

BIMODAL VOTER ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND ELECTION CREDIBILITY IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between the deployment of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System "BVAS" and election credibility in Nigeria. It interrogated the level of Public Confidence on electoral process in Nigeria with particular reference to the use of BVAS in the 2023 Presidential Election Katsina State. The study evaluated the various control measures in the BVAS and the impact on the credibility of the 2023 Presidential election in the study area. A descriptive research design was used in the study. The population of the study is drawn from three senatorial districts of Katsina State using simple random sampling technique. Survey Questionnaire was used as the major instrument of data collection. The data was descriptively analyzed using SPSS. Results obtained are discussed on the basis of which conclusion was drawn as to the influence of BVAS on the credibility of Nigeria's Presidential elections in Katsina state. The study found that the use of BVAS has limited and controlled the extent of interference in the voting process, particularly voter identity and accreditation, validity of votes cast and electronic transfer of results. The study concluded that the use of BVAS has improved the credibility of the 2023 Presidential elections in Katsina, it enhances election credibility in Nigeria by preventing multiple voting, ensuring real-time voter verification, and reducing electoral fraud.

Keywords: BVAS, Election, Credibility, Senatorial District.

Introduction

The use of BVAS in Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election has instigated debate on the question of electoral credibility in the country. The argument that the use of technology could provide recipe for the battered image of the country's electoral process that influenced the adoption of some technological tools in the conduct of election in Nigeria. This began with use of electronic voter register in 2011 and subsequently the use of other technological devices such as the Card Reader and recently the use of BVAS in the 2023 general elections. The resolve of the electoral umpire to stick to the use of technology is borne out of the desire to improve the integrity of the electoral process in Nigeria (Okonji 2023). The decision by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to introduce BVAS machines in the February 25, 2023 general elections was initially opposed by certain sections of the Nigeria Nigerian populace including parties, candidates and some segments of the civil society. The opposition was based on the capacity and level of preparedness of the electoral institution to effectively and efficiently use the technological device.

However, because of the bad experiences of flawed elections in the country, particularly since the return to democratic rule in 1999, the impact of the use of technology in the previous elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was decisive on the efficacy of BVAS in curbing the menace of electoral manipulations and interferences in voting process and collation of electoral results. This decision was though greeted with anxiety, apprehension and pessimism by many stakeholders including political parties and candidates as the leading actors in electoral process. Thus, the 2023 General Elections was expected to be unique in the context of the improved and enhanced technology application in the management of the electoral process. Ahead of the 2023 general elections, the new leadership of INEC, Professor Mahmud Yakub implemented the various technological reforms (such as biometric voter registration, dual voting mode and the VBAS). INEC's deployment of BVAS in the 2023 presidential elections was a commitment to improving Nigeria's electoral integrity by ensuring elections are credible, transparent, free, fair and widely acceptable. This paper thus investigated the impact of BVAS on the credibility of 2023 Presidential elections in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Statement of Research Problems

The 2023 presidential election is the most intense since the country's transition to a plural democratic system in 1999 (International Republican Institute, 2023). The election marked the highest level of political participation in Nigeria's democratic and electoral history. Huge resources were provided for the elections, including N355 billion spent by INEC, the use of over 1 million ad-hoc election workers and over four hundred thousand security personnel. The election is also unique because of the use of a new technology of BVAS in order to improve the level of transparency, reliability and integrity of the elections. At the Presidential level, 14 candidates from various political parties participated in the election. However, the All Progressive Congress (APC) candidate, Senator Asiwaju Bola Ahmad Tinubu; the People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, Alh. Atiku Abubakar, Labor Party (LP) candidate, Peter Obi and Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), were the main candidates in the 2023 Presidential election. Thus, while INEC was confident in its resolve to use BVAS in the 2023 presidential election, the machines were not without some technical hitches during the elections. In spite the challenges encountered with use of the BVAS, the election has been relatively seen as a success. For example, during the Presidential and the National Assembly elections on 25 February, some of the BVAS machines at various voting stations malfunctioned, which delayed accreditation and voting process. Some the challenges experienced include temporary recognition of staff, Permanent Voter Cards (PVC) not being accepted by BVAS, inability to capture biometrics data via fingerprint, battery failure among other technical hitches. To avert an almost chaotic situation, the situation forced INEC to extend the exercise by another day in some affected areas. It is largely in this context that this study examined the impact of BVAS on the credibility of presidential elections in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Introduction

This section reviewed some relevant literature on democracy and electoral process generally and particularly on electoral credibility in Nigeria. Some basic concepts are reviewed as the basis for understanding the contexts within which elections and electoral integrity impacts on the quality of democracy and democratic governance, particularly in emerging democracies like Nigeria.

Concept Definition

Democratic Consolidation

The concept of democratic consolidation arose from concerns about the ability of former governments to maintain their new democratic institutions. The idea is that the task of developing democracy is as difficult as the task of establishing it. This situation has brought the idea of collective democracy to the center of academic debate. Integration of democracy is the process of new democracy, that is, it cannot return to control without external intervention. (Wikipedia, the sacred encyclopedia). Diamond (1999) defines the integration of democracy as the process of achieving broad and deep constitutionalism, where all political elites believe that popular policies are better than other options they want for their societies (Diamond L. (1999)

Election Credibility in Nigeria

Election credibility is a fundamental aspect of democracy, ensuring that electoral processes are transparent, free, and fair. In Nigeria, the credibility of elections has been a subject of intense debate due to historical challenges such as electoral fraud, violence, and weak institutional frameworks (Ibeanu, 2007). Credible elections are essential for political stability, democratic consolidation, and public trust in governance. However, Nigeria's electoral system has faced persistent credibility issues, necessitating various reforms to improve transparency and accountability.

Historically, Nigerian elections have been marred by irregularities, including ballot-box snatching, multiple voting, vote-buying, and manipulation of results (Suberu, 2007). The 2007 general elections, for example, were widely criticized as one of the most flawed in Nigeria's history, with reports of massive rigging and logistical failures (Adebayo, 2008). Similarly, the 2019 elections were plagued by incidents of voter suppression, intimidation, and technical failures in the transmission of results, raising concerns about electoral integrity (Duruji et al., 2020). These challenges have often led to public disillusionment with the democratic process and a decline in voter turnout.

To address these concerns, Nigeria has implemented several electoral reforms aimed at enhancing election credibility. One of the most significant developments was the passage of the **Electoral Act 2022**, which introduced key provisions such as the electronic transmission of results and the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) (Omotosho, 2022). The BVAS has been instrumental in reducing incidents of multiple voting and voter impersonation by ensuring biometric and facial recognition verification (Okon & Ogun, 2023). Additionally, the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV) has increased transparency by allowing real-time public access to polling unit results, thereby reducing opportunities for result manipulation (Duru, 2022).

Despite these improvements, challenges remain in ensuring fully credible elections in Nigeria. Issues such as political interference in the electoral process, logistical failures, and inadequate security during elections continue to undermine confidence in the system (Ajibade, 2019). Moreover, while BVAS and IREV have improved transparency, technical glitches and allegations of deliberate sabotage have sometimes hindered their effectiveness (Uwa, 2023). Strengthening INEC's independence, enforcing stricter penalties for electoral offenses, and improving voter education are critical steps toward achieving lasting electoral credibility in Nigeria (Ojo, 2022).

In conclusion, while Nigeria has made progress in improving election credibility through technological innovations and legal reforms, significant challenges persist. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach, including stronger institutions, enhanced security, and public participation in the electoral process. A sustained commitment to electoral integrity will be essential in ensuring that future elections reflect the true will of the Nigerian people.

Elections in Nigeria

A free and fair election is the bedrock of democracy. This means that democracy means that people have the opportunity to decide with regret who will govern them. Time to accept or refuse to rule them. Free and fair elections can verify the authenticity of government or collectively replace one government with another. The political right of the people to determine who will govern them through free and fair elections distinguishes democracy from other political systems. Elections are also described as a post-mortem examination of the records of public officials to determine if they have fulfilled their election promises (Dixon, 1990).

Schumpeter (1947), one of the most important writers on democracy, argued that democracy gives people the opportunity to accept or reject those who govern them. Therefore, democracy is about voting and electing politicians. Analysis of elections held since Nigeria's independence shows that electoral fraud is a significant factor in Nigeria's democratic history.

Osina chukwu and Jawan (2011) examined electoral administration in Nigeria and its impact on democratic sustainability. Using qualitative data collected from diverse sources including historical design, documented the menace of electoral fraud in Nigeria from 1960 to 2007.

They concluded that electoral fraud undermined the outcomes of democratic caucuses in Nigeria. As a result, elections in Nigeria have failed to deliver political change that would lead to greater accountability in governance process. Accordingly, electoral fraud in Nigeria have been prevalent in the 1964/1965, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections. The manifestations of Election fraud includes illegal printing of voter cards, illegal ballot boxes, ballot box stuffing, illegal voter registers, underage voting, fake names on ballot papers, fake election results, deliberate refusal to submit election documents to certain areas, publication of non-existent election results, alteration and unauthorized publication of results, influencing candidates, representatives among other irregularities and malpractices. (Osinchukwu and Jawan (2011).

Theoretical Framework

In recent times, organizations are competing in a complex and challenging context that is being transformed by many factors such as globalization and technological development. These new environments require organizations to think and behave differently in order to survive and prosper, that is why most of them are seeking for new methods to achieve competitive advantage. Thus, we need to consider theories on how technological change affects organizational and institutional change.

Technology acceptance model is used in the course of this research because of its relevance to the subject under study. Emerging information technology cannot deliver improved organizational effectiveness if it is not accepted and used by potential users. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most successful measurements for computer usage effectively among practitioners and academics (Davis, 1989). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) effectively predicts technology adoption through Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). Its strengths include simplicity and broad applicability. However, it overlooks external factors, assumes rational decision-making, and relies on self-reported data, limiting its predictive accuracy in real-world scenarios.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of BVAS on the credibility of 2023 Presidential elections in Katsina state, Nigeria. It is also to understand the use of technology to facilitate free, fair and credible elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Research Methodology

This method involves the collection and analysis of the data for the study. It also deals with research design, study population, sample size, sampling techniques, data sources, data collection tools, and data analysis techniques. Details of this research process are described below.

Research Design

This study adopted descriptive research design. Brown (1985) explains that scientific research describes the changes that exist in a situation, tries to explain the relationship between variables and determine the conditions between them. This is found relevant as the design for the study, as it examined the relationship between the deployment of BVAS technology and the credibility of the 2023 Presidential election in Katsina state.

Population of Study

Nigeria population survey 2019 national population estimate shows that the population of the country stands at Two Hundred and One Million, One Hundred and Thirty-Five Thousand, and Two Hundred and Sixty- Two People (201,135,262). Whereas the population of Katsina state has been estimated to be Nine Million, Three Hundred and Thirty Thousand and Eighty-Two People (9,330,082). Katsina State population was used as the unit of analysis in this study. However, the study area is categorized into three senatorial districts. The results obtained was used to generalize voter confidence level towards elections in Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of this study was 60 respondents which comprised of male and female adults of voting age (18 years and above). This is a representative sample of the population of electorate in the three senatorial districts of Katsina South, North and Central zones. The sample of 20 respondents was drawn from each of the three senatorial districts (60) for administration of questionnaire through the use of stratified random sampling.

Research Instrument: Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used as the main instrument of data collection for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, sections A and B. Questions in Part "A" relate to the participant's bio data such as sex, age, education, gender and occupation. Section 'B' contains questions on the impact of BVAS on the credibility of elections in Nigeria and other relevant questions on the impact of BVAS on election credibility. The data generated was analyzed using SPSS and result obtained was descriptively discussed.

Technique of Data Collection

The collected data were analyzed using systematic methods. For this purpose, the survey was analyzed using chi-square (x²), simple percentage and t-test. Analyzing data with simple percentages allows the researcher to understand differences between opinions when measuring and evaluating descriptive statements. Chi-square is used to confirm the data or accuracy of the research

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 100 copies of questionnaire were administered in Katsina metropolis where INEC is situated, but only 60 questionnaires i.e. (80%) were retrieved. Data presentation and analysis were made in tabular form and analysis was also made in tabular form and frequency of responses calculated in percentages.

Bio Data of Respondents (Section A)

TABLE 3.2.1: GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
MALE	40	66.7%
FEMALE	20	33.3%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.1 to justify the data, this table shows the gender distribution of the respondents used for this study. The table shows the gender distribution of the respondents and shows the researcher how men and women responded to the respondents' questions.

TABLE 3.2.2: AGE GRADE OF RESPONDENTS

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
BELOW 20 YEARS	5	10.0%
21-30 YEARS	10	16.7%
31-40 YEARS	4	6.7%
41-50 YEARS	12	23.3%
51-60 YEARS	11	26.7%
ABOVE 60 YEARS	8	16.7%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.2 shows the age of the participants in this study. The statement indicates the age of the participants, evidenced by the presentation of the data in the table; It can be seen that the age of these 60 respondents starts from under 20 years old, i.e. 5 of the respondents are below 20, 10 respondents are between 21-30, while 4 of the respondents are 31-40, whereas, 12 respondents are between age of 41-50 and 11 of the respondents are at the ages of 51-60 then Only 8 are above 60 years old.

TABLE 3.2.3: MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
SINGLE	20	33.3%
MARRIED	30	50.0%
DIVORCED	5	10.0%
WIDOWED	5	6.7%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field April, September, 2023.

Table 3.2.3 above shows the marital status of the participants in this study. The respondents were asked to know their marital status and how many people in the survey were single, married, divorced or widowed. This information gives us a clue as to whether some of the respondents are influenced by their spouses or not.

TABLE 3.2.4: EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
WASSCE/SSCE	10	16.7%
OND/HND/BSC	25	50.0%
PGD/MSC/PHD	10	23.3%
OTHERS	15	10.0%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.4 above shows the educational qualification of the respondents used for this study. This table gives us a clear representation of the educational qualification of respondents, this information helps the research determine how level of education influences responses of the respondents.

TABLE 3.2.5: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
1-3 YEARS	18	26.7%
4-7 YEARS	25	33.3%
8-11 YEARS	12	30.0%
ABOVE 11 YEARS	5	10.0%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.5 above shows the number of years of experience of respondents. This table gives a clear representation of the different years of experience of workers, this information helps the researcher to determine the different working experiences of the respondents and how that influences their choice of response.

TABLE 3.2.6: POSITION OF RESPONDENTS

POSITIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
JUNIOR STAFF	40	73.3%
SENIOR STAFF	20	26.7%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.6 above shows the rank or position of respondents. This table shows the positions of the respondents whether junior or senior, this information helps the researcher determine if and why the positions of the staff influence their responses to the questions.

Tables Based on Research Questions (Section B)

TABLE 3.2.7: BVAS IS A RELIABLE MACHINE DURING ELECTIONEERING.

VALID	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
STRONGLY AGREED	20	26.7%
AGREE	25	50.0%
DISAGREE	10	13.3%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	5	10.0%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.7 above shows that the BVAS is reliable for the conduct of elections. This table shows a representation of the responses of respondents as to whether the BVAS is a reliable machine during elections or not. According to the data in the table, it shows that only 10 out of 60 of the respondents do not agree that the BVAS is a reliable machine for elections, and 25 out of 60 agree that it is, which shows that there is significant reason to believe that the BVAS is surely reliable technological tool for the conduct of credible elections.

TABLE 3.2.8: THERE ARE LIMITATIONS IN THE USE OF BVAS FOR ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

VALID	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
STRONGLY AGREE	20	33.3%
AGREED	15	16.7%
UNDECIDED	15	16.7%
DISAGREE	5	13.3%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	5	20.0%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.8 above shows that there are limitations in the use of the BVAS for elections in Nigeria. This table shows a representation of responses as to whether there are limitations in the use of the BVAS in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Giving reference to the table, we can see that there is a close margin between those who agree and those who do not. There are also those who have not decided. This shows that there could be enough reasons to believe that there are limitations and enough reasons to doubt the utility of the use of BVAS

TABLE 3.2.9: GENERAL ELECTIONS WAS CREDIBLE LARGELY DUE TO THE USE OF BVAS

VALID	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
STRONGLY AGREE	10	16.7%
AGREE	25	50.0%
UNDECIDED	16	26.7%
DISAGREE	9	6.7%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.9 above shows that the 2023 presidential election was credible largely due to the BVAS. This table shows a total number of 25 people out of 60 who agree that the BVAS is responsible for the credibility of the 2023 presidential elections and only 9 disagree. This goes further to prove the credibility of the BVAS to election credibility in Nigeria.

TABLE 3.2.10: THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BVAS AND 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CREDIBILITY IN NIGERIA.

VALID	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
STRONGLY AGREE	20	16.7%
AGREE	25	56.7%
UNDECIDED	5	6.7%
DISAGREE	7	13.3%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	3	6.7%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.10 above shows that there is a significant relationship between BVAS and 2023 presidential election credibility in Nigeria. This table gives a picture as to whether BVAS has anything to do with the credibility of the 2023 presidential elections in Katsina state, Nigeria. According to the table, about 25 respondents out of 60 agree that the BVAS has a relationship with the credibility of the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria with just 7 disagreeing. With this data, we can find enough proof to believe that the BVAS has a relationship with election credibility in Nigeria.

TABLE 3.2.11: BVAS HELP TO MINIMIZE ELECTION RIGGING IN NIGERIA.

VALID	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
STRONGLY AGREE	12	16.7%
AGREE	25	40.0%
UNDECIDED	10	16.7%
DISAGREE	8	13.3%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	5	13.3%
TOTAL	60	100.0%

Source: field survey, April, 2023.

Table 3.2.11 above table shows that the deployment and use of BVAS has helped to minimize election rigging in the Nigeria's 2023 Presidential elections in Katsina state. This table shows the responses of respondents as to whether BVAS help minimize election rigging in Nigeria, 25 respondents agree while just 8 disagree which shows that the BVAS did play a role in reducing election rigging, particularly in the 2023 Presidential elections in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Level of significance: 0.05 Decision Rule: reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than the level of significance, accept the null hypothesis.

TABLE 3.2.12: Test Statistics

TEST STATISTICS	THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BVAS AND 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CREDIBILITY IN NIGERIA
Chi-Square	26.333 ^a
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 6.0.

Conclusion based on the decision rule:

Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between the deployment and use of BVAS and the credibility of the 2023 presidential election in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

This research examined the effect of BVAS on election credibility in Nigeria, with particular reference to the 2023 presidential elections in Katsina state, Nigeria. The study examined the relationship between the use of BVAS and the credibility of the 2023 Presidential elections in Katsina state. It found that the BVAS technological tool has improved significantly the credibility of the electoral process, particularly with regards to the quality and integrity of the voting process as well as generation and collation of election results. It has thus reduced election rigging and

fraud in some significant ways. The machines, through biometrics, authenticate the identity of voters to ensure that votes cast do not exceed number of voters accredited. The electronic transmission of results also provides the necessary checks and control that prevented inflation of votes. Nigeria.

The BVAS is thus a reliable machine that facilitates the smooth conduct of elections for improved integrity of the electoral process. The use of the technological device has boost the confidence and trust level of the people and stakeholders on credible electoral outcomes. Even though the device malfunctioned in some voting centers across the state, the intervention of the technical team of INEC has helped in the resolution of the numerous technical hitches encountered. Even though these hitches had caused delays and extension of voting period, in some instances voting spilled over to another day, yet the confidence level of voters has been positive with use of BVAS.

The BVAS has helped minimize the various incidences of election manipulations, particularly in the study area, as the technological device has made voting process more transparent and accountable at the various stages in the conduct of the election and the level of the collation and declaration of results. It tentatively reduced the incidences of ballot box snatching, and multiple voting, stuffing of ballot boxes with invalid ballots as well as impersonation in the voting process.

The research also found that the introduction of the BVAS, though new and innovative, has made the electoral process in Nigeria technologically advanced and sophisticated. This is in spite of the technical hitches encountered in Katsina state. The various litigations at the Presidential level have made references to the records generated by the BVAS as evidence of various manipulations in the 2023 Presidential elections. This therefore represents a huge milestone in Nigeria's electoral process and development. The reports of various election observers also alluded to the improvement made in the transparency and integrity of the voting and collation processes.

Conclusion

This paper examined The Effect of BVAS on Election Credibility in Nigeria with a particular reference to the 2023 Presidential Elections in Katsina state, Nigeria. The results from the test of hypotheses revealed that the 2023 presidential election was an improvement from the previous elections, largely due to the utility of the BVAS machines. As a result, there was relatively low level of rigging and manipulation incidences from the previous elections, particularly in the study area (Katsina State). The various in-built checks and control measures in the BVAS machines and technology has made near impossible for the voting process to be manipulated. It had also made it difficult if not impossible for the results of the elections at various levels to be tempered. Thus as elections remain the widely recognized mechanism of choosing political officers in a democratic form of government, the credibility of its conduct remains crucial for the sustainability of democracy. In Nigeria, a number of factors have combined to derail the electoral process in the past, which contributed largely to the truncation of democracy in the country.

The massive fraud that characterized the electoral process in the past had been largely attributed to the failure of Nigeria to consolidate and sustain democracy in its previous experiences of the First, Second and the aborted Third Republics. One of the findings of this study revealed that though the electoral empire had enough time to prepare for the 2023 presidential elections; the voters register were full of irregularities and discrepancies. Nonetheless, the introduction of technological driven voter authentication shaped the quality and integrity of the elections. The deployment and use of the BVAS machines as a control measure in addition to the coding of all electoral materials as well as strict adherence to the rule that polling centers were placed in public places, the leadership of INEC displayed exemplary courage, strength of character and integrity,

which impact on the credibility of the entire process. However, it is important to note that there are still areas for improvement by both INEC and the electorate. These may include the integrity of electoral officials and security agencies, voter education and enlightenment as well as logistics to guarantee timely arrival and dispatch of materials for election and collation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should enhance the credibility, effectiveness, and reliability of BVAS to promote inclusiveness and sustain democracy in Nigeria.
2. The National Electoral Commission should be reformed and restructured to ensure its independence and professionalism in the country's elections. This required amending the 1999 Charter to ensure that INEC had a committee responsible for policy formulation and guidance and a group of experts/experts for elections; The board of directors must consist of honest and fair people.
3. INEC should invest in upgrading BVAS technology, ensure nationwide network coverage, and provide real-time technical support to prevent system failures during elections.
4. INEC should conduct extensive training for electoral officials and sensitization campaigns for voters to ensure proper use of BVAS, minimizing errors and increasing public confidence in the electoral process.
5. The National Assembly should amend the 1999 Constitution to fund INEC as a guarantee of its independence. In this respect, the funding of INEC should be first-charge on the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation.
6. The unbundling of INEC to make it more efficient. In this wise other commissions like Political Parties Registration and Regulatory Commission and Electoral Offences Commission should be created.
7. Accurate list of polling stations and locations and the number of registered voters should be made available to political parties and observers
8. Adequate security for ballot papers and the distribution should be from locations within a reasonable distance from polling stations. Election materials should be transported to states early enough to ensure that voting started at the scheduled time.
9. To issue certificates to voters within the specified period. Political representatives should be provided with a copy of the results and have the right to request re- registration at the appropriate place for voter registration and the Electoral Act 2006 should be amended to ensure that voting is secret INEC should provide the necessary information immediately. Media reports to avoid speculation

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