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ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: THE CONFLICTS, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS

Received: December 15, 2023

1st Revision: January 15, 2024

Accepted: April 16, 2024

Abstract. This article investigates the electoral administration in Nigeria, focusing on conflicts and problems in the Fourth Republic. Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1999 involved the crucial role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The study aims to highlight that both international and local electoral observers have reported deficiencies in the initial elections conducted by INEC, which have had negative impacts on democracy in Nigeria. Additionally, the article discusses how an incumbent political party may collaborate with INEC to manipulate election results in their favor. Consequently, INEC has faced accusations from opposition parties after announcing electoral outcomes. The article argues that INEC has not maintained political independence in managing elections in Nigeria and suggests that INEC should be more powerful than the incumbent government. The study utilized qualitative and primary documents as its research methods.

Key words: INEC, election, political party, electoral system, democratization, and conflicts.

Introduction

As a general rule, the transition process to democracy is often accomplished by the tasks of the electoral institution. Elections serve multi-dimensional purposes in democratization. This provides opportunities for the citizenry and ensures political participation, liberalization, organization, and a genuine electoral process. An election improves nation-building, particularly in Africa, which is ethnically divided. After independence, ethnicity and political conflicts caused a setback to the representative government in Nigeria (Jinadu, 2005). Over the years, the military regime has been condemned globally, especially by the leadership of the European powers (Bratton & Walle, 1997). Nigeria was identified in Africa as a country with several experiences in military intervention which spanned between 1960 and 1998. Within this period, the political elites clamored for a return to a democratic system, but they failed for several reasons. The establishment of a democratic system started with the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) by the 1999 Constitution. The institution is required to perform substantial tasks in the administration of elections in the country (Anifowosa & Babawale, 2003).

Huntington (1991) succinctly observed that elections are the ways by which democracy operates. In the third wave of democratization, the elections were also a way of weakening and terminating authoritarian regimes. Elections are the vehicles of democratization that drive democratic consolidation in the twenty-first century. The statutory responsibility of INEC contributed to the fall of authoritarian regimes (Jinadu, 2005). Democratization was brought about by authoritarian rulers who held elections and by opposition groups who pushed for elections and participated in the process. Consequently, the lesson from the third wave is that elections are not only the life of democracy; they also mark the end of dictatorship (Fukuyama, 1992). The joint effort in the transition is between those who hold or push the elections as a transformation toward political development. This occurs in different situations in Africa. For example, Nigeria's and Ghana's democratic transition experiences were obviously different from that of South Africa's, which was a negotiated settlement.

Following this transition, Carter Centre (1999) observed the Nigerian electoral process from the founding elections. The outcome of the 1998/1999 elections marked the end of a long reign of military dictatorship in Nigeria. Goddie (1999) avers that

elections serve as congressional political participation as INEC, the electorates and politicians publicly engage in leadership selective processes. The electoral institution, politicians, and electorates are significant in the process of transition that underpins social justice in the multi-party system.

However, working towards credible elections in the future requires the input of institutions such as the National Assembly, INEC, and civil society groups. These institutions are to inject the ERC recommendations for conducting successful elections in Nigeria. Gerson and Berry (2010) explained that the responsibility of INEC involves directing, managing, controlling, and administering either a democratic or authoritarian democratic society. These electoral functions are significant as the principles are aimed at deepening democracy. The deepening of democracy protects civic rights, including the electorate's power, political protest, participation, recall of legislators, political debate, campaign, etc. These civic values are immunities of democracy and they could be implemented by the electoral institution in all ramifications.

Literature review

Political participation and competition usually receive a number of stakeholders distributing electoral power. The stakeholders are in varying degrees vis-à-vis electoral commission, political parties, voters, electoral observers, mass media, etc. Political participation and competition involve electoral activities for the selection of credible leadership in the state of Saka (2021). In explaining these concepts further, democratization was the mainstream of analysis which recognizes certain political situations that foster participation and competition in democracy. It indicates that the elite and the electorate interact in a way that conforms to the electoral principles of the state. The elites that deliberately fall from authoritarian regimes to democratic governments do it explicitly for the model of institutional arrangement. The issues which surround political participation and competition in a new democracy depend on individual political behavior Ganiyu & Hamzat (2020). The process of competition begins with the elites that are interested in the leadership of the country, and the electorate also participates in choosing credible candidates for the constituent offices Huntington (1991).

The regime transition was an institutional arrangement that took place from the shape of political participation. The concept of participation starts from the transition process of African countries

and depends on the electoral behavior of the citizens. This electoral process starts from the registration of credible voters, and the campaign of each political party also contributes to participation and competition. In Africa, participation fluctuates based on individual political behavior for each election European Parliament (2020). That is, a presidential election could be different from the parliamentary or gubernatorial election. In these views, the political behavior of the people determines the voting pattern of each election in the country Partheymuller et al. (2022). In Nigeria, as a case study in Africa, political participation has been very high since the inauguration of democracy in 1999. Therefore, between 1999 and 2015, participation was high in the federation of the country. In this construction, the election is the determinant of African democratic governments after the third wave of democratization.

More so, the political competition, perhaps, relates to the democratization process, and it also has a bearing on political transitions. The process of the party system contributes to the participation of the elites and electorates in the selection of leadership vis-à-vis political parties, opposition parties, incumbent parties, electoral bodies, political campaigns, mass media, and elections Saka (2021). These elements recognize the institutional framework of a democratic state to function according to the consent of the electorate. The prime focus of political competition recognizes the proportional representation of the party in the legislative, and the party that leads has majority members in the legislative house. The legislature was more distinguished because the representation of the people makes sense in democracy when the community delegates members to participate in decision-making. The basic rule in the legislative house lies between the majority party and the minority party. The significance of party membership in the Freedom House is to make a broad decision as well as to regulate the power of the executive power which comes under the system of checks and balances Igiebor (2023).

Methodology

The research methodology is the process of gathering sources in this study. It also serves as procedural rules for the researchers to abide by in the examination and analysis of phenomena in order to accomplish the task of the research process. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the dynamics of electoral administration in Nigeria as the new democracy through its procedural elections. Using qualitative research methods, the

study explores the background framework of the electoral process, focusing on the areas such as conflicts, problems, and prospects after the initiation of democracy in the country. Primary and secondary sources are utilized to provide insights and support the analysis in English. The findings reveal that the INEC has not been politically independent in Nigeria due to the unethical process of conducting elections. Therefore, the study argues that the legal backing of INEC has not been defined adequately to guarantee its autonomy. The article submits that INEC should be stronger than the incumbent government in Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

Conducting elections in Nigeria has become a problem in the post-independence era. INEC has been dealing with past and present challenges. The electoral commission was created by the 1999 Constitution, its functions are specified in the Electoral Act. Apart from its statutory responsibilities, the institution is considered by international and national electoral observers. The outcome of elections is determined by the quality of democracy. Transparency and openness of elections drive the principles of democracy. In real sense, every successful government has always controlled the leadership of INEC. The executive and legislative arms of government have intervened in the internal programs of INEC. This situation has always affected the external engagement of the institution. Therefore, the ideology of the popular political party has regulated the administration of elections since the inauguration of democracy (Albin-Lacey, 2007). Therefore, the study argues that the legal backing of INEC has not been defined adequately to guarantee its autonomy. In Nigeria, post-election is always filled with the opposition political parties filing court suits against the incumbent political party (Ojo, 2008).

The misconduct in the electoral institution is in varying degrees. INEC staff have sometimes connived with the politicians to rig elections (Ojo, 2008). These electoral misconducts involved both the junior and senior staff. Some of them have been paraded for different allegations of electoral misconducts. Many staff have been tried internally, and disciplinary action has been taken against them while some have been tried in court (Awepoju, 2012).

Results and Discussion

Nigerian Electoral System

The etymology of electoral institution was a dramatic process in Nigeria. The process of election and its conduct in Nigeria is legally guaranteed

under the Constitution of the country. Historically, participation in regional elections was organised through the Electoral Provision (EP) of 1958. The institution (EP) administered the first election which was conducted under the colonial government in 1959 (Ogbogbo, 2009). The political system is responsible for the changes after the political independence. The aim of this development was to equip the Electoral Commission of Nigeria [ECN] as an impartial institution to conduct free and fair elections and to announce electoral results. However, the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, being the head of government, established the Federation Electoral Commission (FEDECO) to replace the Electoral Provisions of Britain (Egwemi et al., 2014).

The political erosion of 1983 brought an end to the democratization of the Second Republic by military intervention, which saw Muhammadu Buhari ascending to power. Over the years, the political arrangement for the re-democratization of the civilian government was led by General Ibrahim Babangida's administration. Therefore, liberalization and re-democratization are civil rule processes and were involved in the establishment of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in 1991. The electoral reform was initiated by the military to conduct various elections, such as the National Assembly and gubernatorial and presidential elections, between 1991 and 1993. The issue that surrounded the transition to democracy was the failure of the military to hand over power to democratically elected candidates. This scenario followed the annulment of the June 12 election, the mandate of Chief MKO Abiola. The General Babangida and General Abacha-led government were full of draconian policies that frustrated the electoral process. However, the sudden death of Abacha in 1998 paved the way for his second in command (General Abdulsalam) to fast-track the democratic processes. The National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) was replaced with the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC). General Abdulsalam gave the Electoral Management Body (ETB) two weeks to draft a timetable for transitional/founding (first) elections and to present electoral policies that would lead to the handing over of power to a democratically elected government on May 29, 1999.

E-Electoral Registration and Voting

The Electoral Magazine (1999) examined the roles of INEC on technical aspects of modern development. This incorporates the use of electronic voting machines for generating electoral results. The

incorporation of electronic voting was truncated by the overwhelming opinions of the National Assembly members. Nevertheless, the importance of using a modern method in electioneering can influence and increase voters' registration and the capturing of necessary data, including the biometrics and photographs of all registered electorates by using the Direct Data Captured (DDC) machine. This electoral device promotes and improves the electoral process. First, it ensures and facilitates an adequate database of registered voters. Second, it detects multiple registration and voting in the field. The Electoral Institute of Nigeria (EIN) was established to train different capacities on the pattern of electoral voting within the INEC.

The national policy of the electoral institution supports various transformations and preparation for other elections in the country. INEC (2011) reported that the newly outlined policies were adopted in conformity with the Constitution. The readiness for the 2011 general elections heightened the transformation process in making the institution more independent under the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF), for the training and development of youths. Afterward, the ratification of these developments created effectiveness and improvement against any electoral odds and potential challenges. It was believed that the process would also resist the temptation of politicians who want power at all costs.

Over the years, particularly in 2011, elections have been managed and administered by INEC personnel based on the guidelines of the Electoral Act. The success of the 2011 general elections remained indelible because it served as a template for future elections and the maintenance of national unity. Therefore, the success of the election improves more on diversity in mobilizing the political groups for leadership selection. The success in electoral management has created a national network in the conduct of the 2015 general election. The Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (2015) advocated the involvement of the Permanent voter card and electronic card reader in the 2015 elections. This was projected to enhance the performance of electoral management and reduce electoral malpractices that happened in past elections. The electoral policy was a 2011 agenda and was ratified for successive elections. Going forward, the introduction of electronic devices will help to check fraud as the electorates will be identified and verified at the polling stations across Nigeria. The devices will identify and validate the original user of the PVC from the Electronic Reader

Card (ERC) being configured for the smooth conduct of free and fair elections.

The justification for the card reader machine was actualized in the 2015 general elections. The improvement in this process helped the Returning Officers to converge in Abuja and defend the election results. It is the INEC Chairman who presents and announces presidential results. The outcome of the presidential election was successful with few instances of electoral malpractices in some states. The affected states included, inter alia, Lagos, Bayelsa, Kano, Nassarawa, and Port Harcourt. The Card Reader Machine (CRM) has been argued to have the potential to prevent rigging because of its success in Ghana and Kenya. The potential challenges that may occur during the exercise have been identified and solved with a backup battery in case there is an electricity failure during elections. In this process, first, the smartcard reader comes with its own battery which can be charged before the election. Second, it uses long-life power as the power can last for 12 hours. Lastly, these electoral arrangements were successful in the general elections conducted by INEC in 2015.

The question is: what made this electoral exercise successful? Firstly, using the card reader machine for administering election reflects a national interest. Initially, the adoption of the electoral machine was not accepted by the party members across the country. *The Punch* (2015) reported the statutory stand of the Federal High Court in Abuja on the application to stop INEC from using the electronic card reader machine for administering the 2015 general elections. The court suit was filed by four political parties. These are the United Democratic Party (UDP), Action Alliance (AC), Congress Party of Nigeria (CPN), and Alliance for Democracy (AD). These plaintiffs thought that the use of the electronic device was against the provision of the Constitution as well as the Electoral Act of 2010 as amended. Therefore, the judgment of the Federal High Court in Abuja was considered as a breach of the provision of section 5(1) of the Electoral Act which prohibits the use of electronic voting machines in electioneering.

The Organs of INEC

The Federal Constitution of Nigeria, in certain provisions, indicated the procedural power of INEC as derived from the Exclusive Power. In this statutory power, Section 157 (14) stated the position of the Chairman as the Chief Electoral Commissioner and twelve other members to be known as National Electoral Commissioners. The President of Nigeria

has the exclusive power to nominate a candidate and forward the name of the nominee to the National Assembly for approval. In view of this provision, the

Constitution decentralises the power of each state of the Federation to maintain the electoral structure of INEC.

Table 1 – Past Electoral Commission Chairmen 1954-2015

Name	Tenure	Commission
Eyo, E. Esua	1954-1966	Electoral Commission of Nigeria [ECN]
Chief Michael An	1976-1979	Federal Electoral Commission [FEC]
Justice Victor Ovie-Whiskey	1980-1983	Federal Electoral Commission [FEC]
Prof. Eme, O. Awa	1987-1989	National Electoral Commission [NEC]
Prof. Humphrey, N. Nwosu	1989-1993	National Electoral Commission [NEC]
Pro. Okon Edet Uya	1993	National Electoral Commission [NEC]
Chief Summer Dagogo Jack	1994-1998	National Electoral Commission of Nigeria [NECN]
Hon. Justice Ephrain, I. Apata	1998-2000	Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC]
Sir. Abel Guobaadia (KSA)	2000-2005	Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC]
Prof. Maurice Iwu	2005-2010	Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC]
Prof. Attahiru Jega	2010-2015	Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC]

*Source: Voter Education Handbook (2005) and *The NEWS Magazine* (2015)

The statutory history of INEC informed two eras before and after political independence. In these eras, the procedural selection of the Chief Electoral Chairman is based on the actions, structure, and patterns of elections. Meanwhile, in the table above, the electoral chairman is limited to five years, except in the 1998-2000 period. The period was administered by the leadership of Hon. Justice Ephrain Apata, who spent two years in office under the military regime. The amendment of the Constitution on electoral matters also informed the leadership of INEC in 2010. There was a smooth handover between Prof. Maurice Iwu and Prof. Attahiru Jega in the same year. Therefore, Attahiru Jega conducted the 2011 elections and the 2015 general elections. The difference between the past and present elections is that the commission recruited academic personnel as Returning Officers (RO) across all 36 states.

The NEWS Magazine (2015) reported the significant process in the conduct of free and fair elections across the country. The electoral outcome has improved the quality of democracy, such virtues are patriotism, self-principles, reforms, intellectual skills, and capacity building in the electoral system. The use of university scholars as returning officers in the electoral process was commended nationwide. Furthermore, PLAC (2015) justified the functions of the Electoral Act in ensuring that meaningful understanding was established in educating the

electorates on matters that concern them. Thus, the structure of the electoral institution was designed to perform these tasks adequately. According to (PLAC, 2010), the electoral commission performs the tasks of conducting elections in Nigeria, how elections are conducted and the method of voting, conditions for voter eligibility, the legal requirements for being included on the voters register, conditions under which an election may be delayed or postponed and the actions to be taken to reschedule such election, election offenses and their penalties, nominations criteria for candidates and political parties, regulations for electoral campaigns, the process for counting of votes and declaring election results, election procedure for area councils mode of determination of election petitions arising from elections.

PLAC (2015) specified the electoral programs of INEC, which include the provisions of the Electoral Acts. For example, Section 99(1) of the Electoral Act 2010, as amended, stipulated 90 days for the campaign of political parties. Part of the electoral process is the collection of the party forms from INEC. Subsequently, the conduct of the party primary elections is scheduled by INEC. With regards to the preparation for the 2015 general elections, the collection of forms for all federal elections by political parties was scheduled for 4th -11th December 2014. The last day for the submission of various forms to INEC for the Presidential and

National Assembly elections was 18th December 2014, and for Governorship and State House of Assembly, it was 25th December 2014. Finally, the date of elections for the Presidential and National Assembly was scheduled for 14th February 2015, and the Governorship and State House of Assembly was also scheduled for 28th February 2015.

However, the electoral timetable was unilaterally changed by President Goodluck Jonathan to favor his re-election under the PDP. The Presidential and National Assembly elections were rescheduled for the 28 of March 2015, while the Governorship and States House of Assembly were rescheduled for 11th April 2015. Democracy allows a procedural arrangement with the agreement of the electoral institution. At this juncture, the study committed the succeeding section to explaining the challenges that confronted INEC in its operation. The character that derailed the performance of the institution centers on internal and external politics - meaning that certain challenges have confronted the statutory responsibilities of the INEC since the embracement of democracy between 1999 and 2015.

General Obstacles to the Electoral Institution

The sixteen years of democracy in Nigeria have witnessed both internal and external electoral challenges. These have affected the services of INEC. Maurice and Chinedu (2008) noted that the challenges which often frustrate the operation of INEC include political, legal, environmental, structural, and logistic challenges. The analyses of these problems have incorporated public opinions. The opinions of the public have influenced the government to appoint qualified persons to lead the institution.

INEC in 2007 was supported by the legal action of the Court of Appeal to defend its electoral action in the country. Part of the power is to vet the documents submitted by each political party. The right to perform the electoral task was rejected by the Supreme Court and this overrode the Court of Appeal judgment. As a result of the conflicting judgments, the Court of Appeal's judgment has worked against the statutory function of the commission in substantial matters. The judgment, which preceded the governorship, State House of Assembly, and Presidential elections in 2007, paved the way for the electoral commission to modify its actions, thereby resulting in the printing of a new set of 64 million ballot papers for the presidential election in the same year.

Apart from the external challenges, the distribution of electoral materials to all geopolitical areas of the 36 states across Nigeria and to 200,000

polling stations was an exigency task. The second aspect of this was noted by the explanation of David et al (2014) who observed that past elections have been reddened by electoral malpractices such as the rigging of elections, stuffing of ballot papers, inadequate and late arrival of the electoral materials, falsification of results, vote buying and ideology of the ruling party to influence the electoral law. However, it was suggested that adequate autonomy of the electoral commission should be guaranteed by the Electoral Act and that the executive arm of government should not interfere with the operation of the commission.

INEC has been neither independent nor self-reliant in the conduct of various elections in Nigeria. The inconsistency in the administration of the electoral commission is usually caused by the successive government in power. Oromareghake (2013) disclosed that the appointment of the INEC chairman and electoral commissioners has both served as an instrument of control in some electoral matters. Perhaps, the recruitment of unqualified staff to occupy sensitive positions of the commission should be corrected. The finance of INEC should be removed from the control of the executive President as the expenditure for electoral service may be frustrated in order to bring the commission to its knees.

Awopeju (2011) identified some factors which he claimed had eroded the standard of elections with evidence between 1999 and 2007. Such democratic impediments are the incompetence of electoral staff, intimidation of voters at the poll, selfish interest of the political gladiators, widespread electoral irregularities, poverty on the side of the electorates, and interference with the Electoral Act by the incumbent political party. Moreover, Abdullahi (2013) pointed out that persistent electoral violence during/after the elections has consequences on the INEC's performance, particularly in the 2011 general elections whereby the presidential, state, and local council elections were greeted with killing, arson, vandalisation of property, and riot.

The failure of elections in Nigeria can also be attributed to many behavioural factors. In the view of Enojo (2010, p. 89), electoral violence since the country's independence in 1960 has always been part of the political process. Anifowose and Babawale (2003) both added that the 2003 general elections were rigged by the elites in power. Ojo (2008) and Okolie (2010) are of the view that the 2007 general elections were the worse in the electoral administration in Nigeria with both international and

local observers concluding that there was a range of malpractices during the elections. Awopaju (2012) and Obakhado and Imhanlahimi (2009) have all claimed that low participation in the 2007 and 2011 presidential elections was due to the peoples' loss of confidence in the electoral processes.

Rawlence and Albin-Lacey (2007) characterised Nigerian elections in terms of stolen 'rights' because they were marred by extraordinary display of rigging and intimidation of voters in many areas throughout the 36 states of the country. In many states, very little voting took place as ballot papers were diverted to the offices and homes of government officials and participants to be filled with fake results. These challenges undermined the process of elections after the transition to democracy in 1999.

The accreditation of voters, late arrival of logistics, and inaccessibility of the card reader at polling stations strongly undermined the right of the electorate (TMG, 2015). In the 2011 election, these problems were acknowledged by the NSC (2011) which assessed and declared the electoral outcomes as a harassment and an intimidation of the electorates. The local observers had no access to some states while violence and lack of commitment to the INEC accreditation time by the electoral officer on duty added to the problems. In view of these problems, the study argues that the institution has conducted credible elections in the country and few abnormalities in the elections have been checked and controlled by the past chairman but many questions have been raised about the authenticity of the results in various elections. Apart from this point, the election will be meaningful when INEC conducts free and fair elections with the support of the political stakeholders in the country.

Conflict in the Electoral System

Conflict in the electoral system is a process of democratisation with reference to behaviour that obstructs the leadership selection. Electoral power involves political stakeholders who either maintain the prospects of democracy or obstruct the quality of democracy. Therefore, political power intertwines with procedural legitimacy, meaning that the power is instrumental to contesting elections. The significance of electoral arrangement dictates the distribution of power among the political elites in the state (Huntington, 1991). The electoral institution (INEC) is to comply with the regulations of election to ensure a free and fair outcome. However, electoral conflicts arise when the political stakeholders vis-a-vis the electorates, elites, and INEC fail to comply with

the rule of the democratic game. In this discourse, this study has observed various electoral challenges which translate to conflict in different circumstances (Abdullahi, 2013).

The provision of the Electoral Act does not prevent conflict in the administration of election in this dispensation. Conflict arises when there is tension between the governing elite and non-governing elite (opposition parties), perhaps, leading to the third party (INEC). However, in what way does electoral conflict arise in the electoral system? Nigeria, as a case study, is usually characterised by party disunity/crisis. The evidence of party disunity in the First Republic has resulted in a party coalition which weakens the principles of democracy. The same character dominates the current political dispensation which started in 1999. The ideology of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) as a dominant political party is characterised by membership interests and political ambition has frustrated the political system. For example, the CPC, ACN, and the right wing of PDP against the left wing of PDP was evidence of the party coalition in 2014. The defection in the preceding year has led to acrimony in the 2015 general elections.

The Punch (2015) reported the clash at the INEC office between All Progressive Congress Party (APC) and PDP in Port Harcourt leading to each group mobilising for reinforcement of party members. In the same scenario, the PDP supporters accused the Resident Electoral Officer, Mrs. Gecilla Khan, of planning to favour APC in the 2015 elections. *The Herald* (2015) correspondingly reported that the former governor of Kwara State, Senator Bukola Saraki, mobilised Kwarans in his ward for defection to another party. Defection from one political party to another started when he left ANPP for PDP in 2003. Afterward, he later dumped PDP for APC in 2014 to re-contest for the electoral position in 2015.

The Punch (2015) also reported the gross intimidation of INEC staff on different levels from the over callous interest of the party members on the matter of card readers. In the same manner, the defection from the (PDP) to the APC often causes political enmity among politicians, and this behaviour was reported across the country. *The Punch* (2015) elucidates the behaviour of Governor Amaechi's deputy, Ikuru who defected to PDP while the governor was a *bona fide* member of APC.

Apart from these political conflicts, *The Punch* (2015, p. 9) published the query issued to the INEC boss, Prof. Attahiru Jega, for his secret meeting with the APC in Dubai over the conduct of the 2015

elections by Mr Femi Fani Kayode, the secretary of the PDP. There was a counter allegation by the National Publicity Secretary of APC, Alhaji Lai Muhammed who dismissed the allegation as a fabrication against the INEC boss. In this connection, *The Punch* (2015) also described the political action of President Obasanjo's dumping PDP by tearing his membership card publicly.

In 2015, different political issues preoccupied the atmosphere in Nigeria. Part of the issues was drawing the roadmap for the 2015 elections. The INEC chairman suffered a large provocation in the course of electoral management. *The NEWS Magazine* (2015) reported massive attacks from all sides of the political divide in the country. A typical example was captured from the collation centre in Abuja as

Mr. Orubebe, a former Minister of the Niger Delta in President Jonathan's administration who, with dismay and vituperation, alleged the INEC chairman, Prof. Attahiru Jega, of electoral irregularities and labelled Jega's action as prejudicial. The query centres on how APC got the final result it posted on its website before INEC declared the presidential results publicly in the 2015 election. The outcome of the presidential election was in favour of Muhammed Buhari under the APC won the election and President Goodluck Jonathan and the PDP lost the election. Parts of good governance is transparency and accountability as both values are elements of political efficacy. Therefore, the study argues that part of the disagreement after each election in the country is caused by the political elites with the support of the people.

Table 2 – 2015 Presidential Results

S/N	Name of State	No of Registered Voters	No of Accredited Voters	ACPN	APC	PDP	No of Valid Votes	No of Rejected Votes	Total votes Cast
1	Abia	1,349,134	442,338	2,194	13,394	368,306	391,045	10,004	401,049
2	Adamawa	1,518,123	709,993	2,166	374,701	251,664	636,018	25,152	661,210
3	Akwa Ibom	1,654,481	1,074,070	443	58,411	953,304	1,017,064	11,487	1,028,551
4	Anambra	1,963,427	774,430	3,259	17,926	660,767	688,584	14,825	703,409
5	Bauchi	2,053,484	1,094,069	373	931,598	86,085	1,020,338	19,437	1,039,775
6	Bayelsa	605,637	354,789	38	5,194	361,209	367,057	4,672	371,739
7	Banue	2,893,596	754,634	1,464	373,961	303,737	583,264	19,857	703,131
8	Borno	1,799,669	544,759	243	473,543	25,640	501,920	13,088	515,008
9	Cross River	144,288	500,577	514	28,368	414,863	450,514	15,392	455,900
10	Delta	2,044,372	1,350,914	916	48,910	1,211,405	1,267,773	17,075	2,284,848
11	Eboyin	1,071,226	425,301	1,214	19,528	323,653	363,888	29,449	393,337
12	Edo	1,650,552	599,166	3,284	208,469	286,869	500,451	22,334	522,785
13	Ekiti	723,255	323,799	538	120,331	278,466	300,691	8,754	309,445
14	Enugu	1,381,563	615,112	479	24,157	553,003	573,178	12,459	585,632
15	Gombe	2,110,105	515,828	192	361,245	96,873	460,599	12,645	473,444
16	Imo	1,747,681	801,717	956	183,258	559,185	702,964	28,957	731,921
17	Gigawa	1,815,839	3,153,425	540	885,988	147,904	1,037,564	34,325	1,071,889
18	Kaduna	3,763,767	3,746,031	424	1,127,760	454,085	1,637,482	32,719	1,650,201
19	Kano	4,943,662	2,364,434	402	1,903,999	215,779	2,128,821	43,626	2,172,447
20	Katsina	2,542,741	1,578,646	361	1,345,442	98,937	1,449,426	32,288	1,481,724
21	Kebbi	145,763	792,817	361	567,833	300,972	677,003	38,119	715,122
22	Kogi	1,350,883	476,839	1,059	264,851	149,987	421,328	17,959	439,287
23	Kwara	1,183,032	489,360	817	302,145	132,602	440,080	213,321	461,401
24	Lagos	5,877,846	1,676,754	3,038	792,460	632,327	1,443,685	52,289	1,495,975
25	Nasarawa	1,222,054	562,959	95	236,838	223,460	511,547	10,094	521,641

Table continuation

S/N	Name of State	No of Registered Voters	No of Accredited Voters	ACPN	APC	PDP	No of Valid Votes	No of Rejected Votes	Total votes Cast
26	Niger	1,995,679	933,607	441	657,678	149,222	833,671	31,012	844,683
27	Ogun	1,709,409	594,975	3,072	308,298	207,950	533,172	26,441	559,013
28	Ondo	1,501,549	618,040	2,406	299,889	251,368	561,056	21,379	582,435
29	Osun	1,378,113	683,169	1,731	363,603	249,929	642,615	20,758	603,373
30	Oyo	2,344,448	1,073,849	8,979	528,620	303,376	881,852	47,254	928,606
31	Plateau	1,972,211	1,076,833	391	429,140	549,615	987,388	18,304	1,000,692
32	Rivers	2,324,300	1,643,409	525	69,238	1,487,075	1,585,461	19,307	1,584,768
33	Sokoto	1,663,137	988,899	535	671,926	152,150	834,259	42,110	870,369
34	Taraba	1,374,307	638,578	811	261,326	310,803	579,677	23,089	602,716
35	Yobe	1,027,942	520,127	264	446,265	25,526	473,296	17,971	491,767
36	Zamfara	1,484,541	875,049	238	612,702	144,833	763,022	19,157	780,129
37	FCT	885,573	344,056	240	146,393	157,195	306,805	9,230	310,015
	Total	67,422,005	31,745,490	40,311	15,424,921	12,853,162	28,587,564	844,519	29,432,083

Source: INEC March 28, 2015

The table above shows the summary of the 2015 presidential results. The results were generated from the INEC website and reflected the electoral administration in Nigeria. In the summary, fourteen (14) political parties contested the election. These parties were AA, ACPN, ADC, AD, APA, APC, CPP, HOPE, KOWA, NCP, PDP, PPN, UDP, and UPP. Out of these, three political parties were selected based on the results. The results were collated and captured the thirty-six states including Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory FCT. Meanwhile, APC won the election with 15 424 921, PDP (second) 12 853 162, and ACPN (third) 40,311, respectively. In view of these results, the number of registered voters was 67 422 005 and the number of accredited voters was 31 745 90. There was a gap in the index showing that there was political apathy in the 2015 elections, and the electorates did not turn out for the presidential election as envisaged. Apart from the registration and accreditation of the voters, the number of valid votes was 28 587 564, which was more than the number of rejected votes 844 519. Meaning that the rejected votes were due to the electorates' wrong thumb printing during the election. Finally, the total votes cast 29 432 083 was less than the total number of accredited voters 31 745 490. This shows that it was not all the electorates that were accredited by INEC came out to vote at their polling stations.

Therefore, INEC has performed its statutory responsibility in election administration. Our

argument on the outcome of the presidential election focuses on political apathy, which is peculiar to Nigeria. This draws the attention to the total number of registered voters minus the total number of cast votes and the difference was 37,989,922. The difference in the results showed the number of electorates that could not come out to cast their votes in the 2015 presidential election. As a result, the number of disenfranchised electorates was more than the electorates that came out to indicate their franchise in the presidential election. In the presidential results, INEC also failed to indicate the sex and age of the electorates despite the database. This may have assisted the public and researchers in confirming the level of participation along the lines of gender and age. In this sense, the failure to indicate the sex and age of the electorates does not allow researchers to report the level of participation of the youths in the presidential election. The youths are the opinion makers that determine if the campaign promises and the leadership performance of the elected have been reflected in the governance of the state.

Conclusion

The overall analysis of the electoral process in Nigeria is generated from the historical perspective to understand how elections were organized and conducted before political independence. The INEC, as an umpire and as a whistleblower in the electoral

competition, failed to perform its statutory functions effectively due to some weaknesses in the 1999 and 2015 elections. The reasons that surrounded the fallout include the shortage of manpower, illegal possession of voter's cards, illegal possession of ballot papers, graft, conniving with the politicians, incumbent power influence, and many more. In view of these challenges, INEC, as the electoral umpire, needs critical training when conducting free and fair elections in the country.

The above challenges have frustrated the national service of the electoral institution after the transition to democracy in 1999. Therefore, there should be harmony in this dispensation. The successive governments have improved the electoral reforms that empowered INEC to perform its legal functions in the country. The evidence has been shown in the Electoral Act, which specifies the method of conducting elections and decentralising the structure and power of the electoral body across the country.

We mentioned earlier that, to conduct a credible election in Nigeria, INEC should be supported by other institutions such as the citizenry, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Police Force, etc. These elements will promote

the management of elections in the country. The electorates need to be adequately educated before the elections.

The study observed how elections are managed and conducted by INEC in the Fourth Republic. The past and present experiences have spurred these researchers to examine the electoral framework involved in the politics of power transfer. The electoral exercise is conducive when the incumbent power holder is ready to concede defeat to the opposing political parties. The electoral institution is also ready to deploy a high level of social justice and equality to ensure the conduct of credible elections in the country. Therefore, there should be a restructuring in the statutory responsibility of INEC. This will enable the institution to be deeply involved in the process of nation-building. Other things being equal are, electoral norms and values both set the standard in a democratic state. It means the principles of democracy do not align with an autocratic system. In view of these, adequate security should be provided in the management of the election. The government should not ignore security in the management of elections because the issue of insecurity has contributed to the failure of the institution in some matters.

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