

Enhancing Electronic Voting System and Survey of Voters Trust Factors

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria from the 2015 general elections started introducing electronic devices in the conduct of its elections. However, it is known that those electronic devices have their own short-comings. One of such issues was the inability in many instances, for the card readers to authenticate eligible voters. This research is to obtain the views of the respondents (n=450) and other earlier researchers in the area, regarding how to enhance the processes of electronic voting in Nigeria. Both primary (discussion, interview and questionnaire) and secondary sources of data were utilized. The study reveals that adequate planning of the enabling environment like voter education, provision of adequate ICT network, steady supply of electricity in the communities, addressing other trust factor issues should be gradually and well addressed by the Electoral Management Body.

Keywords: Electronic, Voting System, Voters and Trust Factors

INTRODUCTION

Acceptable methods of voting in Nigeria has been a clarion call that requires efforts for improvement and most recently through exploring the use of electronic device This is because adequacy of democracies relies mainly on free, fair and credible electronics. The application and advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) in all facets of human life have shown several benefits such as improved efficiency, better productivity and convenience. One of such issue is the application of ICT in the processing of electronic stages, a phenomenon, known as electronic voting. [1] argues that in a democratic setup, voting is a significant indicator for active participation into the public affairs in which through effective application of crowd-sourcing technology such as e-voting, countries around the world can improve on citizen's participation in public decision making. However, there is need to practically test the utility of the technology, on non-public election platforms, before its full seal adoption in the entire country. It is a

IMPROVEMENT ON EXISTING VOTING SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

In respect of franchise of Nigerians living in other nations, the existing voting system does not accommodate their challenges. Voting freedom for large number of immigrants living in foreign countries pose serious constraints

concluded fact that e-voting process reduce drastically issues like missing names of some registered voters, snatching or destruction of ballot boxes, battle boxes stuffing, multiple and or underaged voting, destruction of election materials, hijacking of ballot boxes, attacks on election officials, vote buying, violence and manipulation/falsification of election results. An efficient voting system should ensure adequate protection of the voting client and the vote cast, as well as other election materials. The stake holder like the voters, electoral officials, election observers, political party representatives, ectra, need adequate security of lives and property without which the voting venues would be deserted. Security challenges in Nigeria such as kidnapping of politicians, activities of Boko Haram member, insurgencies, militia actions, detonation of explosives/bombs, social-distancing cause by Covid 19, need extra vigilance. Those issues would be reasonable reduced if e-voting is adopted.

because they are required to obtain absence voters identify to enable them cast vote from their host foreign countries [2]. Further, electoral officials, security personal who are on duty and posted to places far from their polling

unites find it very difficult to cast their votes. These Nigerians are disfranchised which is a serious issue in the current voting system. These issues give rise to agitations from different segments of the

CHALLENGES OF TRANSITING TO E-VOTING IN NIGERIA

Voting is a formal and physical expression of preference of a candidate over the others in a community, state or nation. Voting is the heart of democracy and our votes are our voice and collectively, the votes of a nation are the nation's choice of candidate(s) for position(s). During the medieval times, to show how important voting was placed, voting in elections was sole preserved of upper class citizens. Slaves and the poor free-borns were not allowed to vote. During the slavery period in America, voting rights were reserved for male whites and property owners. Nigerians were granted partial suffrage under the 1922 Hugh Clifford constitution which the franchise was limited to adult males resident in Lagos, and who earned an annual income of \$100 (One Hundred Pounds). Nigerians attained the status of Universal adult suffrage in 1979 when women in the northern Nigeria were allowed to vote.

ENHANCING ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEM AND SURVEY OF VOTERS TRUST FACTORS

Survey of Voters trust Factors: Acceptance of any new innovation, always correlates with trust among the users and beneficiaries. The achievement of public trust has been one of the major objectives for the implementation of e-voting. The

Trust should not be taken for granted, and states need to do their utmost best in order to ensure that it is preserved.

This is so because once trust and public confidence is not achieved, it is exceedingly challenging to regain it. [4] stated that the five factor trust are privacy, reliability, ease of use, security and availability. They are capable of enhancing voters trust in the acceptance of e-voting system for elections. A similar result was recorded by [5] where majority; in Tanzania have concerns over security, reliability and privacy of e-voting. The authors cautioned that absence of security, reliability and privacy would pose serious threats to acceptance of e-voting. Thus, an electronic voting system

country and even abroad. Therefore, there is need to explore viable voting system that accommodates voting right of those categories of citizens. These problems would be resolved if e-voting is adopted.

The post independence elections in Nigeria were the beginning of rigging of manual elections in the country. The issues that resulted from the 1964 election led to the imprisonment Chief Obafemi Awolowo and other members of his political party, as well as creation of Mid-western region out of the then western region. The other issues of the 1964 elections caused the battle of supremacy among the political actors. The country's first military coup was as a result of problems that emanated from the dissatisfaction generated by the conduct of the first Republic elections. The 1983 elections were chaotic, with the alleged massive riggings. There were accusations and counter accusations, intimidation and manipulations. Even the 1999 general elections that gave birth to the Fourth Republic which supposed to be welcomed with the greatest enthusiasm after many years of military regimes in Nigeria were not devoid of election rigging.

trust is enhanced when the system proves its reliability and dependability. The Council of Europe in (2011) in their guidelines on transparency of e-voting stated that:

(EVS) that would earn voters' trust and consequently determine their acceptance and participation, must satisfy all these requirements. Privacy was placed in first position. When privacy is related with anonymity, confidentiality, uncoercibility, and secrecy, it becomes clearer while this is most paramount to Nigerian voters. The use of coercion either physically or subtly, from informal observations has been reported in the country for instance during elections, some authors had reported that they witnessed prospective voters in polling booths being promised monetary rewards once they voted for a

particular candidate. If the compromised voter, voted for the candidate and tactically expose the ballot paper to the candidate's agent, he/she would be paid as agreed. It is therefore obvious that any system that would guarantee the privacy of voters would be trusted and accepted. Closely related to privacy was reliability. The smart card readers used during elections were not very reliable. The government must ensure that these related characteristics are given due attention in the e-system design. During the elections, many eligible voters were not authenticated by the card readers. Ease of use is another important factor that would influence trust in an e-voting system. Any system that is difficult to use, no matter the amount of functionalities it possesses, would not be easily acceptable by users. Most voters would prefer to cast their voters with little or no help, even if they have to use

The barrage of litigations which followed the conduct of the elections so far conducted in the 10th anniversary of Nigeria, Fourth Republic was enough sign that all was not well with democracy in the country.

Professor Maurice Iwu, the then Chairman of the Nigeria Election Management body, the Independent National Electoral

Violence, pervasive use of money, gender inequality and unhealthy mindsets of some Nigerians and the leaders.

Colin Powel, an American who visited Nigeria with his team to observe elections

- *The free will of the people must not be kidnapped or bought by the highest bidder.*
- *The Nigerian experience in the past ten years was troubling.*
- *People were being manipulated and pushed aside in the quest for power not service.*

Those issues, observations and comments show that the manual method of processing elections has not satisfied the

LEGAL CHALLENGES TO ADOPTING E-ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

The adopting of E-election in Nigeria has a lot of legal issues and questions. The legality or otherwise of those e-voting issues need to be constitutionally

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country directly or through freely chosen representatives. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, which shall be by Universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedure.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended at its

Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of Eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to a legislative house shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election.

an electronic system. E-voting system that aims to gain it users' and reliability trust must guarantee security, from a technical point of view. Issues relating to security are often local and specific to individual country. The government and Electoral Management Body (EMB) will do well to identify the local threats, and the necessary mechanism in place to address them.

The least scored, factor was availability. However, the rating is high enough to affect voters' trust. Voters definitely would appreciate a voting system that is easily accessible; and deployable via different platforms, including mobile platform. Mobile penetration in Nigeria has continued to maintain upward trend. This technology could be leveraged on for election purposes. A Supreme Court Judge of Nigeria Justice George Oguntade after listening to elections Matter presented before him stated thus:

Commission (INEC) remarked that the problem of electoral system was based on:

stated during the 10th Anniversary of Nigerians Fourth Republic, as follows;

yearnings of Nigerians in their quest for free, fair and credible elections.

addressed. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) stipulates:

sections 77(2), 117(2), 132(5) and 178(5) among others state;

The legality of the use of the smart Card Reader (SCR) in the 2015 general elections was contained in Shinkafi Vs. Yari Okorjo

where the Justices of the separate Supreme court (JSC) observed:

... the function of the card reader machine is to authenticate the owner of voter's card and prevent multiple voting by a voter". Section 52(2) of the 2015 Electoral Amendment Act says, "voting at an election shall be in accordance with the procedure determined by the Independent National Electoral Commission." The above section highlights a substantial gap in the country's electoral laws. Concrete predictable section, which allows e-voting should be substitute for 52(2). The process of voting or franchise is so sacrosanct that the legislations governing it should not be vague or ambiguous. The substitution may read "e-voting is the procedure (or a recognized procedure) for filling elective posts in Nigeria." In addition to a definitive nod and pronounce of e-voting as a system of election, the amended electoral law should also stipulate specific prescription, guidelines, and the method of conducting such elections. When this is done, this will confer on electronic voting the legitimacy it requires and will not subject it to protracted litigious battle in courts of the land by losers of electoral contests.

CONCLUSION

The beauty and acceptance of any democracy depend on the credibility, transparency and fairness of the elections. However, it should be noted that no system of election is perfect or One Hundred percent leak proof. Nevertheless, the Electoral Management Body, INEC should try to evolve convincing evidence with high standard of achieving peoples trust at each stage regarding the use of those electronic devices in all the processes. Also with the level of Nigeria's high level should strive to eliminate predictable cybercrimes (attempting to Hijack) the process either

for financial gain or for the fun of it. The legal framework should be addressed while the staff trained and retained towards manipulation of those electronic devices. The above should be gradually developed so that the possibility of gathering to the acceptable e-elections should be achieved in no distant future. If the e-voting processes could be successfully implanted in Nigeria, that would lead us to the expected position as the giant of Africa. The position would overcome major hurdles facing young democracies in Africa which have been using selection instead of election.

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