the electorates.				
9	Illegal reconfiguration of the SCR machine to a pooling unit by INEC ad-hoc staff.				
10	Non-accreditation of eligible voters due to factors relating to faded permanent voters' card.				

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The structured interviews are presented below:

1. What do you have to say about digital democratization and the use of SCR in the 2019 election?
2. What do you have to say about the readiness of INEC to use digital democracy in its election activities?
3. What do you have to say about INEC's performance and result collation in 2019 in terms its reflection of digital democracy?
4. What future do you think that the use of SCR has for Nigeria in terms of online voting seen in other parts of the world?
5. What do you have to say about the role of SCR in election malpractice in 2019.
6. Would you say that the SCR as a game changer in the conduct of election in Nigeria?
7. What weaknesses can you point out that confront the use of SCR for digital democratization in Nigeria.