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Abstract

Credible election is believed to be condiment for democratic governance and democratic development and over the years, elections have become a capital intensive venture in Nigeria's democratic experience. What is even more worrisome, is the geometric progression of expending tax payer’s money in Nigeria's general elections and most often, the elections are deficient and suffered credibility deficits. For instance, a sum of 242.245 billion naira was approved for the conduct of the 2019 general elections and it is still a subject of debate on whether improved spending will guarantee credible election. This study examines the cost of the 2019 general elections vis-à-vis its credibility. The study used incremental theory as a framework for the study. Similarly, the methodology employed was wholly the use of secondary sources in which literature were interrogated to establish weather cost of conducting elections guarantee credible elections in Nigeria. The study found that whilst government is spent huge amount of money to conduct elections in Nigeria, a lot still needs to be done by the electoral umpire to enhance the credibility of future elections in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study recommends among others, the need for proper training of INEC’s adhoc staffs that will be engage for future elections, the need to improve logistics to ease operational challenges in the future elections and the need for improved synergy between the INEC and other critical stake holders such as security agencies, political parties and observers to ensure that process is free fair and credible.

Keywords: Election, Credible, Cost, INEC and Parties

Introduction

General elections in Nigeria have become a capital intensive venture in Nigeria especially in recent times. This has become worrisome in view of the fact that huge amount of money is always expended in the name of conducting elections by the federal government and yet the election process in Nigeria is still far from perfection largely because of the actors and factors involved in the electioneering process and combination of which ultimately inhibit a smooth and a credible elections. Since return to Nigeria’s democratic governance in 1999, general elections have been conducted at least six times, specifically the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and the 2019. Similarly, hundreds of reruns and isolated elections were equally conducted. In all these elections, hundreds of billions of naira was spent and yet most of these elections suffered from acute credibility deficit.

For example, Momah (2016) argued that the 2007 elections fell short of national, regional and international standards for democratic elections. They were marred by very poor...
organization, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularity and substantial evidence of fraud. After the 2007 general elections for instance, a principal beneficiary of the presidential election, late President Umar Musa Yar’adua admittedly confessed that the election that brought him into office was flawed and that steps would be taken to improve the electioneering process in the future (Momah 2016). Although there are noticeable improvement in the management of the electioneering process in Nigeria especially with the introduction and the deployment of technology such as the card reader and other innovative mechanism for enhancing the credibility of elections in the build up to 2015 and the recently concluded 2019 elections, the trajectory of skyrocketed and exponential increment in the budgetary allocation for the conduct of general elections has become more worrisome recently.

In the 2019 general elections for instance, a whopping 189.2 billion naira was expended for the elections and the funds were said to cover for the election operation cost 134.4 Billion, 127.5 Billion on election technological cost, 22.6 election administrative cost and 4.6 billion for contingency. This huge amount of money has been appropriated and expended and yet, problems that characterised the process and the barrage of criticisms that trailed the postponement of the polls by the electoral umpire on account of poor logistics is indeed a pointer to the fact that there is need to interrogate whether huge budgetary allocation would ensure improved logistics and enhance the credibility of elections in Nigeria.

**Election**

Election has been variously conceptualised to mean different thing to different people. It is a process of choosing a new leader or a representative through democratic process where all eligible people cast a ballot to choose a leader or decide on an issue. The majority rule and the new leader is the one who has the most votes. It is also seen as a formal process by which voters make their political choices on public issue or candidates for public office. Historically, the use of election in the modern era dates back to the emergence of representative government in Europe and North America since the 17th century. It is through election that leaders are held accountable for their performance and permit an exchange of influence between the governors and the governed as the availability of alternatives is necessary condition to the success of a democracy (Samuel, 2010).

The relevance of an election in a democratic setting cannot be overemphasized. An electoral process, depending on how free, fair and credible it is, would either make or mar a democratic system. Constitutionally, Nigeria as a country and as a democratic nation “shall be based on the principles of Periodic election as one of the tenet of liberal democracy has be described as one of the many options of choosing leadership and deposing old governments in a political system. As a core institution of representative democracy, elections are supposedly the only means to decide who holds legislative or executive power. (Lindberg, 2007:6).

Furthermore, elections in Nigeria dates back to colonial period and have been a means through which political leaders are elected at regular interval as stipulated in the nation’s constitution. As an important component of democracy, elections have largely taken place a number time, especially with the return to democratic rule in 1999, after a long period of military regime. In 1999, election was clearly contested for various elective offices. For the presidential election, two major political parties presented their candidate and contested for the office of the president. All Peoples’ Party and Peoples’ Democratic Party presented Chief Olu Falae and Olusegun Obasanjo respectively.
and Olusegun Obasanjo emerged as a winner. Similarly, in 2003 the two major contenders were Muhammadu Buhari of All Peoples’ Party and Olusegun Obasanjo of Peoples’ Democratic Party in which the later again emerged the winner as declared by INEC. In 2007 still Peoples’ Democratic Party maintained the grip of political power at the centre in which the three dominant political parties presented Muhammad Buhari under the platform of All Nigerians People’s Party, Atiku Abubakar of Action Congress of Nigeria and the late Umaru Musa Yar’aduwa of Peoples’ Democratic Party.

In 2011 therefore, Action Congress of Nigeria, All Nigerians People’s Party, Congress for Progressive Change and Peoples’ Democratic Party presented Malam Nuhu Ribadu, Malam Ibrahim Shekaru, Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan respectively as the dominant political parties in which Goodluck Jonathan emerged as the winner. Similarly, in the 2015 general elections, the contest was among over sixty political parties with the major ones fielding the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP, and General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC as the winner and in 2019, the PDP fielded Alh. Atiku Abubakar and the APC’s Muhammadu Buhari as the winner.

Credible Election
The indispensability of credible election to democratic consolidation cannot be overemphasised. This is because a flourishing democratic practice is always predicated on the periodic and credible election. Adekunle and Florence (2016) observed that, election is universally regarded as the heart of representative democracy and that credible elections not only confers legitimacy on political leadership, it is also crucial to the sustenance of democratic order. Credible election however provide citizens with freedom to choose their leaders and to actively participate in policy formulation and implementation.

Open Election Data Initiative (OEDI 2018) observed that credible elections should be characterised by inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and competitiveness. These are basic ingredient that a credible election should have and election mismanagement would always have ripple effect on the delivery of good governance. It has become evident that lack of credible elections has plunged many countries into avoidable conflicts, absence of law and order, forcing states into paralysis, incapacitation, and hence unable to discharge basic functions such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo 2011, Kenya 2007 Zimbabwe 2008, Nigeria in 2007 and 2011 and so many other African countries such as Cote’d Ivoire, Guinea etc. in fact, credible elections has become a challenge to most African countries and all African countries should be encouraged to observe democratic ethos and the principle of transparency, accountability, inclusiveness in conducting elections.

Methodology
This study is a library based research and therefore, data for the study was gathered from Secondary sources and personal observation of the researchers. The researcher participated in both 2015 and 2019 general elections as Collation Officer and therefore his experience and observations in the field is considered as vital to the study. The secondary source included the use of existing literature derived from relevant materials like theses written on the subject matter, text books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, relevant government publications, internet materials related to the subject of study as well as other relevant unpublished materials. These materials were interrogated and analyse qualitatively. Similarly, content analysis of document sourced was carried out where information generated was
presented in tabular form and interpreted using statistical tools of simple percentages.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study employed Incremental theory as a framework for the study. Incremental theory or science of muddling through was propounded by Charles E. Lindblom in 1959; other proponents of the theory include Martin Landau (1962) Robert Dahl (1967) and David Braybrook (1968). Lindblom (1959) wanted to provide an alternative to the scientific school, the rational comprehensive theory which is rooted in scientific thinking, thoroughness, rationality or power of proper reasoning, objectivity and empirical claim of proof of claims in dealing with societal problems.

Incremental theory is one of the empirically based theories of decision making and started from a recognition that human problems are extraordinarily complex, while our analytic capacities and resources are quite limited among other obstacles we lack sufficient knowledge of cause-and-action effect to understand complex social problems, and there is not enough time and recourses even to conduct most of the partial studies that are feasible (Lindblom, 1959).

Braybrook and Lindblom (1963) claimed that people do not know all their goals or the tradeoffs they are willing to make among them. They further argued that, humans disagree about almost everything, and have no satisfactory analytic method for resolving disparate perceptions and priorities into collective choices. Due to the constraints in time needed for rational decision, Lindblom proposes what he calls “disjointed incrementalism” or “the science of muddling through”. In line with this philosophy Lindblom proposes five distinct characteristics of policy decision making, which the analyst has to recognise (Dlakwa, 2008:141).

Stillman (1980) further explained that, it is incremental in the sense that only small steps are taken at a time in order to achieve objectives and not broad “leaps and bound”. Second, it is non-comprehensive because of the limitation imposed on policy makers by lack of resources to go into sufficient details of problems before taking remedial measures. Third, policy decision involves “successive comparison because policy is never made once and for all but made and remade endlessly by small chains of comparison between narrow choices.” Fourth, in practice decision making “suffices rather than maximizes from among the available options.” The fifth characteristic of the incremental theory is plurality in choice. This is based on the fact that government decision making rest on a ‘pluralist’ conception of the public sector in which many contending interest groups compete for influence over policy issues, continually forcing the administrator, as a person in the middle, to secure agreement from among the competing parties” (Stillman, 1980:201, cited in Dlakwa, 2008). Based on the outlined characteristics of the incremental theory, the following assumptions are discernible. That Public policy and programme is a continuation of previous policy with minimum changes; that existing programmes, policies expenditures are considered as a base, and that Policy maker accepts the legitimacy of previous policies and programmes because of uncertainty about the consequences of new policies.

**Relevance of the Theory**

In spite of the weaknesses of the incremental theory on account that it lacked methodological ground and moving in disjointed pattern because of its subscription in riding with the tide as observed by Dlakwa, 2004, the theory explain the variable under study in view of the fact that the budgetary expenditure for elections in Nigeria has been consistently increasing to cope with the
prevailing economic realities. Secondly, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been using the preceding election to serve as the basis for improving and conducting subsequent election in terms of manpower, logistics and the general conduct of the elections.

Figure 1.1: Showing Linkage of the Incremental Theory and its Applicability

Source: Developed by the Authors 2019.

The cost of Conducting Elections and the Credibility of Elections in Nigeria with Focus on the 2019 General Elections

The 2019 general elections will certainly go down in the history of Nigeria as one of the fiercely contested. Babayo (2019) argue that 2019 general elections is the most keenly and closely contested in the history of Nigerian presidential elections since the colonial and post-independence period. This has become evident in view of the fact that the election was characterized by tension, intense campaigns, media war, and the palpable desperation of the frontline contestants is arguably the top spender of taxpayer’s money on election management.

A cursory look at the 2019 election expenditure revealed that Nigeria has spent far more than so many countries with bigger economy. For example, Nuruddeen (2018) observed that the cost of conducting general elections in Nigeria is higher than that of countries with bigger economies such as India, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. Nuruddeen went further to argue that Canada spent 375 Million Dollars on election expenditure where 17.5 Million people voted, Kenya with 14.3 Million registered voters spent 427 Million Dollars during its 2012 general elections and India spent 600 Million Dollars where 553.8 Million people voted in the 2014 general election. There is no doubt that the 2019 general elections will go down in the history of Nigeria as one of the most expensive election the country organized.
### Table 1: Budgetary Allocation for General elections in Nigeria 1999-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budgetary Allocation</th>
<th>Increase from the Previous</th>
<th>Percentage Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>32,000,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>60,500,000,000</td>
<td>28,200,000,000</td>
<td>88.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>74,200,000,000</td>
<td>13,700,000,000</td>
<td>22.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>89,200,000,000</td>
<td>15,000,000,000</td>
<td>20.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>120,000,000,000</td>
<td>30,800,000,000</td>
<td>34.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>189,000,000,000</td>
<td>69,000,000,000</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>564,900,000,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>156,700,000,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Culled from Daily Trust 2018

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**Figure 1.2: Graphical presentation of the cost**

![Graphical representation of the cost](image)

**Source:** Developed by the Authors

Table 1.1 and Figure 1.2 above present the budgetary expenditure of INEC from 1999 to 2019. The table shows that INEC has conducted six general elections within the period and whooping sum Five Hundred and Sixty Four Billion, Nine Hundred Million Naira (564,900,000,000) was expended in conducting the six general elections and yet, Nigeria is still battling to perfect the process. Although there are improvement in the conduct of general elections especially with the introduction of Permanent Voters Card and the electronic Card Readers, there are room for improvement. The table indicated that in 1999, the electoral body under the leadership of Ephraim Akpata spent 32 Billion naira to conduct the 1999 general elections.

In 2003, the electoral body under Chief Abel Goubadia spent 60.5 Billion Naira to organise the 2003 general elections. In spite of the spending, the conduct of the 2003 elections was characterised by irregularities and the report of both foreign and local observers indicated that the election was neither transparent nor credible. For instance, the report of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) observed that INEC contributed its own fair share of the electoral problems in the 2003 elections. The report indicated that lack of clearly designed compartments for thumb...
printing and poor transportation arrangements of the sensitive materials to the polling units. In the same vein, Momah (2003) argued that INEC was part and parcel of the enormous fraud that characterised the 2003 elections by not been proactive and the apparent lack of adequate preparedness to conduct the elections.

In 2007, INEC under Prof. Maurice Iwu spent 74.2 billion naira to conduct the general elections but, 2007 elections was highly characterised by widespread rigging and allegations of falsification of results. Momah (2016) observed that the 2007 elections fell short of national, regional and international standards for democratic elections. They were marred by very poor organization, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularity and substantial evidence of fraud.

The contest for the 2011 presidential elections was between the then incumbent President Dr Good luck Jonathan and Gen. Muhammadu Buhari. In 2011, INEC under Prof. Attahiru Jega spent 89.2 billion Naira to conduct the 2011 general elections and just like the previous elections, the 2011 election was characterised by irregularities poor organisation leading to postponement and rescheduled of the Presidential and National Assembly elections. Similarly, in 2015, under the leadership of Prof. Jega, INEC spent 120 billion to conduct the 2015 general elections and in 2019, INEC under Prof. Mahmoud Yakubu has spent 189 billion to conduct the 2019 general elections.

Challenges of the 2019 General Elections

Logistics Problems

Logistics is one of the critical component of electioneering process. Efficient and effective logistics is always needed to ensure credible election exercise. Movement of election materials and personnel is the fulcrum for a credible process. During the 2019 general elections, there were observable lapses on the part of INEC on how movement of election materials was carried out. In fact, the presidential and national assembly elections that was earlier slated for 16th February, 2019 had to be postponed to 23rd February, 2019 at the eleventh hour owing to the poor handling of the logistics on the distribution of both sensitive and non-sensitive election materials. Election materials were not distributed on time and the election materials of some states were conspicuously missing, only to be found in another state.

Inadequate Manpower and lack of Proper Training

Manpower training is another factor that would guarantee a credible electoral process. In 2019 general elections, a total of 134.4 Billion was expended as election operational cost including training of the adhoc staff engaged for the election exercise at various levels. The training was carried out within two to three days. Some of the personnel engaged, the Supervisory Presiding Officers (SPO’s) were trained to train the Presiding Officers (PO’s) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APO’s) and even the SPO’s were not sufficiently trained and therefore, they could not effectively train the PO’s and the APO’s on how to carry out their designated responsibilities. This has led to poor management of the conduct of the elections at various levels and different parts of the country. This has further undermined the determination of the electoral umpire to organised a credible elections and the apparent displeasure expressed by election observers. Inadequate and poorly trained personnel has impacted negatively on the 2019 general elections and eroded and eclipsed the confidence and trust of the electorate, domestic and foreign observers on the ability of INEC to conduct a credible electoral exercise that would meet the international standard.
Electoral Violence and the militarization of the process

Electoral violence has remain a challenge to credible electoral process in Nigeria. This is because, electoral violence have over the years become one of the defining characteristics of the Nigeria’s electoral process. Abubakar et al (2018) observed that electoral violence is the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force related to elections processes. It is characterized by intimidation, harassment, assassination, blackmail, kidnappings, killings and destruction of valuable properties. Electoral violence has become impediment to credible elections in Nigeria because it has continued to eclipse the efforts of the electoral umpire in organizing a credible election. The use of political violence during elections has become alarming and worrisome for instance, the Human Right Watch in its 2007 report observed that the 2007 election in Nigeria was marred by violence and fraud. Similarly, the 2007 report observed and federal elections have fallen short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections. They were marred by poor organization, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, significant evidence of fraud, particularly during result collation process, voter disenfranchisement at different stages of the process, lack of equal conditions for contestants and numerous incidents of violence.

The subsequent elections were conducted in 2011, 2015 and the 2019 general elections. In these elections, there are improvement from the previous elections and though they equally suffered from credibility deficit especially the 2011 general election, the 2015 general election and the 2019 general elections were conducted with improved organization and logistics.

One of the major drawbacks of the 2019 general elections was the use of military in some states like Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Kwara, Ogun and a couple of other states to supervise the elections and in the process, voters were scared away and there are allegations that the military were brought in to help rig the elections. Though the military can be called upon to intervene in internal security problem, the way and manner the military were brought-in and the prevailing condition that does not warrant the military’s involvement raise a lot of unanswered questions.

Conclusion

Credible election is a necessary ingredient for democratic governance and democratic practice and the credibility of general elections is largely hinged on a number of factors such as the preparedness of the electoral body in terms of its ability to engage, effectively train and deploy election personnel without manipulations, the neutrality of the electoral umpire, the commitment of the critical stakeholders such as the political parties, the security agencies especially the police, the electorate, foreign and domestic observers and non-interference from government by given the INEC the free hand to independently conduct the elections. This has become necessary in view of the fact that the trajectory of elections experience in Nigeria is such that has been characterized by credibility deficits. Although there are improvement on how the election management body organized elections recently, there is still room for improvement considering the huge amount of money being invested for conducting general elections in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The study therefore has the following as recommendations:

1. Substantial efforts should be directed at the training of the Ad-hoc staff that would be engaged for the election exercise. This has become necessary due the fact that the training given to the ad-hoc staffs for the
2019 general elections was grossly inadequate in view of the enormity of the work involved.

2. There should be improved and timely delivery of sensitive and non-sensitive election materials to states, Local Governments and to their respective polling units.

3. Capacity of the police should be improved to effectively carry out their statutory responsibility of providing security before, during and after elections. Similarly, soldiers should keep away from election duty unless where necessary in order not to scare away prospective voters.

4. Efforts should be made to ensure funds budgeted for future elections are transparently and judiciously utilized for elections purpose through close monitoring within the electoral umpire.

5. The anti-graft agencies, the EFCC and the ICPC should beam their search light on the activities of the electoral umpire to forestall any act of corruption and ensure proper appropriation of the funds set aside for the elections.

References


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