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An Assessment of the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria: A Study of Kwara State

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Abstract

The paper examines the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria: a study of Kwara state. This paper is a case study research work. To this end, the Kwara State election is a study and an analysis of its impact on the concluded presidential election in Nigeria. The unchangeable conventional political analysis has repeated itself in Nigerian politics; as the north central zone has been one of the determinants of winning the presidential election since the inception of the fourth republic, the tradition remains unchanged. Kwara State, as one of the states in north central, cannot be ignored from this historical legacy. This research aims to analyze the presidential election in Kwara State with in-depth analysis from an electoral behaviour perspective. The theory employed in this work is a voting theory that is more beneficial to this paperwork. The research methodology comprises primary data from key informant interviews of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials, party agents, and electorates; the secondary data include texts, journals, television media, and newspapers. The findings revealed the APC candidate as the winner of the presidential election. Likewise, the research identified the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) flaws and its causes. One of the prime recommendations is the need to improve the technology rate of Nigeria's electronic voting system in terms of service and technical know-how.

Key Words

Presidential Election, Election, Independent National Electoral Commission, Kwara, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The election is an important process in the democratization consolidation of any given state in the world. It is a process toward ensuring peaceful development transition government in a state. It is a vital unit of the country's democracy. Election ensures sustainable democratic government (Bamigbose, 2023). Democratic stability on a global scale is significant to the development of human resources and crucial features of political life in all liberal societies and particularly so far emerging democracies in Africa, through the electioneering process (George, Agada, & Katampe, 2017). The election institutional mechanism stands out in Africa as a legitimate of choosing acceptable leaders, even among the aristocratic class or oligarchic. The electioneering process ensures democratic stability, and most of the time, the development agenda reflects the bad leadership character and ideology to the extent that the electoral mandate remains unfulfilled (Ogundare, 2021). In Nigeria, the state in the fourth republic election is essential for ensuring a good transition government but not necessarily turning to a responsive and representative

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government. The ethics of politics in Nigeria's context is in a dilemmas situation as the citizens are facing the challenges of human security and national security. Politics as an investment is a product of bad leadership and poor governance, as vote buying syndrome is a normal political philosophy in Nigeria's polity. The invention of the new system of democratic practice in Nigeria's electoral system by the INEC chairman Professor Mahmood Yakubu through the electronic mechanism Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) was to ensure free and fair elections and avoidance of vote buying. However, this is not sure whether the purpose has been achieved. This paper is focused on Kwara State presidential election and the impact analysis as a case in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election.

It is not sufficient to use a component unit out of 36 component units to explain the political scenario of the 2023 presidential election results in Nigeria. But, in comparative terms, in a case study, empirical research of impact analysis can be deducted and used to explain a whole process of the political phenomenon with facts and objectives as Kwara state is used as a case study to explain the impact analysis of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The research aims to investigate the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria: A study of Kwara State.

2. Analytical Framework

2.1. Presidential Election

The concept of a presidential election varies from one country to another in terms of roles and functions. It is the process whereby people choose a candidate as a president or chief executive to hold an official position (Collins, n.d). The United States of America's presidential election takes place every four years, at intervals of Tuesday after the first Monday of November during the year of the election (John, 2018). The contestant for president must be at least 35 years old, born in the United States and have stayed in the United States for 14 years before he or she can be eligible (Polyas Election Glossy, 2023). The candidate must have declared intention a year before the election. In the United States, there is no national authority that conducts elections; the local authority organizes the election with the help of administrators (John, 2018; & Polyas Election Glossy, 2023). The President of Israel is elected by Knesset to a single seven years term with ceremonial function, while the prime minister performs the administrative function. In Tanzania and Kyrgyzstan, the president is elected for seven years and six years, respectively, with general voting (Solovyou, 2011). However, the United States election at the state level determines the representative that will form 'Electoral College' and the Electoral College from each state elects the president; the electors comprise 538, of which 435 house of representative with 100 senates seats, and three from Washington. The first president to be elected by the Electoral College in the United States of America was President George Washington in 1788-1789.

Nigeria State operates a presidential system like the United States of America, but the general populace across the 36 states with the federal territory determine the presidential election; in which Kwara State as a component unit is one of a factor that contributes to the electioneering process of Nigeria's presidential election.

2.2. Election

The election has become the most acceptable method by which the citizens of a state choose their rulers in a political system (Mohammed & Ibrahim, 2021). Mohammed and Ibrahim (2021) further argue that election also provides the basic platform with the opportunity for people to indicate their preferences among the policies and programs presented by different political manifestos and ideologies in a candidate that will represent them in government. The election is an act of checks on the government to provide a responsible and responsive government since the elected are aware that they may not be for another term unless they fulfilled their promise

to the satisfaction of the electorates who give their mandate (Nwachukwu et al. cited in Ogundare, 2015). Progressive elections, in a real sense, provide an alternative to different options presented to the people to select a candidate they think is in line with their aspirations and interest (Ali, Gambo & Hayatu, 2017). Okeke (2008) asserted the fear of being rejected by the electorates in another term since the election is a continuing process made the candidate comply with the will of the electorates. This paperwork emphasizes election as an instrument for a smooth transition of democratic government in the business of politics to the hand of the Aristocratic or oligarchic class in the state.

2.3. Independent National Electoral Commission

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the electoral body that conducts elections in Nigeria. It was established through military fiat by General Abdulsalam Abubakar (Odeyemi, Igwebueze, Abati & Oyindotun, 2022). The first chairman of INEC was Justice Ephraim Akpata, who narrowed political parties from 26 to 3 political parties that finally registered for the 1999 election (PDP, AD, and APP political parties). The death of Akpata in January 2000 led to the appointment of Abel Guobadia by Obasanjo as Nigeria's Chief Electoral officer and the approval of the senate; Guobadia conducted the 2003 election, which was referred to as gross misconduct by international observers. Guobadia resigned in June 2005 and was succeeded by Professor Maurice Iwu, who conducted the 2007 "do or die" election; this chairman rejected the international monitoring team but allowed for international observers; with a series of criticism Iwu left the chairmanship position in 2010, 28 April 2010 Attahiru Jega was appointed by Jonathan with the approval of National Executive Council (The council of ex-president and former head of state) with the senate president and house of representative leader, senator David Mark and Dimeje Bakole. It was recorded that the 2011 and 2015 elections were not free and fair. Jega resigned in June 2015 and was replaced by Amina Bale Zakari as acting chairman; after a short while, President Mahammadu Buhari appointed Mohamood Yakubu, who is the current INEC chairman (Jude, 2009; Election Today, 2008; Carter Center 1999; Soni, 2010, & Vanguard, 2015). Since the inception of the fourth republic, there has been no complete free and fair election in Nigeria.

2.4. Theoretical Framework: Voting Theory

The theory employed in this work is voting theory with the specification of the Altruism theory of voting. The scholars in this school of thought are Jankowski (2007), Evren (2012), Byrne (2021), Adams (2007), and a host of others. Altruism theory is a model emphasizing voter behaviour in a democracy that explains citizen preferences for the general welfare of others. That is, citizens' voting behavior is rational toward the utilitarianism of the majority at the expense of the individual or minority interest. The voting strength will be determined or measured by cumulative benefits that the people will receive from the candidate voted. There are some basic assumptions of altruism economic voting such as decisions based on the incumbent's performance, political ideology, and party manifesto, policies that benefit the citizens or economy, party affiliation, and voting for the candidate that has a future economic plan for the society. When voters do not vote according to economic reasons is then irrationally explained by altruism (Byrne, 2021).

The relevance of this Altruism theory to the research work on the 2023 presidential election in Kwara State is that the voters' behaviour is basically on an altruistic economic vote which is on party affiliation, past performance of the candidates and their goodwill, and assumption of primordial attachment and they believe that the candidate elected will represent their interest.

3. Research Method

The research employed both primary and secondary data analysis. The primary data of analysis is the interview, while the secondary data is on existing literature such as text, journals article, news, and newspapers. The researchers participated in this 2023 presidential election in Kwara State as observers; through this medium, some Key informant interviews were held within the state. The key informants are the electoral officers at the poll units at the local government level, the parties' agents, and the electorates. The respondents were interviewed on issues regarding the election process and procedure. The format was an unstructured interview. These personalities are selected because of the position they occupied in the present election. The interview of these people discloses important information and adds objectivity to this research work. The main themes of the interview were centred on:

1. The opinion of the respondents on the prevailed situation of the election process
2. The views of the respondents on the impacts of the BVAS on the 2023 presidential election in Kwara State. These interviews were done orally and documented through a written process, while some are recorded for validity.

4. Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature review revealed the ideas of scholars, politicians, and media on the 2023 presidential election from protagonist and antagonist perspectives. Keyamo (2023) asserted the victory of presidential elected candidate Bola Ahmed Tinubu to Peter Obi. He furthers his argument that Obi was a means to an end but not an end itself. That is Peter Obi, as a third force, was an obstacle to the People's Democratic Party (PDP), as the voting behaviour in most of the southeast and south-south favoured Labour Party (LP), which is the major home for PDP political party. The big weight of the G 5, governors (Governor Wike (Rivers), Seyi Makinde (Oyo), Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi (Enugu), Samuel Ortom (Benue), & Okezie Ikpeazu (Abia)) within the party going against the ideology of the party (PDP) paves the way for the victory of the All Progressive Congress (APC) elected presidential candidate.

However, these arguments cannot stand from the antagonists' perspective as Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi insists that the 2023 presidential election is the worst in the history of Nigeria (Francis, 2023). The Arise television morning show (2023) indicate the election filing suit as it was presented before the election petition tribunal reflecting one of the worst election considering the abuse of the 2022 electoral law. Akinferinwa (2023) found ambiguity in the pronouncement of the APC presidential candidate as the winner of the 2023 presidential election has some gaps in the constitution, and the 2022 electoral act was not addressed. "Section 64(a) of the electoral act stipulated that the presiding officer can only collate and announce the result of an election subject to verification and confirmation that accreditation number and voters stated on the collation results are correct and consistent with the voters' results recorded and transmitted from the poll units" (Akinferinwa, 2023). This electoral mandate was not fulfilled by the INEC. The electronic voting squanders, logistics challenges, violence in some areas across the states, and election malpractice undermined the credibility of the election (Premium Times, 2023). The INEC chairman Professor Mahmood Yakubu referred to this as technical glitches, which are purely political flaws against the fundamental rights of other candidates.

Section 134(2b) of the amendment 1999 constitution provided that for the candidate to be declared the winner of the election, he must have the highest number of the votes cast at the election, and he has not less than one-quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two-thirds of all states in the federation and the federal capital territory (1999 Constitution; Akinferiwa, 2023). Both the APC nor PDP presidential candidates were not qualified to be

declared winners of this election; none of these two candidates had one-quarter of the vote cast in Abuja, the capital city. The rule of the INEC bypasses this constitutional concept on technicality grounds. It can be referred to as an abuse of law and limitation to the sovereignty power of the state.

In Kwara State APC political party won the highest presidential votes across the 16 local government areas of the state, of which history repeated itself as Kwara State has become one of the determinant states in north central that determine the winner of the presidential election.

5. Results and Discussion

The PDP agent in the polling unit 28 of Wara Osin/Egbejila ward disclosed that the presidential election was free and fair. In the interview section, he further argued that the BVAS operation was efficient and effective but somehow difficult for the old people to be captured easily. He said the victory of the APC presidential candidate was surrounded by the team of candidates' achievements that contested at the senatorial and constituency levels in Kwara State, such as Saliu Mustapha and Shagaya Tolani, who contested for central senatorial district and central house of representative respectively. The APC agent in this unit confirmed that the lifetime ambition of Tinubu for president has enhanced his commitment to party development, and all party members felt his impact that cannot deny him the presidency. All the electoral officials, security, party coordinator, and agent ensure a free and fair election in this unit. In the Air Force unit, Idinagba /Offa garage, and Ilorin East, there was a smooth running of the election in these areas Kwara central Afon local government was challenged with overvoting and violence which led to the cancellation of election results in this area.

A respondent, one of the electoral officials at the Ifelodun local government area in the interview section complains about the insufficient service weight of the electronic voting machine BVAS. In most of the units, BVAS results are sent offline which is liable to technical challenges before getting to the right zone. Some respondents in this area agreed that there are minor errors in terms of calculations and overvoting problems. The little errors may lead to contradictions of the result from the one export from poll units to INEC servers. All the ad-hoc academic officials' Professors and Doctors did not sign until the contradiction is perfected, which is contrary to the result at the poll units. However, this does not challenge the victory of the APC presidential candidate in this local government, according to the respondents from this area. It was a clear landslide winning despite the little challenges. The experiences of the electoral process are mostly the same in Kwara South local government areas, as the voters in this zone believe it is the turn of the southerner to become president.

In Kwara North local government areas, some of the local government witnessed logistic problems such as transportation to the far extreme places, late registration of the voters, and BVAS low service weight and inability to export the result from the polling unit to the INEC server by the electoral officers at the polling units. These areas witnessed the problem of over-voting in some polling units and a slight crisis that led to cancellations of election results. The victory of the APC presidential candidate was cleared across the whole 16 local government areas of the state, despite all odds from antagonists' perspectives both at the state and national levels.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The landslide winning of Bola Ahmed Tinubu was not doubted; his victory can be attributed to his national leadership roles and achievements in the APC political party, party affiliation, the contribution and the achievements of the APC team at senatorial and constituency levels in Kwara State; and they believe that Bola Ahmed Tinubu will meet the aspiration and the needs of the citizens through effective government policies. However, the results show there were

challenges of BVAS and uploading of the results of which Kwara State cannot be ignored, which challenge the position of free and fair of the 2023 presidential election holistically.

This paper advocated for the improvement technology rate of Nigeria's electronic voting system in terms of service and technical known-how personalities. There must be sufficient bank service weight for Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) for effective and efficient upload results for accountability and transparency.

There also needs to improve on logistics in terms of supplying appropriate raw materials to various poll units at the right time, the electoral officials arriving at various poll units at the right time, and all politicians must imbibe the idea of political sportsmanship politics should not be seen as do or die affairs. Likewise, money politics or politics as an investment should be discouraged by politicians and voters. If all these are well implemented, the Nigeria electioneering system will be free and fair in all ramifications.

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Interviews

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- Mr. H. Abdulrasheed electorate Wara-Osin/Egbejila poll unit 28
- Mr. I, Abdulrasheed electorate Wara –Osin/ Egbejila poll unit 28
- Mr. K. Abdulrasheed electorate Wara –Osin/ Egbejila poll unit 28
- Mr. I Abdulmumini presiding officer Wara- Osin/ Egbejila
- Mr. I. Kayode Zone C Lao Area, APC Agent Wara-Osin/ Egbejila
- Mr A. Ismeahi Zone C Lao Area, PDP Agent Wara-Osin/ Egbejila
- Honorable A. Peter Labour party Ekiti local government area.
- Paul Samuel UNNP party Agent Laduba poll unit Asa local government area
- Mr. A Abdulganiyu electorate Laduba poll unit.
- Mr. A. Kehinde INEC electoral officer in Ipata Ojagboro Ilorin East local government area
- Mr. Ogundare Yemi is an observer in Moro local government area.
- Malla m Issa Lafia electorate and eminent personality from Baruten Local government area.