**ELECTION RIGGGING AND VOTE BUYING: A THREAT TO NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The Nigerian Election Act's shortcomings as well as election manipulation were discussed in the study. In the elections held in 1964, 1965, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, and 2007, election manipulation was refined. Any unjustified authority or power that tampers with election results to advance a certain agenda at the expense of the interests of most voters is considered election rigging. Election manipulation can frustrate the interest of the people, leading to the questionable imposition of an unpopular candidate, but when the interests of the people are stated in a free and fair election, the government in power tends to have the sovereign legitimacy of the people. The unfortunate conclusion is that governments lack popular support, which is one of the fundamental tenets of democracy. Elections as a crucial step in the democratic process are still underdeveloped and underdeveloped in the nation with the most difficult voting system. Nonetheless, there is a general lack of research on the issues preventing the adoption of e-voting in developing democracies like Nigeria. Notwithstanding the considerable difficulties, a critical assessment of the difficulties is crucial to the long-term acceptance of electronic voting. Knowing the effects of these variables would empower democratic practitioners and policy makers to successfully commit to a respectable yet trustworthy voting system. This report investigated issues that hinder Nigeria's adoption of electronic voting and made recommendations for the future.*

**Keywords**: **Election, e-voting adoption, domain specific, Independent National Electoral Commission, Nigeria**.

**INTRODUCTION**

Election rigging, which poses a severe danger to democratic ideals in any liberal democracy, is caused by defects in the electoral process in most countries. The electoral laws of most African states all have these weaknesses. The Election Act is flawed in Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and other nations. The democratic system in Nigeria is flawed. With a population of around 150 million, Nigeria's democracy is the most populated in Africa. Because of Nigeria's size, some people believe that as Africa advances, so does Nigeria. Nigeria is hence subject to high expectations. This implies that other African democracies may learn from the way she conducts her elections. Nigeria was born into democracy after gaining independence from the British imperialists in 1960. When civilian control crumbled due to several reasons, the botched election was one of the main ones, and democracy had yet to take root. Election-related violence is sparked by unreliable electoral systems, which has the long-term effect of weakening public faith in the democratic process (Alemika 2011). The election catastrophe has been brought on by malicious politicians and certain partisan electoral officials who use the flaws in the current voting system to commit electoral fraud (Ogbaudu, 2011; Abdulhamid, Adebayo, Ugiomoh, &AbdulMalik, 2013). The cumulative effect of the irregularities, which include, but are not limited to, seriously flawed voter lists, the abuse of incumbent power, a lack of transparency, and actual or perceived bias on the part of election officials that results in real or perceived fraud, encourages election-related violence with the long-term effect of eroding the public's faith and confidence in the democratic process (UN, 2012). The scenario explains the escalating violence, which has resulted in fatalities and maiming’s (Alemika, 2011; Nwagu, 2011). The current method of voting, which uses paper ballots, lacks the crucial components of a credible election, such as openness, responsibility, and fair play (Alemika), and is susceptible to fraud and manipulation (LeVan &Ukata, 2012). The need for an acceptable voting technique in Nigeria has been a call to action that has sparked initiatives for change, most recently through the investigation of the usage of technological devices. The use of different technologies to enhance democratic practises is encouraged by information system (IS) experts and democratic practitioners. The use and distribution of ICT in election processes, such as e-voting, significantly enhances democratic practises in several democracies throughout the world. The incident had a significant impact on Nigerian policymakers, who began investigating the practicality of using e-voting in the general elections. To have legitimate elections, the world is heading towards expanding the use of technology, according to the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Jega& Hillier, 2012). The need for an acceptable voting technique in Nigeria has been a call to action that has sparked initiatives for change, most recently through the investigation of the usage of technological devices. The use of different technologies to enhance democratic practises is encouraged by information system (IS) experts and democratic practitioners. The use and distribution of ICT in election processes, such as e-voting, significantly enhances democratic practises in several democracies throughout the world. The incident had a significant impact on Nigerian policymakers, who began investigating the practicality of using e-voting in the general elections. To have legitimate elections, the world is heading towards expanding the use of technology, according to the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Jega& Hillier, 2012).

Acceptable voting practises in Nigeria have been a call to action that have sparked improvements, most notably through It is important to remember that the fight for democracy in Nigeria was envisioned as a method of establishing responsible political institutions that support a government that is accountable to the people, not just as a means of ending military rule or as an internationally focused endeavour (Bello, 2011). In the meanwhile, democratic governance is not just about elections and the handover of power to civilians; it also involves the rule of law, adherence to the constitution and basic human rights, socioeconomic empowerment, peace, and the safety of people and their property, among other things. The current state of Nigerian democracy's transformation of its citizens' political and socioeconomic empowerment is an illusion. As a result, it prompts important queries like, "What does democracy mean and which democracy?" These considerations are necessary because, in Nigeria, when democracy is completely implemented, it is anticipated that a huge portion of the people would experience happiness as opposed to a small number of "transnationally oriented elites." Moreover, it is anticipated to promote equality, bring about a slow and progressive socioeconomic and political revolution, and rightfully establish an atmosphere that will let individuals at all levels to exercise control and power over actions that have an impact on them. Since 1999, there have been several problems in the election process. Since then, it appears that every election has been worse than the one before it. As a result, administrations frequently complicate the dynamics of federalism by emerging with a history of legitimacy difficulties. Following the elections in 2003 and 2007, this is what transpired. Although adopting electronic voting is crucial, a democratic choice to do so must also consider the difficulties of transition. It is stated that buying a technological device without carefully considering the necessary circumstances would only result in technology that disables rather than enables (Rajesh, 2003).

**Challenges of Existing Voting System in Nigeria**

The performance of the current conventional paper ballot election method in Nigeria would undoubtedly be hampered by several variables, making it less effective. One of the major problems with Nigeria's current traditional voting system is the rough topography of some areas, which makes it tough and problematic to distribute electoral materials effectively (LeVan &Ukata, 2012). Traditional voting is a process that (to paraphrase or not to paraphrase (Ogbaudu, 2011). Furthermore, disseminating election results by conventional modes of transportation exposes them to several dangers, including attack by political thugs, resentful party members, or manipulation by authorities acting under the influence of corruption. These limiting limitations undermine the effectiveness of the traditional paper ballot method and cast doubt on the validity of its further adoption. It also makes e-voting possible (Jega& Hillier, 2012) for the obvious reason that results are tallied and sent electronically. Franchise-related issues are still a hot topic in Nigerian politics. Since they must get absentee voter identification to vote from their foreign host nations, a huge number of immigrants who live abroad face serious restrictions on their ability to exercise their right to vote (Kozakova, 2011). Also, voting rights are difficult to exercise for election officials and security employees who are on duty and assigned to locations other than their polling stations. Absentee voting is not supported by current voting system flaws. So, there are pockets of agitation from different groups of people in Nigeria and overseas to investigate workable voting systems that allow those types of individuals to exercise their right to vote.

**Electoral Process**

Several academics contribute to the literature on elections, their procedure, and malpractice in the form of qualitative secondary data analysis (Ebirim, 2013; Ighodalo, 2012; Osinakachukwu and Jawan 2010; Idowu, 2010 and Herreros, 2006). According to Ighodalo (2012), elections are a way to choose representatives of the populace for various public posts within the polity. Elections, he said, are essential components of democratic rule in contemporary political systems. They are viewed as a tool for political accountability, mobilisation, and choice. Elections are expected under the liberal democratic paradigm, which has emerged as the most popular type of democracy in the modern period of globalisation, to smooth the transition from one civilian rule to another and make it easier to legitimise existing governments. Herreros (2006) views election as a mechanism of choosing "good sorts" of politicians who would promote the common good instead of their factional interests. Odusote (2014:31) has correctly suggested that electoral process is a foundation of democracy because it gives effect to the right to govern by agreement. Election, according to Dickerson (et al., 1990), is "a post-mortem on the performance of people in office, whose performance may have nothing to do with promises made when they were last elected" (cited in Idowu, 2010:54). He said that elections and electoral processes are frequently misunderstood. Because of this, he defines the electoral process as all pre- and post-election actions, without which an election is either impractical or pointless. So, the procedure includes registering political parties, registering voters, resolving election-related problems, swearing in election victors, etc. Election procedures and rules are undoubtedly a part of the electoral process. Long-standing disagreements or political violence are peacefully addressed in a democratic society when elections are free from crises. A structure like this increases the likelihood of political stability, peace, progress, and continuity in governing. Elections that are marred by violence, thuggery, intimidation, rigging, ballot box snatching and stuffing, and other electoral malpractices, on the other hand, call into question the fundamental foundations of democracy and jeopardise the security of the country.

**E-Voting, a Potential Remedy to the Problems of Traditional Paper Ballot System of Voting in Nigeria**

Onu and Chiamogu (2012) said that the best way to address Nigeria's issues with weak democratic institutions is to establish strong IT policies and initiatives. E-voting clearly has a comparative advantage over traditional voting. According to Kozakova (2011), e-simplicity voting's is a feature that boosts participation and alleviates voting-related tiredness. E-voting makes it simpler for individuals to express their opinions and cast ballots, which is a necessary condition for a healthy democratic process. In addition to being reliable, safe, and secure, the e-Voting system has certain intrinsic benefits over paper-based voting in that it significantly reduces voting mistakes. According to Abu-Shanab, Knight, and Refai (2010), electronic voting increases the convenience, effectiveness, and efficiency of the election process; it also lowers the cost of holding elections, increases participation, and offers an alternative option while enhancing the integrity of the election process overall. E-voting systems are a desirable alternative due to the limitations of traditional paper-based approaches in terms of accuracy, security, and verifiability. This is due to the former's manual voting and vote-counting procedures. According to Kozakova (2011), the successful use of electronic voting technology would be highly advantageous for modern democracy. The likelihood of each vote being counted improves with the addition of electronic voting systems, which also expands the pool of possible voters. Given the foregoing, the issue of whether electronic voting might be a solution to problems with the Nigerian electoral system's lack of transparency and accountability, loss of faith in the election process, and other electoral-related issues is at stake (Adetula, 2008).

**Electoral Malpractice**

Election malpractice, according to Ebirim (2013), is the manipulation of the rules and laws governing how elections are conducted in order to advance certain interests. It may be accomplished using a variety of methods and techniques, including blatant rigging and the fabrication of election results. Election-related malpractice, however, can occur before, after, and even during an election. In a similar spirit, Bamisaye&Awofeso (2011) describe electoral malpractices as the manifestation of political actors' and political parties' unwavering commitment to seizing power at all costs and via any means necessary. For him, politicians manipulate the political process through a variety of electoral malpractices, including manipulating elections and intimidating voters. According to Nwabueze (2005, cited in Ibrahim, 2009), election rigging refers to electoral manipulations that are manifestly illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent, or sinister motive to influence an election in favour of a candidate (or candidates). Examples of such manipulations include illegal voting, bribery, treating and undue influence, intimidation and other forms of force used against the electorate, falsifying of results, and the false declaration of a losing candidate as the winner (without altering the recorded results). In developing democracies that have evolved as a result of the so-called "Third Wave" of democracy that swept over the developing globe from the 1980s onward, electoral fraud has become a growing concern.

**Challenges of Transition to e-Voting System in Nigeria**

E-government issues with using electronic tools for democratic decision-making, such e-voting, to strengthen the legitimacy of the state and its relationships with its people under the rule of law (Brown, 2005). Several democratic countries have adopted remote or E-voting and polling place e-voting technologies, demonstrating their user-friendliness. For instance, e-voting acceptance and dissemination are at various levels in the USA, Australia, Estonia, Japan, Brazil, and India. The antecedents of the implementation of e-voting include reasons as diverse as land mass and unevenly dispersed population, accessibility to supplementary technologies, technical improvement, increased involvement, or political will to assure legitimacy (Goldsmith, 2012). Even if these criteria are not all the same, it is nevertheless important to grasp their consequences if you want to deploy sustainable e-voting technology. Lack of critical assessment of the social and environmental processes within which the programmes are framed results in implementation delays for most ICT development projects and initiatives in underdeveloped nations (Avgerou& Walsham, 2001). This perspective has emphasised the necessity to address the difficulties caused by the contextual variety of ICT, which includes organisational, national, and sectoral factors involved in the creation and use of IS. One of the delicate duties that might threaten a loss of faith and trust in the system is the choice of the voting mechanism (Hall, 2012). While choosing a voting system, caution must be used due to its sensitivity and complexity. The shift to electronic voting adoption in Nigeria is anticipated to encounter significant difficulties that are essential for a successful adoption. Understanding the implications of these elements will provide democratic practitioners and policy makers with the means to properly commit to a respectable yet trustworthy voting system.

**CONCLUSION**

Election Card Reader was so successfully used in the 2015 elections that it is being used today. It ensured that only eligible voters with voting cards cast ballots. It made it impossible for someone to create a fake card and use it to cast a vote. Notwithstanding some errors along the way, it significantly increased the integrity of the general elections in 2015. The conventional methods of rigging have been eliminated. We think the card reader is here to stay, but the technology for using it must advance. Things are likely to improve if the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari continues to confront the issue of corruption and other concerns facing Nigerian society. The next president has a reputation for having an uncorruptible character and does not tolerate corruption and poor management as a former governor, petroleum minister, and head of state during the military administration. In fact, several former high government officials have started returning the wealth they stole from the most recent dictatorship out of dread of his intolerance for corruption. Although democratic government will function successfully, all other areas of the country will have a new appearance. Before a full-scale national deployment, the technology needs to be tested in practise on a platform for open elections. The pilot project would ensure that individuals were involved in the design and creation of the adoption policy. By allowing citizen engagement through pilot projects, the government boosts its chances of getting input on voter participation, infrastructure upgrades, technical design, capacity building, and, of course, technology appropriateness. Thus, make sure the technology is applied in a sustainable way to public elections. Effective government office networking for both internal and external transactions, also known as e-administration and e-government, respectively, is part of a long-term plan and serves as a springboard to boost the adoption of sustainable e-voting. It is more likely that a society will use cutting-edge technology in elections if its public administration uses electronic tools to carry out internal tasks and build a presence online for contacts with the outside world. This is due to a comparatively high proportion of persons who are tech-savvy as compared to a society with manual administrative procedures. To increase the degree of technological literacy among citizens, government ministries and agencies at all levels, including schools and higher education institutions, should ensure successful gradual digitization of their service delivery. Since it is corruption that drives the godfathering, ballot stuffing, thuggery, delays, and manipulations of election justice, as well as the non-prosecution of electoral violators, that results in the imposition of political candidates. Regardless of the political, economic, religious, or social institutions the evils are expressing in, corruption is unquestionably the breeding ground of nearly all the issues of the election process in democratic administration. Although corruption exists in every culture, including those in industrialised nations, history indicates that any nation with a history of growth must have significantly reduced the prevalence of corruption. Nigeria ought to learn from these nations.

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