

**ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF INDEPENDENT NATIONAL
ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC) IN THE 2011 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN
SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *Most studies on elections in Nigeria have been characterized by several undemocratic activities such as manipulation of electoral results, indiscipline arising from unethical practices and the breach of the constitution by electoral officials, these and among others have not been explored empirically by researchers. Hence, this study will scientifically examine the level of preparations of INEC before the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria and also identified the challenges faced by INEC during the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria. Arising from the field study, 84.42% respondents agreed that there was insufficient time for training of INEC staffs before the 2011 election which did not allow for proper assessment of personnel before deployment to the field. While, 98.49% respondents agreed that multiple registration and underage registrations were some of the major challenges experienced by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the 2011 registration exercise in South Eastern Nigeria. The study concluded that the 2011 gubernatorial elections conducted in South Eastern Nigeria were neither perfect nor faultless; the elections provided a genuine opportunity for larger number of citizens to exercise their right to vote and for their votes to count compared to the previous elections.*

KEYWORDS: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Gubernatorial Election, Election Administration, Electoral system

INTRODUCTION

Elections in Nigeria before and since independence have faced several challenges including electoral malpractices through buying of votes, rigging of elections, violence, corruption, intimidation and harassment of voters before and during Election Day. One major obstacle to electoral success in Nigeria is the inability of successive electoral bodies to conduct a fair and credible election (Okhaide 2012). Judging from the previous elections conducted by various electoral bodies in the past, one may conclude that the June 12, 1993 general election conducted by Professor Humphrey Nwosu is still regarded as the freest and fairest election ever conducted in the history of Nigeria in which late Chief Moshood Abiola was presumed to have won the presidential election. It was Professor Nwosu's commission that introduced the novel voting system of Option A4 and Open Ballot System both of which constituted to the remarkable success recorded during his tenure as the chairman of National Electoral Commission (NEC). However, a new electoral body called "Independent National Electoral Commission" (INEC) was established in 1998 to oversee elections in Nigeria. It is an organization that has been

involved in numerous controversies since its formation. For instance, “Justice Ephraim Akpata and Sir Abel Guobadia served as the chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1999 and 2003 respectively. During this periods (1999 and 2003), it was reported that election results were widely condemned by the oppositions and the European Union Election Observers. The elections were marred by poor organization, lack of essential transparency, violence, widespread procedural irregularities and significant evidence of fraud particularly during result collation process” (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013). In 2005, Professor Maurice Iwu became the chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). His tenure was perhaps the most controversial when compared to his successors. The 2007 election he conducted was marred by massive irregularities and blatant favoritism and was criticized by Nigerian and foreign observers for conducting election that fell below acceptable democratic standard and this statement was also admitted by the late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua (Musa 2011). On June 8, 2010 Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega was nominated by President Goodluck Jonathan as the new chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), subject to Senate confirmation as a replacement for Professor Maurice Iwu who vacated the post on April 28, 2010. Professor Attahiru Jega’s nomination as INEC chairman followed approval by a meeting of the National Council of State called by President Jonathan and attended by former heads of state (EU Election Observer Mission Report 2011).

However, before the April 2011 elections were conducted, the much maligned Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had undergone an internal overhaul under its new boss Professor Attahiru Jega. INEC claims that a great deal of time and money had been invested in technology, for a high-technological registration process, and in staffing in order to ensure that the elections are free and fair. Against the above background, this study is aimed to examine the level of preparations of INEC before the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections; and to identify the challenges faced by INEC during the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria. In other words, the study is face with two basic questions: (1) How prepared was INEC before the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria; and what are the challenges faced by the INEC during the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria?. In arriving at these issues, the study is poised to make some basic conceptual clarification such as Electoral system, Electoral Administrations

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Electoral System

The extent to which election advances democratic order depends in large part on the existing electoral system, its nature and its acceptance by the stakeholders in the electoral process. Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013) observes that, electoral system refers to a “complex of rules and regulations that govern the selection of officeholders” in a democratic context. For him, the choice of a particular electoral system does not only have a profound effect on the political life of a country, it also distributes costs and benefits to political actors i.e. political parties and candidates. In this view Jibrin (2010) argues that most controversy about electoral systems center on rules for converting votes into seats. Such rules are as important as they are technical. They form the inner workings of democracy, sometimes as little understood by ordinary voters as the engine of a car but just as essential to the political machine. Most time electoral systems make

provision for the way and means through which people's representatives are to be elected or chosen. This explains the assertion that elections are a complex set of activities with different variables that act and feed on one another. For Nnoli (cited in Obah-Akpowoghaha 2013) asserts that, "an electoral system encompasses procedures, rules and regulations for the electorate to exercise their right to vote and determines how elected MPs occupy their allocated seats in the legislature". For him, the procedures, rules and regulations governing elections are commonly defined by both national constitutions and specific electoral laws. The administrative obligations and management of elections are the responsibility of specific public institutions tasked for that, either as government departments (as in Swaziland) or as independent electoral commissions (as in Lesotho). Also some scholars have argued that most basic level, electoral systems translate the votes cast in a general election into seats won by parties and candidates in the legislature at the national and, where relevant, the sub-national level as well. For Reynold (quoted in Obah-Akpowoghaha 2013) further identifies the key elements of an electoral system to include:

- The electoral formula (plurality/majority, proportional, mixed, or other);
- The ballot structure (i.e. whether the voter votes for a candidate or a party and whether; the voter makes a single choice or expresses a series of preferences); and
- The district magnitude (the number of representatives to the legislature that a particular district elects)

Thus, for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2009) writes that, electoral systems define and structure the rules of the political game; help determine who is elected, how a campaign is fought, the role of political parties, and most importantly, who governs. Furthermore, the choice of an electoral system can help to 'engineer' specific outcomes, such as to encourage cooperation and accommodation in a divided society. Hence, the importance of a suitable electoral system in a developing country like Nigeria with diverse ethnic base cannot be overemphasized. In other words, this explains that electoral systems are the central political institution in representative democracies. It converts votes into seats and structure the choices facing voters. It also affects the behaviour of political parties, individual MPs, and candidates. Consequently, a country's electoral system is the technique used to measure the number of elected position in government that persons and political parties are awarded after elections. In other words, it is the way that votes are translated into seats in parliament or in other areas of government (such as the presidency).

Election Administration

And for Election Administration Iwara (2010) sees election administration as "the organization and conduct of elections to elective / public (political) offices by an electoral body". For him, subsume in election administration are the structure and process. By structure it "meant the bureaucracy that is set up or established to organize and conduct elections" The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is a good example. By process is "meant the rules, procedures and activities relating among others, the establishment of electoral bodies, the appointment of their members, the registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, balloting, counting of the ballots, declaration of results, the selection and training of electoral officials, constituency delimitation, voters education and, in some cases, registration of political parties and supervisor of party nomination congresses". Apart from the issues raised in structure and

process of election administration mentioned above, Beckett (2011) argues that there are other critical issues in election administration or management including but not limited to problems of funding of the Electoral Management Body (EMB), logistics, the pervasive role of the state, tenure of office and autonomy of the EMB, among others.

However, it is quite worrisome to note that the issues of election administration have not been accorded the right of place in relation to the issue establishing the electoral system especially in developing countries including Nigeria. Indeed, the administration of election has generated less interest and literature. Therefore from these review, it is clear that there exist different types of electoral system practiced by different countries which are determined by both electoral environmental factors and internal peculiarities of each country. Yet the electoral system adopted and practiced in Nigeria, the Plurality System has implications and impacts on the success or failure of system. This is more so given the avalanche of issues highlighted above surrounding election administration in Nigeria. While the situation on electoral administration in Nigeria approximate that of the independent EMB, several issues raised when discussing election administration, calls for answer in light of the need for people' vote to count and for the electoral system to flourish, thereby deepening electoral administration process in Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used both the primary and secondary data collection. The primary data were sourced through the administration of questionnaire on a purposively selected sample of 220 respondents from among four of the five states of the South Eastern region; namely Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The sample size outline is as follows: 100 respondents are drawn from among the 5 selected political parties (People's Democratic Party (PDP) - 25; All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) - 25; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) - 25; Progressive People's Alliance (PPA) - 25; and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) - 25; The above named political parties are the leading political parties in the selected states. Also, 28 lecturers from the selected universities; such as University of Nigeria, Nnsuka (UNN) - 7; Imo State university (IMSU), Owerri - 7; Abia State University (ABSU) - 7; and Ebonyi State University (EBSU) - 7. These lecturers are drawn from relevant departments like Political Science, Sociology and Law.

While the selection of these universities was due to their locations, the choice of the selected department is as a result of expertise and observatory experience in the selected states during the conduct of 2011 general elections. 12 respondents from the election monitoring organization (Right Monitoring Group (RMG) – 3; Center for Convention in Democracy Integrity Limited – 3; United Nation Education and Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – 3; and Peace Corps of Nigeria – 3) Their selection is based on their observatory experience in the selected states during the conduct of 2011 general elections. 80 respondents, with 15 each from the four selected states will be drawn from among the electorates. Secondary data were sourced from relevant books, journals/articles, newspapers, magazines, seminar papers, government publications, documentary records, public lecture series, internet and other archival materials. Given the empirical nature of the study, secondary data were heavily relied upon in generating relevant data. Data were analyzed using analysis of variance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Socio-Demographical Characteristics of Respondents

The description of the respondent by sex as observed in Table1 shows that 45.73% of the respondents in the study area are Male while 54.27% were observed to be female. The study also revealed the age distribution of the respondents, of which 29.65% were between ages 18-30 years, 31-45 years were 36.18%, 46-60 years were 19.10%, while 61-75 years were 15.08%. By state of origin, larger percentage of the respondents 27.14% came from Enugu state, 17.59% came from Abia, 24.62% from Ebonyi while 18.59% came from Imo state. In relation to respondent's occupation, 9.05% were lecturer, 30.15% were politician, 6.53% were election observer while 54.27% are engaged in an occupation not categorized in the study.

Presentation of Socio-demographic Data of Respondents through Pie-chart and Tables

Table.1: Percentage Distribution of the Respondents by their Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	91.00	45.73
Female	108.00	54.27
Age	Frequency	Percent
18-30 years	59.00	29.65
31-45 years	72.00	36.18
46-60 years	38.00	19.10
61-75 years	30.00	15.08
State of Origin	Frequency	Percent
Abia	35.00	17.59
Ebonyi	49.00	24.62
Enugu	54.00	27.14
Imo	37.00	18.59
Other	24.00	12.06
Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Lecturing	18.00	9.05
Politician	60.00	30.15
Election Observer	13.00	6.53
Others	108.00	54.27

Party	Frequency	Percent
PDP	20.00	10.05
ACN	15.00	7.54
PPA	11.00	5.53
APGA	17.00	8.54
ANPP	9.00	4.52
None	127.00	63.82
Total	199.00	100.00

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2013

Research Question 1:

What is the level of Preparations of INEC before the Conduct of 2011 Gubernatorial Elections in South-Eastern Nigeria

The respondents' knowledge towards the level of preparations of INEC before the conduct of 2011 gubernatorial elections in south-eastern Nigeria discussed in the table below. The opinion of respondents in relation to strategic operational plan of 2011 election, greater numbers of them, 11.06% agreed, 69.35% undecided, 15.08% disagreed while 0.52% strongly disagreed that INEC did not have a strategic operational plan for the 2011 voters' registration exercise. The study also confirmed that 13.57% strongly agreed, 70.85% agreed, 11.56% undecided, 3.02% disagreed while 1.01% strongly disagreed that there was insufficient time for training of INEC staffs before the 2011 election which did not allow for proper assessment of personnel before deployment to the field. Also, 1.01% strongly agreed, 21.11% agreed, 76.88% undecided while 1.01% disagreed that INEC and relevant stakeholders organized series of public enlightenment and voter education programme as part of its preparation before the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria. Moreover, 2.51% strongly agreed, 45.23% agreed, 22.61% undecided and disagreed respectively while 7.04% strongly disagreed that registration of voters was not given sufficient publicity by INEC during the 2011 general election in South Eastern Nigeria. As regards funds available to INEC for the conduct of 2011 election, 0.5% strongly agreed, 9.55% agreed, 56% undecided, 19.60% disagreed while 20.10% strongly disagreed that appropriate funds were not released for INEC to organize and conduct the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria. Similarly, 0.5% strongly agreed, 34.67% agreed, 17.59% undecided, 46.23% disagreed while 1.01 strongly disagreed that INEC lack credibility during the 2011 voters registration exercise in South Eastern Nigeria.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of responses on the level of preparations of the INEC before the conduct of 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
INEC did not have a strategic operational plan for the 2011 voters' registration exercise.	0	0	22.00	11.06	138.00	69.35	30.00	15.08	9.00	4.52
There was insufficient time for training of INEC staffs before the 2011 election which did not allow for proper assessment of personnel before deployment to the field.	27.00	13.57	141.00	70.85	23.00	11.56	6.00	3.02	2.00	1.01
INEC and relevant stakeholders organized series of public enlightenment and voter education programme as part of its preparation before the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria.	2.00	1.01	42.00	21.11	153.00	76.88	2.00	1.01	-	-
Registration of voters was not given sufficient publicity by INEC during the 2011 general election in South Eastern Nigeria	1.00	0.50	19.00	9.55	100.00	50.25	39.00	19.60	40.00	20.10
Appropriate funds were not released for INEC to organize and conduct the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria.	5.00	2.51	90.00	45.23	45.00	22.61	45.00	22.61	14.00	7.04
The assistance of the Development Partners, before, during and after the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South Eastern Nigeria contributed to the successful performance of INEC.	8.00	4.02	36.00	18.09	152.00	76.38	2.00	1.01	1.00	0.50
INEC lack credibility during the 2011 voters registration exercise in South Eastern Nigeria	1.00	0.50	69.00	34.67	35.00	17.59	92.00	46.23	2.00	1.01

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2013

Research Question 2:**What are the Challenges faced by INEC during the Conduct of 2011 Gubernatorial Elections in South-Eastern Nigeria?**

Results from the data table below revealed that, 60.80% strongly agreed, 36.68% agreed, 1.51% undecided while 1.01% disagreed that some local government and state headquarters of INEC in South Eastern Nigeria experienced inappropriate transportation mode during the 2011 voter's registration. Also, 50.25% strongly agreed, 48.24% agreed, 1.01% were undecided while 8.54% strongly disagreed that multiple registration and underage registrations were some of the major challenges during the 2011 registration exercise in South Eastern Nigeria.

In relation to electoral staff technical capability, 31.66% strongly agreed, 57.29% agreed while 11.06% undecided that there were technical challenges over the ability of many ad hoc staffs to use the Direct Data Capturing (DDC) machine. Moreover, 6.03% strongly agreed, 48.24% agreed, 38.19% undecided, 2.01% disagreed while 5.53% strongly disagreed respectively that there were several cases of non-compliance with the directive that no polling station should have more than 500 voters during the conduct of the 2011 general election.

Furthermore, as touching public enlightenment about 2011 election, 3.52% strongly agreed, 77.39% agreed, 12.06% undecided, 6.03% disagreed while 1.01% strongly disagreed that there was lack of public enlightenment on the display of voters register during the 2011 registration exercise in south eastern Nigeria. Similarly, 24.12% strongly agreed, 73.87% agreed, 1.51% were undecided while 0.50 strongly disagreed that there were delays in the distribution of materials during the 2011 registration exercise in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Identified Challenges Faced by INEC during the Conduct of 2011 Gubernatorial Elections in South-Eastern Nigeria

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Some local government and state headquarters of INEC in South Eastern Nigeria experienced inappropriate transportation mode during the 2011 voter's registration.	121.00	60.80	73.00	36.68	3.00	1.51	2.00	1.01		
Multiple registration and underage registrations were some of the major challenges during the 2011 registration exercise in South Eastern Nigeria.	100.00	50.25	96.00	48.24	2.00	1.01	-	-	1.00	0.50
There were technical challenges over the ability of many ad hoc staffs to use the Direct Data Capturing (DDC) machine.	63.00	31.66	114.00	57.29	22.00	11.06	-	-	-	-

There were several cases of non-compliance with the directive that no polling station should have more than 500 voters during the conduct of the 2011 general election.	12.00	6.03	96.00	48.24	76.00	38.19	4.00	2.01	11.00	5.53
INEC staffs (permanent and ad hoc) were poorly remunerated in the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria.	4.00	2.01	60.00	30.15	57.00	28.64	39.00	19.60	39.00	19.60
There was lack of public enlightenment on the display of voters register during the 2011 registration exercise in south eastern Nigeria.	7.00	3.52	154.00	77.39	24.00	12.06	12.00	6.03	2.00	1.01
There were delays in the distribution of materials during the 2011 registration exercise in South-Eastern Nigeria.	48.00	24.12	147.00	73.87	3.00	1.51	-	-	1.00	0.50

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2013

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This research work was specifically designed to assess “the performance of INEC during the process and conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern States of Nigeria”. In order to achieve the two specific objectives, two research questions were raised. Frequencies and percentages were used in presentation of personal data while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to answering research hypothesis.

Research question one was on how prepared was INEC before the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria? The result from the finding shows that significant relationship exist between strategies adopted by INEC as part of its preparation for the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South Eastern Nigeria and the free and fair election in that region. This finding is in line with (Beckett 2011) that the crucial role of election officials in the conduct of credible and peaceful elections was recognized early in the commission's preparations for the general elections. Consequently, efforts were made to ensure that officiating of the 2011 General Elections was enhanced by timely sourcing, recruitment, and training of the ad-hoc staff before the commencement of the electoral activities. In order to achieve this goal a task-force was set-up, to among other things identify the source of the ad-hoc personnel requirements estimated to be 368,812; liaising with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Federal Tertiary Institutions and other Federal Agencies. The role played by University Staff as Collation Officers at the Registration Areas, Local Government Areas, Constituency Collation levels, particularly as Returning Officers, raised the level of credibility of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria with particular reference to south eastern region. Their involvement in the process substantially addressed the incidence of declaration of false election results and declaration of results of inconclusive elections (Ibrahim 2011).

The findings of research question two revealed that there is significant relation between challenges faced by the INEC during the conduct of the 2011 gubernatorial elections in South-Eastern Nigeria and success of the election. This finding is in line with (IFRA 2011) who noted that one of the major challenges that characterized previous elections was the issue of multiple voting. He revealed that the commission took the view that a major way to check this in the 2011 elections was to have: (i) Accreditation of voters, between 8.00 am and 12.00 noon, simultaneous across the country and (ii) vote casting from 12:30 pm, until the last person on the queue has voted. According to him, this arrangement makes it extremely difficult for any multiple voting to take place. Naturally this came with its own challenges especially adequacy of time on Election Day. This necessitated INEC to adopt Voting Points as one of its strategies. Voting Points are locations within polling units where queues of not more than 300 voters are formed for accreditation and voting, manned by a poll clerk, usually an Assistant Presiding Officer (APO). Thus a polling unit with 900 registered voters would be divided into three (3) voting points with about 300 voters at each voting point. This way, it was possible to accredit about 300 voters within the four-hour period provided for accreditation. Another strategy adopted by INEC in the conduct of the 2011 general election in Nigeria was operations costs. This strategy started from the on-set, the commission agreed on the costs of operations as well as honoraria to be paid to ad-hoc staff. To ensure successful conduct of the elections, the Commission, through the Operations department computed the operations cost and disbursed same to the State Offices, and NYSC.

They further noted that the Prior to the conduct of the April 2011 General Election, the Commission was fortunate in that several Development Partners offered to work with it in pursuit of its primary objective of conducting free, fair and credible elections. Indeed the Commission enjoyed tremendous support from many Development Partners, before, during and after the elections (Jega 2011).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

Arising from the study the paper therefore recommend: INEC as an institution that conduct election in Nigeria should be holistically independent (in the appointment of the chairman and the finance of the body should be within the confides of the consolidated account of the federation which will ensure sincerity of purpose concerning free and fair elections in the country); INEC should work with the National Assembly and other stakeholders towards reviewing the relevant sections of the constitution and the Electoral Act to address all gaps and problems in the legal framework of electoral governance in the country. Such review should be concluded before the end of 2014. This is to ensure that the legal framework guiding subsequent elections is concluded in order to facilitate better understanding of the electoral process and enhanced electoral administration; INEC should be restructured in relation to its recruitment and staffing with emphasis placed on the definition job roles recruitments and the matching of such roles with relevant skill. Such restructuring should address the issue of staff redundancy and under utilization of personnel. Also, there should be definition of the duties and responsibilities of INEC department with regard to the discharge of the mandate of the commission; and electoral crime commission should be established to serve as a watchdog of the electoral commission. These bodies should have power to prosecute any individual or group caught in

electoral crime such as falsification of results, thuggery violence, snatching of ballot box and other electoral ills in the court of law.

Conclusively, the 2011 gubernatorial elections conducted in South Eastern Nigeria were neither perfect nor faultless; thereby revealed persistent challenges, which includes logistical and operational problems, and election-related violence. Nevertheless, the elections provided a genuine opportunity for larger number of citizens to exercise their right to vote and for their votes to count compared to the previous elections. Consequently, the commission (INEC) under the leadership of Professor Attahiru M. Jega has managed to bring substantial improvement to the electoral process. Although, this improvement is yet to reach a level of perfection whereby there will be a general acceptability of the elections results. Finally, the study seeks to crave the indulgent of Nigerians to support the commission (INEC) towards the forthcoming 2015 elections

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