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Information and Communication Technology and Post-Election Disputes Mitigation: An Assessment of 2023 General Election in Nigeria

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Abstract

Election irregularities in Nigeria have systematically led to post-election dispute, forcing electoral management body to continuously deploy ICT instruments in a bid to addressing these irregularities. This study assessed the roles of ICTs played in mitigating post-election disputes in 2023 general elections in the country. The objectives of the study were to determine the extent ICTs mitigated 2023 post-election dispute in Nigeria. This study employed a mixed method of research design to collect data from purposively selected adult residents and elections stakeholders across (4) States randomly selected in the country. These States includes Kwara, Osun, Edo and Kaduna. Out of the (520) administered copies of questionnaire, (481) were retrieved back, while (25) interview sessions, which includes (15) KII and (10) IDI were conducted. Primary data collected were analyzed using descriptive and content analyses. Result of the findings showed that the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS)/Result Viewing Portal (IReV) eliminated incidences of ballot snatching/stuffing, discouraged manipulation of election result and reduced post-electoral violence. This study concluded that BVAS/IReV

largely reduced 2023 post-election disputes. This study recommended among others that to increase the effectiveness of ICT in Nigeria's future elections, the electoral law should be amended to compulsorily allow election result to be transmitted into INEC server and ensure that the general public has free access to it.

Key Words: Election, Post-election dispute, ICTs, INEC, BVAS

Introduction

Democratic governance in any country of the world entails electioneering process, which gives an opportunity to practically justify the notion that democracy is shaped by the will of the people, serves the interests of the people, and is carried out by representatives chosen by the people. To this end, conducting election becomes imperative. This involves citizens coming out to vote and be voted, through a process adequately supervised by an unbiased electoral umpire.

Inability for the process to be credible, free and fair, attracts dispute and disagreement popularly known as electoral dispute. Right from the first republic in Nigeria, the electoral process is often challenging, chaotic, and disputed at different stages of the election (Omotola, 2010). The electoral body has been contending with diverse experiences of political landscape marked by intense rivalry and power tussles, where some ambitious politicians resort to extreme and aggressive tactics to secure electoral victories (Aboh & Obem, 2022).

As a result of this, Nigeria has introduced technological reforms in their electoral management laws with the aim of enhancing the quality of elections and to minimize the incidents of electoral dispute. The electoral Acts of 2015 and 2022 made salient provisions for the adoption of technology in the electoral process. Specifically, Sections 47 and 50 of the 2022 Electoral Act made provision for the use of technology for voter accreditation and electronic transmission of results while Section 62 (2) gave INEC the mandate to maintain an electronic register of votes (Electoral Act 2022).

It is against this foregoing that INEC was courageous to deploy Information Commission Technology (ICT) instruments before and during 2023 general elections. Voter Enrolment Device (IVED)/ Bimodal Voters Accreditation System BVAS/INEC Result Viewing (IReV) Portal, all-inclusive in a single machine is to function at pre, during and post elections stages (INEC 2021). This is to ensure optimal credibility and transparent of voter registration, accreditation, counting and transmitting of election result to internet platform where general public can view and monitor the processes.

Statement of the Problem

Conducting free, fair and peaceful elections in Nigeria has become a difficult task for the electoral body and the nation at large. Right from the first republic, before, on and after election stages continues to witness unprecedented disputes over certain election irregularities such as bloated voter register, over voting, tampering with elections figures, suppression of voters, vote buying and many other electoral malpractices. Since 2003, the electoral body had begun to deploy several technologies in order to check-mate these election irregularities causing

disputes before and after elections. For instance, between 2003 and 2011, pre-election stage was dominated with Information Commission Technology (ICT) to curb double registration, irregularities in voters' bio-data and possibly, prevented dispute arisen from blotted voter registers for accreditation of voters. In spite of this laudable intervention, elections held before and after year 2011 were marred with series of irregularities, causing series of dispute. Many of these disputes have resulted to cancellation of election results in some States (Pally, 2022), loss of lives and properties (Sambo *et al.*, 2024), while in some instances, placed the country on the progression of collapsing (Lambe & Mubarak, 2023). Searching through existing studies (Ogbeide-IIhama, 2022; Chukwuma, 2022; Adeleke, 2020), many scholars have investigated the impact of ICTs in mitigating electoral dispute on or before elections day in Nigeria, but there is also a need to conduct similar study on post-election stage particularly in respect to the 2023 post-election stage.

Literature Review

Electoral Dispute

Disputes are recurrent and inevitable part of human interaction, often emerging from competing goals or interests. Adimula (2018) underscores this inevitability, viewing dispute as a necessary element for individuals and groups in pursuing their objectives. Similarly, Otite and Albert (1999) interpret disputes as signals of societal transformation, reflecting shifting values and conditions for survival. However, these constructive potentials can quickly degenerate into destructive conflicts that undermine societal stability and development.

Within the electoral context, disputes are shaped by incompatible interests between political actors or between political parties and electoral bodies. Robert (2021) narrows this down to disagreements over perceived irregularities at any stage of the electoral cycle before, during, or after elections. In line with this, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2017) and Yusuf (2019) describe electoral disputes as manifested through protests, demonstrations, petitions, and sometimes violent acts such as destruction or seizure of electoral materials, all of which reflect dissatisfaction with the process. Olurode (2013) extends this understanding by distinguishing between minor irregularities such as ballot snatching or logistical lapses and more serious cases that escalate into widespread protests, violence, or prolonged legal contests challenging the legitimacy of election outcomes. These authors' perspectives suggest that electoral disputes occupy a spectrum from ordinary grievances and technical irregularities to violent confrontations and judicial battles. In the context of post-election disputes, several academic texts on Nigeria elections focus on the complexity of post-election violence. While much of the literature have identified manifestations of disputes, less attention is given to the intersections between electoral violence, fraud, and litigation, particularly how they reinforce one another to deepen political instability.

Information and Communication Technology

The concept of technology has been interpreted from multiple perspectives, each offering valuable but partial insights. Buchman (2023) extends the notion of technology beyond mere physical tools, emphasizing the dual nature of hardware (e.g., biometric machines, ballot

scanners) and software (e.g., voter registration databases, electronic transmission systems). This perspective is significant for recognizing the integrated role of devices and digital platforms in electoral processes, though it is limited by insufficient attention to contextual, ethical, and human factors that shape technology adoption in fragile democracies.

Similarly, Spacey (2022) frames technology in terms of services, products, and infrastructures rooted in science and engineering, with particular reference to information technologies such as networks, software, and computing systems. While this definition adequately captures the technical foundations of ICT infrastructure, it overlooks the political, social, and ethical dynamics that often determine how technologies succeed or fail in real-world elections. Complementing these views, IGI (2010) conceptualizes ICT as an umbrella term for all technologies used in creating, storing, transmitting, and exchanging information. This functional orientation highlights the information-processing capacities of ICT that are central to electoral management, including accreditation, result collation, and fraud prevention.

Technology in electoral processes can be understood not merely as tools or infrastructures but as a socio-political system a combination of hardware and software (Buchman, 2023), scientific and engineering foundations (Spacey, 2022), and information creation and exchange functions (IGI, 2010). However, the convergence of these definitions reveals a conceptual gap: the neglect of political, ethical, and contextual realities that profoundly influence electoral technology in fragile democracies.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to address the research questions. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2023), Nigeria's projected population stands at 216,000,000. From this population, a purposive sample of 520 respondents was selected.

The sample comprised 36 security personnel, 196 electorates, 48 civil society organisation (CSO) members, 76 officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and 164 political party members. Respondents were drawn from four of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, with one state randomly selected from each zone: Kwara (North Central), Oyo (South West), Edo (South South), and Kaduna (North West). Questionnaires were administered to the respondents, of which 481 were successfully retrieved and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

For the qualitative component, 25 informants were purposively selected for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) based on their expertise and knowledge of the subject matter. These informants included INEC officials, security personnel, political party stakeholders, election observers, and political analysts. In total, 25 interview sessions were conducted, comprising 15 KIIs and 10 IDIs. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis, while secondary data from published sources were employed to support and enrich the thematic discussions.

Data Presentations, Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

Figure 1: Demographic Distribution of Election Stakeholders

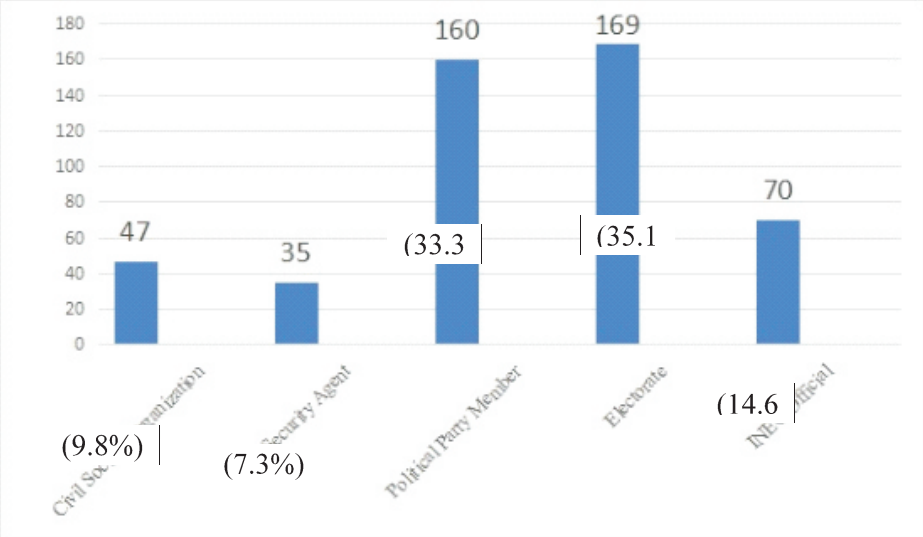

Figure 1: indicates reveals the election's stakeholders who participated in the study. It shows that 47(9.8%) of the respondents were Civil Society Organization, 35(7.3%) were Security Agents, 160(33.3%) were Political Party Member, 169(35.1%) Electorates, and 70(14.6%) were INEC Officials. This distribution showed that the respondents in this study cut across diverse group of stakeholders in election process across the four (4) selected States in Nigeria.

Figure 2: States Demographic Distribution of respondents
Source: Researcher Field Study, 2024

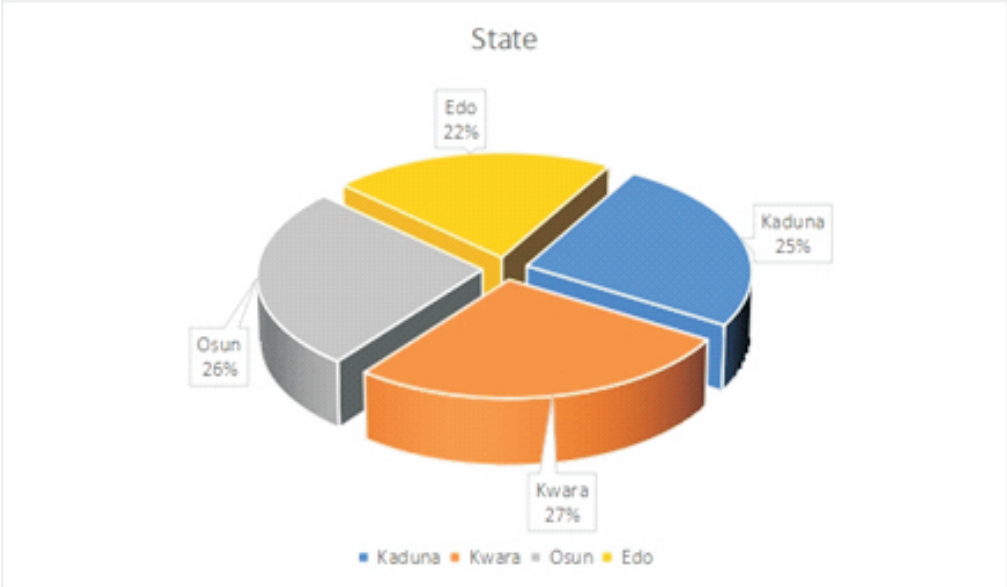

Figure 2: Gives the distribution of the respondents across the four States where this study was conducted. It showed that Kaduna State had a total of 122(25.4%) respondents, Kwara 129(26.8%), Osun 127(26.4%), and Edo 103(21.4%). The data showed that all the States were relative represented in term of number of the participants, though Kwara had the highest while Edo had the least. This implies that the study had a fair representation in the selected States.

The Extent ICTs Usage has Mitigated 2023 Post-Election Disputes in Nigeria

Table 1: Respondents Perception on the extent ICTs usage has mitigate 2023 post-election disputes in Nigeria

Items	SA	A	DK	D	SD	M	St. D.	Rank
Reduce ballot snatching/stuffing	191 (39.7%)	173 (36.0%)	29 (6.0%)	50 (10.4%)	38 (7.9%)	3.89	1.255	1st
Discourage Manipulation of Election Result	218 (45.3%)	132 (27.4%)	34 (7.1%)	52 (10.8%)	45 (9.4%)	3.89	1.338	1st
Reduction in electoral violence	209 (43.5%)	126 (26.2%)	34 (7.1%)	65 (13.5%)	47 (9.8%)	3.80	1.374	3rd

Source: Researcher's Field Study, (2025)

Table 1 provided details of the extent Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) ICT mechanisms such as Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) mitigated electoral disputes post-election dispute during 2023 general election in Nigeria. The introduction of BVAS/IREV 2023 election led to significant advancement in electoral dispute resolution as the innovation resulted to reduction in ballot snatching/stuffing (3.89, ±1.255), discouragement of manipulation of election result (3.89, ±1.255) and Reduction in electoral violence (3.80, ±1.374). Qualitative result collected through the oral interview sessions conducted shows that there were fresh innovations in the administration of election in Nigeria since the end of 2019 general elections up to 2023 post-election stages in the country. An informant; an electorate in Oshogbo, explained further,

> The BVAS that was used during election prevented manipulation of result and ballot stuffing or snatching. In the 2018 election conducted, the election was cancelled in many polling units due to over voting and ballot snatching and that resulted into rerun of the election we witnessed, but this was not the same story in 2022 (IDI: Female: Electorate: 55yrs: 2024).

According to an eye witness who doubled as an electorate in Orolu LGA,

> Ever since I have been voting in early 80s, 2022 process was quite different and faster. Unlike previous elections held in the State, the 2022 election witnessed low queue of voters waiting to be accredited. The machine

> brought (BVAS) made the entire process easier and faster (IDI: Male: Electorate: 65yrs: 2024).

Pieces of oral evidence from other states of the federation were not different from what was obtainable in Osun State over the effectiveness BVAS deployed to replaced Smart Card Reader during off-circle and general election before 2023. An election observer that served with YIAGA Africa Initiative (YIAGA) in Kaduna said succinctly,

> BVAS brought an end to ink identification after voting. Also, facial accreditation of voters largely curbs incidences of double voting and over voting across the States. Lastly, don't let us forget that the same machine used for voter registration was equally deployed for accreditation of the voters, in essence, manipulation of numbers be it result of vote cast or otherwise, was completely eliminated by BVAS (IDI: Male: CSOs: 32yrs: 2024).

The findings of this study extend the conversation around electoral technologies in Nigeria by showing not only their role in enhancing credibility and transparency, but also their capacity to mitigate post-election disputes. According to Orhero and Okolie (2024) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2023), the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and related technologies has been instrumental in curbing election rigging and fostering greater public trust in electoral processes.

However, this study goes beyond the existing discourse by situating ICT deployment as a dispute-prevention mechanism, not merely a transparency-enhancing tool. The replacement of the Smart Card Reader (SCR) that was widely criticized for its short-comings during the 2019 general elections with BVAS in 2023 marked a deliberate institutional shift by INEC. In addition, this study reveals an emerging deterrence effect. This is line with Ibrahim and Ibeanu (2007) who argued that technology, when credibly deployed, shifts the incentive structure of electoral malpractice by raising the risks of detection and reputational damage. The realization among political actors and potential perpetrators that digital tools such as BVAS could expose irregularities, and even trigger outright cancellation of compromised results, discouraged attempts to tamper with electoral outcomes.

Furthermore, this study shows that BVAS not only safeguarded the integrity of votes but also improved the efficiency of polling unit operations. Based on the findings, human manipulations during and after casting of votes were heavily mitigated by the adoption of ICT. This resonates with Oba and Ojekunle (2025) who noted that technological efficiency at the polling unit level strengthens democratic participation. This current study showed how electorates reported quicker accreditation and smoother voting processes, which enhanced their sense of inclusion and confidence that their votes would count.

In distinguishing this study from existing scholarship, it is clear that while previous work (Orhero & Okolie, 2024) primarily highlight the preventive and confidence-building functions of electoral technologies, the present study demonstrates a broader systemic impact: the role of BVAS and ICTs in mitigating post-election disputes by eliminating fraud at its source, deterring

malpractice through risk of cancellation, and improving citizen satisfaction at the polling unit level.

Furthermore, deployment of the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in the Osun and Edo states off-cycle elections represents a watershed in Nigeria's electoral process, particularly in the effort to deepen transparency and restore public confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The Yiaga Africa Election Result Analysis Dashboard (ERAD) (2023) Report highlights that access to IReV during these elections was seamless, with minimal difficulties for the public in viewing uploaded results.

This outcome is significant because it points directly to the core rationale behind developing IReV: enhancing transparency, accountability, and trust in the electoral process by allowing real-time access to polling unit results. The findings aligned with the scholarly positions of Oloyede and Abbas (2024) and Adeyemi (2023), who acknowledge the technological innovations of BVAS and IReV as commendable break-through. These tools addressed long-standing post-election dispute around voter accreditation fraud, result manipulation, and the opacity of collation processes that have historically marred Nigeria's elections. Specifically, the BVAS curtailed incidents of over-voting and impersonation by ensuring biometric verification, while the IReV platform served as a digital audit trail, providing stakeholders political parties, civil society, observers, and citizens direct access to election results as they were uploaded.

This successful deployment had both immediate and long-term implications. In the short term, it enhanced the credibility of the Osun and Edo off-circle elections, which were widely adjudged as relatively free and fair compared too many earlier contests. In the long term, it laid a foundation of institutional confidence for INEC to insist on the nationwide adoption of these technologies in the 2023 general elections, despite political opposition and skepticism from some quarters. The case of these off-cycle elections underscores the interplay between technology and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the introduction and deployment of ICT mechanisms particularly the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) represent a major advancement in Nigeria’s electoral administration and conflict management framework. The adoptions of BVAS and IReV have proven to be effective not only in delivering credible outcomes but also in reducing the contentious aftermath of elections. This underscores the centrality of ICTs in the future of Nigeria's democracy, where electoral credibility and post-election peace are deeply interlinked.

Recommendations

It is against the forgoing that this study recommended the following:

I. INEC should collaborate with telecommunications providers and electricity agencies to ensure reliable internet connectivity and stable power supply during elections.
ii. Continuous upgrading of BVAS devices and the IReV platform is necessary to improve speed, accuracy and resilience against malfunction.

iii. The National Assembly should review and up-date electoral laws to provide explicit constitutional backing for the deployment of ICTs in election administration.

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