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VOTERS EDUCATION AND CREDIBLE ELECTION IN NIGERIA: A SURVEY OF 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

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Abstract

This study examined the 2023 general election, with particular emphases on voters education towards a credible electoral process. A survey design was employed and a simple random sampling was used. The instrument used for the collection of data was a structured questionnaire on the 5-point Likert scale measurement. A sample size of 375 respondents representing 95 percent of the targeted population. A table was constructed for; frequency counts, percentage and mean are compiled to provide answers to the research question. The study is however sourced predominantly from primary source with the aid of questionnaire. The finding shows that religon, voting patterns and ethnicity significantly affect the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommended that, Nigeria should discard the belief and notion of three (3) main ethnic groups officially recognized (Hausa, Igbo & Yoruba) in order to give the numerous ethnic groups identity and media should support the formation of an inclusive government, cutting across tribes and religion in the country to reduce the negative impact of ethnicity and religion in the country.

Keywords: Election, Voters Education, Religion, Ethnicity, Voting Pattern, Political participation.

Introduction

The presidential election was the seventh since the country re-established its democracy in 1999. Presidential elections had been held in Nigeria on February 25, 2023. The 2023 elections will be the most challenging to conduct in Nigeria, saying

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the raging insecurity; preparedness of the electoral body, INEC, and conduct of presidential candidates will shape the outcome of the polls. The candidate of Nigeria's ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party Bola Tinubu was declared the winner with 36 % of votes after defeating two of his closest rivals in the most competitive election for decades. The Independent Nigerian Election Commission (INEC) announced final results on 1 March, after a chaotic count lasting almost four days. Tinubu's victory was irrefutable, with 8.79 m votes, putting him well ahead of main opposition challenger Atiku Abubakar with 6.98 m and the newcomer Peter Obi with 6.1m votes. For the first time, none of these candidates was a former officer, which was also considered a success. However, less than 10 % of the candidates were women (Burke, 2023). Still, provisional data signaled Nigeria's lowest-ever voter turnout of 27%.

The 2023 elections were conducted under a new electoral framework, the Electoral Act 2022, a law that provides a more robust legal framework for the conduct of the polls. The law gives the legislative backing for more transparent voting, collation and announcement of results. The Electoral Act (2022) states that the winner of the presidential election will be subjected to the provisions of section 134 of the Nigerian Constitution. "In an election to the office of the President or Governor whether or not contested and in any contested election to any other elective office, the result shall be ascertained by counting the votes cast for each candidate and subjected to the provisions of sections 133, 134 and 179 of the Constitution.

Nigeria is in an extremely fragile state. Available indices show characteristics of a failing state. There are conflicts and agitations everywhere, feelings of marginalization and exclusion, a rise in political and criminal violence, loss of control of borders, rising ethnic, religious, and cultural hostilities, weak institutions, food shortages, unemployment, inflation, crumbling infrastructure, deteriorating human development indicators such as infant and maternal mortality, and literacy rates. These troubling realities make the 2023 general elections a defining moment for the country which, in turn, raises the need for a thorough and insightful search for who will succeed President Buhari.

The growing insecurity that had plagued the pre-elections certainly had contributed significantly to dampening turnout. For example, INEP recorded over 134 attacks on its offices or personnel (Gavin, 2023). The ECOWAS which had deployed about 240 election observers declared the elections as largely peaceful although it criticized poor planning and a lack of transparency which, however, did not affect the final result. It appealed to leaders of the opposition to promote peace and use constitutional means to address any grievances they may have.

In total, more than 93.4 million voters had been registered on the Nigerian electoral roll. That was over 11 million more than four years ago. On 11 January 2023, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) released a new register, from which it said 53,264 ineligible voters had been removed (Aziegbemhin, 2023). Incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari, a 'Northerner' and retired general of the Nigerian army, cannot

stand again due to poor health and because his term has ended. According to opinion polls, three candidates had realistic chances of winning. First, Bola Tinubu, 70 years old, represented the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party. He was known as a political 'godfather' in the South West. Second, Atiku Abubakar, 76, was running on behalf of the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP). Third, Peter Obi, 61, was the candidate for the little-known Labour Party and hoped to break the two-party system that ruled the country.

Given the geographical expanse of the country, the number of registered voters, electoral constituencies and polling units, conducting a general election in Nigeria is a huge undertaking. The delimitation details are staggering: 93,469,008 registered voters expected to elect their representatives for 1,491 constituencies in 176,846 polling units (INEC, 2023). However, the 2023 Presidential Election seemed to be different from the previous ones in the sense that, behaviour of the electorates changed which also changed the voting pattern. Campaigns were undertaken based on culture of manipulation of religion, ethnic group and regions. The electoral system of any given country plays a fundamental role in sustaining and molding the political behavior of its citizens (Okolo, 2022). The way election is conducted in a country determines to a great extent the level of political culture, political participation and good governance in the country.

There are conflicts and agitations everywhere, feelings of marginalization and exclusion, a rise in political and criminal violence, loss of control of borders, rising ethnic, religious, and cultural hostilities, weak institutions, food shortages, unemployment, inflation, crumbling infrastructure, deteriorating human development indicators such as infant and maternal mortality, and literacy rates. These troubling realities make the 2023 general elections a defining moment for the country which, in turn, raises the need for a thorough and insightful search for who will succeed President Buhari. The candidate who emerges as President must understand all the issues and have a clear vision of where to take the country. We have read and followed the manifestoes and issues of all the presidential candidates and are happy the campaign is issues-based, unlike previous elections.

In the 2023 general election, the Nigerian government spent over 305 Billion Naira to deliver the general election (Maclean, Egbejule & Alfa, 2023), yet the process had several challenges resulting in electoral malpractices like, rigging, violence, intimidation and harassment of the electorates, electoral officers and militarization. It's against this backdrop this study intends to examine the impact of voters education in credible election and its attendant issues especially the huge investments involved.

Concept of Voter Education and Credible Election

Voter education equips the electorates with necessary information that educate them on their right to select the candidate of their choice. It contains vital aspect like when, where to register and vote casting. Election Management Bodies (EMBs) organize regular voters 'education updates or broadcasts through messages, aired on radio and the print media.

The EMBs modify its operation to be in tune with contemporary media trends for example, the maximum use of the internet. Elections cannot be generally said to be credible unless the voters are aware of the right choice. In addition, detailed information on voting methodology should be available ahead of time of Election Day. Voters' education activities could be directed by either the EMBs or other stakeholders like the civil society in disseminating information on what is required of the electorates throughout the electioneering process.

Waheed (2011) views voters' education as an enterprise to ensure that now voters are ready to participate in electoral process and to know who the best choice is beyond political, ethnic or other affiliations. He further explained that elections are always defining moments in the history of nations, so major stakeholders of elections, i. e., voters should have sufficient education as to how, when and to whom the choice is made. It added that this Voters' Education should have the following objectives:

1. Sensitizing electorates generally on voting procedure, electoral processes and other civic obligations and duties.
2. Educate the electorates against election malpractices such as hooliganism, electoral violence, ballot boxes snuffing and snatching, multiple thump-printing and falsification of result.
3. Educate members of political parties and other major stakeholders on relevant electoral guidelines, rules and regulations, constitutional provisions and acts guiding electoral practices.
4. To enlighten the voters on the benefits and effects of democratic governance and its features such as periodic elections, universal adult suffrage, free and fair elections, independent electoral bodies, inalienable human rights, independent judiciary, free and vibrant press, etc.

Elections in Nigeria

Election in Nigeria relies on two major legal documents which are the 1999 Constitution as Amended and the Electoral Act 2010. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the agency that is saddled with the responsibility of the conduct of elections and other related matters such as registration and de-registration of political parties, regulating the conducts and activities of contestants and political parties and designing regulations for the electorates towards the conduct of the election proper. The INEC has been perceived as one of the challenges of electoral conduct in Nigeria due to alleged corruption, partiality, irregularities, shoddy preparations and lack of expertise and professionalism among others.

Election in Nigeria usually has the political culture and voting pattern of ethnicity, religion and regionalism which is part of the issues that are bedeviling the successful choice of good leaders in the country. Closely related to the above is the politics of winning at all cost where elections in Nigeria are marred with rigging, violence, manipulation of results

and intimidation of opposition and their supporters using the apparatus of security personnel and political thugs (Fatai, 2021). Election in Nigeria took the dimension of money politics where vote buying, godfatherism, bribery, corruption, overspending, violation of electoral rules and other irregularities affected the process and its outcome (Sule, Adamu & Sambo, 2020).

The phenomenon of money politics reached its zenith in Nigerian politics during the 2015 Presidential Election. The political elites found it expedient to manipulate religion as the easiest means of acquiring power because of their failure to deliver their responsibilities. Politics has been turned into a business venture in Nigeria for self-services and personal accumulation of wealth. The religious clerics are bought and corrupted by the politicians to sway the voters' opinion into submission to religious sentiments in politics. The political culture in Nigeria is that of the politics of violence, zero-sum game, militarism, utilization of thugs by politicians and the use of all available means to secure power at all cost including killings, political assassination, intimidation of opposition and voters. Because of the elites' nature of capturing power at all cost for personal gain, election in Nigeria is turned into a war-like affair (Vigneron, 2018). Election can thus, be held peacefully, safely and fairly if the process of the conduct is improved.

Political Participation

This is voluntary participation of electorates in politics of the country or state. As asserted by Conway (2000), political participation is a political commitment. He added that it could equally be thought of as the citizens' rights and obligations manifest in formal political settings. The concept, political participation alludes to activities undertaken by the electorate in active participation in processes leading to selection of governmental representatives or leaders. Political participation is also known as the movement that affects government activity; either directly or indirectly in constituting those involved in governance.

Nexus between Voters' Education and Credible Elections in Nigeria

Experience has shown that the true test of democracy is the ability to conduct free and fair election, and this partly premised on the competence of Election Managers charged with this responsibility. In addition, the roles of electorates in any given environment cannot be over-emphasized in view of their domineering number in the electoral process. It has been widely posited that the quest for credible election in the country today could best be achieved through the attitudinal change of the electorates. Aside the capacity of the Electoral body to deliver, voters need to have positive perception and right orientation about the inalienable roles expected of them if democracy in Nigeria is to stabilize. This task can only be best achieved through thorough and apt Voters' Education. Voters' Education promotes meaningful participation of citizens in the electoral and political processes, and in enhancing the credibility of the whole process {citizen-Voters'

Education Campaign (2005-2009). Voters' Education calls for the political culture and the political awareness of the political parties, candidates, and most importantly the electorates. The education of voters with an overhaul of electoral and political structures, processes, policies, and mechanisms tends to evolve around the primacy of party platforms and programs rather than personalities and enhances people's democratic participation in both the electoral process and in governance. In essence, it will lead to the development of a politically mature and critical electorate conversant with the processes and requirements of a full-fledged democracy.

Presidential elections in Nigeria

Presidential Election in Nigeria started during the Second Republic (1979-1984) when the country dropped the parliamentary system of government after the bloody coup in 1966. From 1979 to date, Presidential Election took place nine (9) times in the history of the country. The first two elections occurred in the Second Republic in 1979 and 1983. Another took place in 1991 during the Aborted Third Republic which was eventually annulled. In the Fourth Republic, six (6) Presidential Elections took place during 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019.

An analysis of the Presidential Election in Nigeria will reveal a pattern of voting behaviour where the electorates are voting according to ethnic, religious and regional belongings. For instance, the 1979 Presidential Election disclosed that the three major contenders; Alhaji Shehu Shagari of National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Obafemi Awolowo of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) gained their votes from their respective political regions. The same phenomenon replicated itself in the 1983 Presidential Election (Olayode, 2015). In the Fourth Republic, the Presidential Election was contested six times in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 and all the contests present ethnic and religious influence among the voters either directly or indirectly. In 2011, President Jonathan from the South contested under the platform of PDP while Muhammadu Buhari under the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The votes were shared regionally with Buhari winning in the North and Jonathan in the South. Jonathan won the contest and the same contestants resurfaced in 2015 but, this time around, Buhari won. The 2019 Presidential Election saw another dimension where the two major strong contenders; President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP emerged both from the North and both of them are from the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group and are also Muslims by religion.

The results of the Presidential Elections in the history of Nigeria are clearly pointing towards ethnic, religious and regional voting for instance, the 1979 Presidential election was between a northerner Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari and a southerner Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the same phenomenon resurfaced itself in the 1983 Presidential Election. A detailed analysis of the result disclosed that voters cast their votes based on the candidates' ethnic, religious and regional background. The same can be said of the

1999, 2003, 2011, 2015 and 2023 General Election. The only exceptions are that of the 1991, 2007 and 2019 General Elections where the winners and runners-up emerged from either the same region or the same religious group.

Table 1: Summary of the results of Presidential Elections in Nigeria (1979-2023) for the winners and runners up

Year	Party	Candidates	Scores	Party	Candidates	Scores	Winner
1979	NPN	Alhaji Shehu Shagari	5,668, 857	UPN	Obafemi Awolowo	4, 916, 651	**NPN**
1983	NPN	Alhaji Shehu Shagari	12, 081, 471	UPN	Obafemi Awolowo	7, 907, 209	**NPN**
1991	SDP	MKO Abiola	8, 341, 309	NRC	Alhaji Bashir Tofa	5, 952, 087	**SDP**
1999	PDP	Olusegun Obasanjo	18, 738, 154	AD	Olu Falae	7, 907, 209	**PDP**
2003	PDP	Olusegun Obasanjo	24, 456, 140	ANPP	Muhammadu Buhari	12, 710, 022	**PDP**
2007	PDP	Umaru Musa Yaradua	24, 638, 063	ANNP	Muhammadu Buhari	6, 605, 299	**PDP**
2011	PDP	Goodluck Jonathan	22, 495, 187	CPC	Muhammadu Buhari	12, 214, 853	**PDP**
2015	APC	Muhammadu Buhari	15, 424, 921	PDP	Goodluck Jonathan	12, 853, 162	**APC**
2019	APC	Muhammadu Buhari	15, 191, 847	PDP	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	11, 262, 978	**APC**
2023	APC	Bola Ahmed Tinibu	8,794,726	PDO	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	6,984,520	**APC**

Source: (Authors Compilation, 2023)

Issues of 2023 General Election

Unlike the 2019 election which had 73 presidential candidates, the 2023 general election will feature just 18 candidates, with four main contenders: Atiku Abubakar of the People Democratic Party (PDP), Bola Tinubu of the APC, Peter Obi of Labour Party (LP) and Rabiu Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP).Emergence of 'viable' third force parties

Until 2015, Nigeria's political landscape was dominated by one party – the People's Democratic Party. It was the only party strong enough to win presidential elections. This changed in 2015 when the All Progressives Congress, a coalition of opposition parties, defeated the sitting president, Goodluck Jonathan. This heralded an era of a two-party dominant state.

The emergence of the Labour Party and the New Nigeria People's Party seems to have changed the electoral dynamics. Obi frames his campaign on anti-establishment rhetoric and is therefore able to attract a horde of frustrated young voters. As the only Christian among the four leading candidates, Obi may also benefit electorally from Christians opposed to Muslim-Muslim ticket of the ruling APC. At least three opinion polls showed him leading the race, though some have questioned the credibility of those polls. Kwankwaso, founder of the Kwankwasiya movement, is regarded as a grassroots organiser. He is believed to be popular with ordinary people in the north but is thought to lack a strong following in the south.

The 2022, Electoral Act introduced innovations like the electronic transmission of results from the polling units and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System. These were intended to curb rigging. But some political forces are believed to be opposed to their use.

Introduction of BVAS: Section 60 (5) provides: "The presiding officer shall transfer the results including total number of accredited voters and the results of the ballot in a manner as prescribed by the Commission." It is in line with the power donated to INEC in the above section, that the commission released the Regulations and Guidelines for the conduct of Elections 2022. Clause 38 of the regulation provides: "the presiding officer shall electronically transmit or transfer the result of the polling unit, direct to the collation system as prescribed by the Commission; use the BVAS to upload a scanned copy of the EC8A to the IReV as prescribed by the Commission."

Ethnicity and regionalism: Four of the 18 presidential candidates in the election, regarded as the front runners, come from the three dominant ethnic groups in the country: Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. From the north are Atiku Abubakar, a former vice-president of the country (1999-2007) and the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party; and Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, a former governor of Kano State and the presidential candidate of the New Nigeria People's Party. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a Yoruba from the south-west, is the presidential candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress. Peter Obi, an Igbo from the south-east and former governor of Anambra State, is the presidential candidate of the Labour Party.

Challenges of 2023 General Election

The 2023 General Election in Nigeria encountered any challenges which are being countered by the previous elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic but which are peculiar and unique in the case of the 2023. These challenges required urgent attention and practical policy implications against future general elections in the country that is why they are identified here.

- **Judiciary Problems:** Ahead of the 2023 elections, there have already been several complaints against the judiciary, ranging from allegations of partisanship on the part of its agents to judicial compromise of the legal system. As many as 1,200 cases have already been filed in relation to these elections, revealing a litigious contest that may produce last-minute decisions that hamper INEC's preparations, according to the author's interviews with the commission. Saddled with the responsibility to ensure the security of the electoral process by deterring voter interference and protecting voters, security agencies are essential to the smooth running of the forthcoming elections.
- **Violence and Political Thuggery:** Elections in Nigeria are generally characterized with violence and political thuggery at all levels. The 2023 General Election is expected to be progressive in which violence and activities of thugs are anticipated to be minimized but unfortunately, the activity continued unabated.

There was a prediction of violence across the 36 states by CLEEN Foundation and United States Institute for Peace during the 2023 General Election but it was never expected to be volatile to the extent that was recorded. In some states, the election was declared inconclusive.

- **Money Politics:** Money politics in Nigeria has been a decisive factor in who wins in an election because of the political culture of an expensive election in the country. The 2023 General Election though is adjudged an improvement on that of 2019 in terms of spending, it is still far from being transparent in party financing in which right from the party primaries at all levels, money politics played an influential role in determining who secured the party nomination (Sule, Adamu & Sambo, 2020) and it has also played a decisive role in identifying who wins in the General Election.

The Successes of the 2023 General Election

- **Fair Process:** The process of the conduct of the 2023 General Election is not hitch free or without irregularities and challenges as observed above. However, despite the challenges, the INEC had succeeded in making the process fair for all the parties without displaying partisanship or favouritism for the ruling party or any other party. The parties were observed to have been treated equally as in the case of where the ruling APC was denied from fielding candidates in the Election in Rivers State, Zamfara States and other places in certain seats or elective position. In the past, precisely during the heydays of the PDP rule, such fate will never occur.
- **Access to Media:** One of the significant achievements of the 2023 General Election is the fair play process in the preparation and campaign process for both the ruling and opposition parties. Although, there were some outcries on the side-lined of the opposition from the public-owned media outlet, still the reports from domestic and international observers revealed that a fair play process is enabled which gave advantage for the parties to sale their manifestoes adequately (Sule *et al*., 2020).
- **Minimizing the Incidence of Rigging and Manipulation:** There was a good sign of progress in the process of electoral conduct where rigging and manipulation were drastically further minimized. In the 2023 General Election, the rigging was drastically curbed through the introduction of BVAS. In the 2019 General Election, the rigging was further diminished. The previous elections in 2003, 2007 and 2019 were identified as controversial and faulty for alleged rigging and manipulation. The INEC built on the success of the 2019 General Election and consolidated the use of card readers and BVAS. In the 2015 General Election, card readers were introduced but they were not made compulsory for the election conduct.

- **Increased Voter Awareness and Transparency of the INEC:** One of the successes recorded in the 2023 General Election is the increased voter awareness and transparency from the INEC. The INEC used widespread media in indulging the voters to register and it displayed the voters' registration for rectification of issues prior to the election time.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study adopts the rational choice theory and neo-liberalist theory

a. Rational Choice Theory

The study is anchored on Rational Choice Theory of Election in explaining the context of this work. The Rational Choice Theory of Election is a political economy approach towards understanding the nature and pattern of voters' choice during election in a particular democratic setting. The Theory originates from the writings of Anthony Downs in his discourse of "An Economic Theory of Democracy". Another scholar behind the postulation of this theory is Kenneth Arrow. The Rational Choice Theory of Election identifies that political behaviour and voting pattern of the electorates is a rational choice based on some indicators such as economic benefit, resources allocation, distribution of goods and services, allocation of juicy political offices and favour. Rational Choice Theory of Election is either evaluative or non-evaluative according to Downs (1957) and Arrow (1986). Evaluative is the process of measuring and evaluating the performances of regimes to determine whether they deserve voters' choice or not and, in this regard, rationality is based on performance measurement. The non-evaluative is based on clientelistic considerations such as favouritism, patronage, ethnicity, religion, regionalism and family.

b. Neo-Liberalist Theory

The study also adopts neo-liberalist theory as its theoretical framework. It holds that human nature is basically good and that innate goodness makes societal progress possible. Evil or unacceptable human behavior is the product of inadequate or corrupt social institutions and lack of understandings among leaders. Liberals believe that through collective action, the state can eliminate the possibility of conflict. Neo-liberal theory is a product of Enlightenment Optimism of the 19th century political and economic liberalism and the 20th century Wilsonian Idealism. The contribution of this theory rests on the idea that individuals are rational human beings, able to understand the universally applicable laws governing both nature and human society. Understanding such laws means that people have the capacity to improve their conditions by creating a just society. If a just society is not attained, then the fault rests with inadequate institutions, the results of a corrupt environment. Therefore, to overcome defects in the society, education is imperative as it prepares one for civil life. It is pertinent

that eligible voters be educated properly to participate in the election of their representatives in government.

Review of Empirical Literature

Aziegbemhin (2023) examined the socio-economic inequalities prevalent in Nigeria politics as a warning sign for the 2023 general elections. It argued that considering the contextual realities of poverty and illiteracy, the poor and illiterate constituents have less power to contest for political offices or to evaluate the credibility of public servants and to hold them accountable. The study relied essentially on secondary methods to source data and employed the 'Functionalist' and 'Social Contract' theories for its theoretical framework. It observed that systemic challenges heralded by inequality of all kinds have bred an atmosphere of cynicism and mistrust between citizens and political leaders at all levels of government. Political elites in Nigeria exploit poverty and illiteracy to mobilize voters with food items and money based on the assumption that people are more likely to vote for a politician who influences them with money/food (stomach infrastructure) than one who only brings messages of hope. It found that the dearth of political will to resolve the imbalance between leaders and the citizens has been purposeful and to perpetually impoverished the masses as Nigeria lacks a system of governance in which leadership is based on capability.

In their contribution, Oshodi and Oshodi (2022) analyses the election observation work of Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) in Nigeria. Exploring the stakeholders' ecosystem approach, they primarily did a comparative analysis of Nigeria's 2015 and 2019 general elections. They argue that there were similarities in the COG reports on both elections. However, they note areas of improvements in the report of the organization on the 2019 elections. Going by the comparison of both the 2015 and 2019 reports, the authors conclude that the COG did not pay sufficient attention to commit stakeholders on working with the recommendations they offer on improving the integrity of the process

Yusuf (2021) examine Voters' Education: A Tool for Credible Election in Nigeria. The study found that voters do not know their rights, not properly guided in terms of voting and such voters are not protected. However, the 2019 general election was characterized by vote rigging, buying, violence, theft of ballot boxes, logistics etc. Therefore, this paper discussed the importance of voters' education in credible elections and its challenges. The study concluded by stating the need for viable or credible electoral system, establishment of Electoral Crime Commission charge with the responsibility of punishing electoral offenders for vote buying.

Onuoha, Okafor, Ojewale and Okoro (2020) contribution focuses on the 'militarization' of the 2019 elections, suggesting the heavy deployment of security personnel during elections and its challenge to free and fair elections. He argue that militarization of elections is connected to the post-colonial character of politics that places excessive premium on state power. They conclude that the deployment of the security forces,

particularly, the military in polling centres heightened voter apathy, human rights violations, and also strained civil– military relations in the country. He advocates a security sector reform that prioritizes the use of police in election duties.

Methodology

The main instrument used in data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured into two sections (A and B). Section A, exhausted all information on the socioeconomic profiles of the respondent while section B was structured to answer the various core research issues. For the purpose of this study, the section B part of the questionnaire is structured in closed-ended format with five-point likert scale, that is; Strongly Agree (SA)-5,Agree (A)-4,Undecided (U)-3,Disagree (D)-2 and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1. Direct interview was also used by the researcher with the top officials of the enterprises to obtain some technical information necessary for this study.

Data collected were analyzed through the use of tables, bars and simple percentages to enable the researcher draw reasonable conclusions from it. The formulated hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis (MRA) regression at 5% significance level with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0).

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no significant effect of ethnicity on the 2023 general election in Nigeria

H_1: There is a significant effect of ethnicity on the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Table 1: Frequency Distribution on the effect of ethnicity on 2023 general in Nigeria

Effect of ethnicity on 2023 general in Nigeria	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	%	R
Did you voted based on tribe of the candidate(aspirant)	140 37%	118 31%	26 7%	63 17%	28 8%	3.74	19.33	**5th**
The 2023 elections is influenced by ethnicity	145 39%	125 33%	49 13%	42 11%	14 4%	3.91	20.23	**3rd**
Ethnicity triggered the 2023 general election	128 34%	140 37%	32 9%	68 18%	7 2%	3.84	19.84	**4th**
Ethnicity played a major role in the 2023 election	151 42%	131 35%	30 8%	43 11%	20 5%	3.93	20.31	**1st**
Ethnicity affects education, employment and election	**149** **42%**	**130** **35%**	**36** **8%**	**40** **11%**	**20** **5%**	**3.92**	**20.26**	**2nd**

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Note: SA = Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; SD=Strongly Disagreed; D=Disagreed; U=Undecided;

$\bar{X}$=Mean and R=Rank

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The remarks as shown in Table 1 indicated that the overall decision of the respondents on each of the question items (row) in the table. Ethnicity really triggered the 2023 general election Auchi community to some extent. It was also found that the presidential and national assembly election was about religion and ethnicity. Also, ethnicity played a major role in the 2023 general election in Nigeria and voters voted based on tribes of the candidates. Finally, on the average respondents agreed that ethnicity plays a key role in areas like education, employment, election etc.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.745[a]	.5557	.5565	.453	-.896	1577.487	.000

From the model summary, it was observed that there is a moderate high association between ethnicity and 2023 general election in Nigeria such that there is 74.5% possibility that ethnicity has a high effect on 2023 general election in Nigeria.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	323.589	1	323.589	25.725	.000[b]
	Residual	37.744	3	12.581		
	Total	361.333	4			

a. Dependent Variable: 2023 General election

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity

Using the ANOVA output above to test for the stated hypothesis

Decision Rule: Reject **H_0,** if P-value is less than 0.05.

From the result of the analysis above, the P-value (0.0000) is smaller than level of significant (0.05). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) and conclude that, ethnicity has a significant impact on the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.176	.064		2.768	.006
	Ethnicity	1.059	.027	.946	39.718	.000

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The regression analysis model explains relationship between ethnicity and 2023 general election in Nigeria. Therefore, a unit changes in ethnicity will lead to 1.059 increases in credible election in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

Ho: There is no significant effect of religion on 2023 general election in Nigeria

H_1: There is a significant effect of religion on 2023 general election in Nigeria

Table 2: Frequency Distribution on the effect of religion on 2023 general in Nigeria

Effect of religion on 2023 general in Nigeria	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	%	R
Does religion play a significant role in 2023 general Election	178 47%	112 30%	20 5%	51 14%	14 4%	4.04	20.47	**1st**
Do you think religion should be a factor in the just concluded election in Nigeria	168 45%	122 32%	21 6%	48 13%	16 4%	4.01	20.31	**2nd**
Do you considered religion of the candidate before voting	144 38%	126 34%	30 8%	61 16%	14 4%	3.87	19.60	**5th**
Do you agree that election in Nigeria is influenced by religion	140 37%	130 35%	41 11%	48 13%	16 4%	3.88	19.66	**4th**
Do you agree that religious factors also play a role in voters behaviour,	**140** **47%**	**150** **30%**	**20** **5%**	**51** **14%**	**14** **4%**	**3.94**	**19.96**	**3rd**

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Note: SA = Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; SD=Strongly Disagreed; D=Disagreed; U=Undecided;

$\bar{X}$ =Mean and R=Rank

The results of Table 4.7 revealed that, of the sampled respondent indicated that religion play a significant role in the conduct of 2023 general election. 20.31% of the respondents show that religion was a determinant factor in the conduct of the election in Nigeria. In fact, 19.66% of the respondents agree that election in Nigeria is influenced by religion.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.891[a]	.896	.794	.453	-.896	1577.487	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religion

From the model summary, it was observed that there is a high degree of association between religion and 2023 general election in Nigeria such that there is 89.1% possibility

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that voter's religion have a high positive impact on the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Based on this association, there is a high degree of correlation between religion and 2023 general election and was able to explain 89.1% of the total changes that occur.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	323.589	1	323.589	1577.487	.000[b]
	Residual	37.744	3	12.58		
	Total	361.333	4			

a. Dependent Variable: religion

b. Predictors: (Constant), 2023 general election in Nigeria

Using the ANOVA output above to test for the stated hypothesis

Decision Rule: Reject **H_0,** if P-value is less than 0.05.

From the result of the analysis above, the P-value (0.00001) is smaller than level of significant (0.05). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) and conclude that, there is a significant effect of religion on 2023 general election in Nigeria.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.016	.094		3.778	.006
	Religion	2.039	.077	.813	19.218	.000

The regression analysis model explains relationship between religion and 2023 general election in Nigeria. Therefore, a unit changes in religion will lead to 2.039 increases in credible election in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

Ho: Voting pattern has no significant impact on the 2023 general election in Nigeria

H_1: Voting pattern has a significant impact on the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Table 3: Frequency Distribution on voting pattern on 2023 general in Nigeria?

Voting pattern on 2023 general in Nigeria	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	%	R
Voting choice of electronic transmission	160 43%	120 32%	22 6%	54 14%	19 5%	3.93	20.0	**3rd**

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Voters' turnout determine the voting pattern of the electorates	170 45%	115 31%	23 6%	49 13%	18 5%	3.99	20.3	**1st**
voting was based on geo-political zones	145 39%	125 33%	40 11%	44 12%	21 5%	3.88	19.7	**4th**
voter turnout amid reports of violence and voter suppression.	148 40%	120 32%	31 8%	68 18%	8 2%	3.89	19.8	**5th**
Electorate participation in the 2023 general election influence by their exposure	**160 45%**	**126 31%**	**20 6%**	**52 13%**	**17 5%**	**3.96**	**20.2**	**2nd**

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Note: SA = Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; SD=Strongly Disagreed; D=Disagreed; U=Undecided;

$\overline{X}$=Mean and R=Rank

The respondents had are of the opinion that 20.0% acknowledge that coting choice of electronic transmission was adopted in the 2023 general election in Nigeria, 20.3% where of the opinion that voters turnout determine the voting patterns of the electorate. Similarly, 19.8% with an average of 3.89 were of the opinion that voter's turnout amid reports of violence and voters and suppression. The study reveals that there is persistence of violence ahead of, during and suppression of people's right to vote.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.781[a]	.896	.794	1.453	-.896	1577.487	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Voting pattern

From the model summary, it was observed that there is a high degree of association between voter's pattern and 2023 general election in Nigeria such that there is 89% possibility that voting pattern have a high positive impact on the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Based on this association, there is a high degree of correlation between voting pattern and 2023 general election and was able to explain 89% of the total changes that occur.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.176	.064		2.861	.000
	Voting pattern	1.032	.027	.746	12.748	.000

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a. Dependent Variable: 2023 general election

The regression analysis model explains relationship between voting pattern and 2023 general election. Using the regression model from the coefficient table above, it was observed that, there is a direct relationship between voting pattern and the outcome of the 2023 general election such that a unit changes in the pattern of voting will lead to 1.032 increases in the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the study was to examine voters education and credible election in Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of the study, three research questions were posed and three hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. Literature related to the study was reviewed. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The instrument used for data collection was the researcher designed questionnaire. Data was collected from 375 respondents. The hypotheses were verified using simple regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings that emanated from the study were summarized below.

(i) There is a significant effect of ethnicity on the 2023 general election in Nigeria
(ii) Religion was a determinant factor of the 2023 general election in Nigeria
(iii) Voting pattern has a significant impact on the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Conclusion

It is concluded that religion and ethnicity significantly influence the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Finally, for Nigeria to develop politically and in all spheres, the stranglehold and grip of ethnicity in the lives of the Nigeria masses must be changes. Unity in diversity must be promoted and proper education must be the order of the day and the pursuit of the government. Religion, as in times past, will shape the build-up to, and outcome of the 2023 presidential elections. The risk of states and geopolitical zones voting along sectarian lines is high. This may, however, lead to heightened religious sensitivities that may escalate existing tensions and fragilities. But these can be averted if the winning candidate offers guarantees and accommodates the religious fears of other faiths

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The media should support the formation of an inclusive government, cutting across tribes and religion in the country to reduce the negative impact of ethnicity and religion in the country.
2. Nigeria should discard the belief and notion of three (3) main ethnic groups officially recognized (Hausa, Igbo & Yoruba) in order to give the numerous ethnic groups identity

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3. The curriculum content of voter education should be elaborate enough to cover contending issues like ethno religious factor and its divisive effects in elections and the country, voters should be taught the essence of issue based campaign
4. There should be regular preparation and motivation for the attainment of credible election.
5. And finally, subjects (Social Studies, Political Science, etc.) which contents have link with aspect of leadership, democracy, election, voting, etc. should be taught effectively in all levels of education. This tends to make an individual acquire knowledge on procedures of election during their studies

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