



## ELECTORAL CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA AND THE ROLE OF INEC: A CASE STUDY OF 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS.

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D),  
<sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel

<sup>1,2,3 & 5</sup>Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Oye-Ekiti;

<sup>4</sup>G.S Unit, Enugu State University of Science and Technology,

<sup>6</sup>Science Unit, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

### Abstract

*This study aims to investigate the obstacles affecting the peaceful conduct of elections in Nigeria, focusing on the 2023 elections held by INEC as a case study. While some African nations have managed to conduct transparent elections, others like DR Congo and Nigeria have faced challenges like rigging and violence despite efforts to ensure credibility. Nigeria, specifically, has witnessed violence, ballot theft, vote buying, and electoral malpractices, hindering the attainment of free and fair elections. Before the 2023 elections, INEC reported attacks on 53 of its offices across Nigeria, with ongoing violence persisting. This paper critically analyzes these challenges to identify their root causes and proposes solutions to facilitate transparent and credible elections in Nigeria. Through a method of critical analysis, it argues that politicians, citizens, INEC, the judiciary, and the government all bear responsibility for ensuring successful polls. Additionally, it suggests that adopting successful strategies used by countries like Senegal, Angola, and Kenya could provide insights for Nigeria to overcome these challenges.*

**Keywords:** Election, General, Nigeria, INEC, Role

### Introduction

The general sentiment expressed about Nigeria's elections since 1999 is one of disappointment due to recurring irregularities and the apparent disconnect between the candidates declared winners by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the people's preferred choices. These issues have persisted through seven election cycles, including the most recent one in 2023. Despite promises by the government and INEC to conduct the freest and fairest elections, the reality fell far short of these assurances. Several problems plagued the 2023 elections, including the exorbitant cost of nomination forms that deterred competent candidates, the failure of new technology like the Biometric Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and a range of issues during the presidential and National Assembly elections. These problems included rigging, underage voting, vote buying, ballot paper burning, violence, result cancellations, delays, disenfranchisements, and BVAS malfunctions, all of which contradicted the constitutional provisions outlined in Section 133 of Nigeria's Constitution.

A candidate for an election to the office of the president shall be deemed to have been duly elected to such office where being the only candidate nominated for the election- (a) he has a majority of YES over NO votes cast at the election; and (b) he has not less than one-quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two-thirds of all the States in the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, but where the only candidate fails to be elected in accordance with this section, then there shall be fresh nominations.

The constitution clearly indicates that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was compromised. The candidate declared as the winner was not properly nominated, lacked the majority YES due to extensive rigging, and importantly, did not secure victories in all states, including the Federal Capital

#### Citation:

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management* Vol. 2 (1), pg. 180-188 . WWW.FJPAM.COM



Territory. This paper aims to thoroughly investigate these irregularities and challenges to propose solutions. To begin, it's crucial to analyze specific concepts to provide clarity on the issues at hand.

### **Conceptual Analysis**

#### **Election**

Election is a process through which political offices of government are filled; where the electorates are given the opportunity to elect their leaders through a democratic process that should be free, fair and transparent (Heywood, 2019). Election does not begin and end with the casting of votes by the electorates as to elect their political leaders into government; it is also the act of citizens actively taking part in governance through ensuring the sustenance and consolidation of democracy in the country (David, 2020). Therefore, it can be said that election is a ritual organized periodically for the electorates to cast their votes for leaders of their choice, and it is also a veritable process through which leadership of the country are changed through a peace process aimed at achieving improved socio-economic policies that will become beneficial to the citizenry (cited in Azowue, 2023).

Nigeria's electoral history traces back to 1959, featuring a diverse array of political parties. The country operates on a multi-party system, with prominent parties like APC, PDP, APGA, NNPP, and LP demonstrating significant electoral success. For 16 years following the restoration of elections in 1999, the PDP held the presidency until Mr. Muhammadu Buhari's victory in 2015. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with the responsibility, among others, to conduct elections for various political offices across the nation (Johnson, 2023). The significance of elections cannot be overstated.

Elections play a crucial role in fostering democracy as they stand as the sole legitimate method for choosing public officials. They enforce accountability among elected representatives, who recognize that their performance can determine their removal in subsequent elections. Additionally, elections facilitate the smooth transition of government, especially in nations with inclusive political institutions. However, in Nigeria since 1999, elections have consistently faced challenges. Manipulation is prevalent as those in power seek to maintain their positions, leading to increased instances of vote-buying and various forms of election fraud (Nnaji, 2020).

#### **Electoral Malpractice**

Electoral malpractice, also known as electoral fraud, encompasses any misconduct during the electoral process that influences election outcomes for personal gain at the expense of the public interest (Heywood, 2019). These wrongful actions, illegal and unjust, occur before, during, and after elections and can involve desperate politicians, security personnel, electoral commission staff, political parties, supporters, and hired individuals like thugs, all aiming to secure victory. Such malpractices manifest in various forms, including ballot box destruction, underage voting, ballot stuffing, vote manipulation, rigging, voter intimidation, disenfranchisement, manipulation of electoral devices, and the practice of vote-buying (Uwoh, 2019).

#### **INEC**

INEC, short for the Independent National Electoral Commission, was founded by Abudulsalami Abubakar in 1998, just before Nigeria's shift from military to civilian rule. It serves as the country's electoral authority, responsible for supervising all elections within Nigeria. As the primary election umpire, it assumes responsibility for all electoral affairs in the nation. INEC operates as an independent entity, conducting its functions devoid of external influence, including government interference. Its pivotal roles and responsibilities will be examined closely (Obot, 2022).

#### **Functions of INEC**

##### **Electoral Education**

INEC officials are tasked with educating voters to prevent errors during voting, providing guidance on thumb printing, avoiding mistakes, and handling ballot papers to prevent ink stains. This education is disseminated through various channels such as media, churches, workplaces, and markets. Given Nigeria's

#### *Citation:*

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188 . WWW.FJPAM.COM



large population and limited INEC officials, ad-hoc staff are hired to support during elections. Proper training for these individuals is crucial to prevent errors in managing election results. However, observations from the 2023 elections suggest that INEC may have failed in adequately educating these staff, leading to discrepancies and cancellations. To ensure credible elections, there's a need for extensive voter education and awareness programs, with a specific emphasis on women, youth, and marginalized groups (Uzoanya, 2023).

### **Political Party Registration**

INEC is responsible for registering political parties in Nigeria according to the regulations outlined in the country's constitution, specifically Section 221, subsection (a), which mandates that no association can operate as a political party without registering its national officers' names and addresses with the Independent National Electoral Commission. The excessive registration of political parties in Nigeria has led to frequent instances of politicians switching party affiliations, particularly during election campaigns. This trend has emerged as a challenge impacting the conduct of free and fair elections in the country (Oquaye, 2020).

### **Political Parties Campaigns Monitoring**

Following their registration, political parties in Nigeria are permitted to conduct campaigns, operating within the principles outlined in the country's constitution. It's the responsibility of INEC to ensure compliance with these principles, yet there's a prevailing issue with enforcement. Many political parties frequently breach these principles without facing repercussions from INEC. For instance, substantial sums of money were openly distributed by a specific party to delegates during their primaries, yet no action was taken. This failure to regulate the activities of these parties has allowed corruption to thrive further during elections (Adebayo, 2023).

### **Voters Registration**

INEC is tasked with registering individuals above the age of eighteen and issuing voter cards containing essential voter details to prevent electoral malpractice. Possession of a voter's card is a prerequisite for voting eligibility during elections. However, INEC's failure in the 2023 elections was evident as underage individuals were observed casting votes, indicating a significant deviation from INEC's regulations and raising questions about its reliability. Voter registration in Nigeria remains a persistent challenge that requires resolution (Amadi, 2023).

### **Democratic Electoral Process Promotion**

In Nigeria, fostering robust democratic education falls under the purview of INEC. The commission is responsible for disseminating the democratic knowledge it has accumulated. However, there are concerns regarding INEC's apparent lack of democracy and independence, deviating from its expected role and status (Akagha, 2010).

### **Delegation of Powers**

INEC operates within a hierarchical structure, ranging from the Chairman to various levels of officials like Resident Electoral Commissioners, Electoral Officers, Returning Officers, and Collation Officers. The commission has the authority to delegate responsibilities to individuals for various functions. However, instances where INEC deviates from its responsibilities can be attributed, at times, to interference from the incumbent government. When a corrupt or self-serving government is in power, it may manipulate INEC's functions to maintain control. The credibility of democracy lies in its integrity, and INEC's effectiveness diminishes when it succumbs to external influences (Bako, 2023).

### **Challenges Facing Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria**

In Nigeria today, there are a lot of challenges confronting peaceful elections and these are;

#### **Persistence of Violence ahead of, and during Elections**

Electoral violence has plagued Nigerian elections for a considerable time, and unfortunately, the trend persisted during the 2023 general elections, spreading across almost all 36 states. Lagos, notably, became

#### *Citation:*

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188  
. WWW.FJPAM.COM



a focal point for such incidents. Political parties often employed thugs to disrupt the electoral process in various regions like Rivers, Lagos, Enugu, Abia, and Adamawa. In Enugu, for instance, a House of Representatives candidate from the Labour Party was tragically murdered just days before the House of Assembly election. Threats were also directed at a Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Rivers State to prevent the announcement of presidential results from a specific local government (Bako, 2023).

In Lagos State, instances of violence were reported, triggering an ethnic clash between the Igbo and Yoruba communities. Anambra State experienced fatalities, with a voter shot dead during polling in Njikoka LGA, while police intervened to stop hoodlums attempting to snatch ballot boxes in Ihiala LGA. This persistent cycle of violence during and after elections has significantly marred the electoral process in Nigeria and contributed to the low voter turnout witnessed by INEC (Bako, 2023).

### **Vote Buying**

In Nigeria's political landscape, money holds immense sway in determining leadership, overshadowing competence and turning elections into intense battles. Money politics has become pervasive in Africa, impeding the rise of competent and incorruptible leaders in Nigeria. The prevailing practice of buying votes among Nigerian politicians presents a formidable challenge to the integrity of the electoral process, distorting election outcomes and undermining genuine representation (Victor, 2019).

The 2022 APC primaries vividly showcased the prevalence of vote-buying, significantly influencing the victories of many candidates. Despite attempts to curb this practice in the 2023 general elections, these efforts proved ineffective. As the government endeavours to combat vote-buying, politicians continuously devise new methods to perpetuate it, attributing its roots to the exorbitant costs of purchasing nomination forms and running campaigns. This culture of vote-buying further solidifies the grip of political elites on power, as they vigorously fight to retain their positions by any means necessary (Uwuh, 2023).

### **High Cost of Running Elections**

Over time, the expenses associated with conducting elections in Nigeria have steadily risen, yet measures to address this escalating cost have been lacking. This elevated cost barrier has provided an opening for ill-suited politicians to access leadership positions and maintain their power grip. Consequently, when these individuals assume office, their primary agenda often revolves around recouping the substantial funds spent during their campaigns. As a result, their focus shifts towards misappropriating public funds, leading to a tenure marked by minimal achievements or significant developmental efforts (Ugiagbe, 2010).

### **Multi-Party System**

This poses a significant challenge and financial strain on INEC. Nigeria's abundance of political parties leads to considerable wastage of resources during elections. It also facilitates the continuous shifting of politicians from one party to another. The desire of numerous entities to establish political parties creates a logistical hurdle for INEC to accommodate all parties on a single ballot paper (Gani, 2015).

### **Poor Funding**

INEC grapples with a critical issue of insufficient funding despite the allocation of substantial sums for organizing elections. Adequate remuneration for ad-hoc staff engaged during elections is crucial. The current challenges with payments have led to the emergence of criminal practices like vote-buying (Reginald, 2020). Therefore, it's imperative for INEC to enhance the honoraria for these staff members and ensure prompt and adequate payment to address these issues.

### **Electoral Acts**

While INEC operates independently, at times, legislative actions by the National Assembly can impede its operations. For instance, despite the longstanding existence of electronic voting methods, INEC cannot implement them without explicit permission in an electoral act. Occasionally, INEC may be seen violating laws, potentially favoring the ruling government. The Electoral Acts stipulate requirements for a presidential candidate to secure 25% of votes in all 36 states and win in the FCT, yet these regulations were not strictly applied in the 2023 general elections. Similarly, the provision for conducting supplementary

#### *Citation:*

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188  
. WWW.FJPAM.COM



elections in areas marred by violence was not fully considered by INEC during the 2023 elections (Reginald, 2020).

### **Underage Voter**

The issue of underage voters persists as a challenge within Nigeria's electoral process, despite the implementation of the BVAS technology. Surprisingly, during the 2023 general elections, these underage voters resurfaced and were observed casting votes on election days. This raises critical questions regarding the registration process for these individuals and why they were permitted to vote despite being underage. This situation highlights INEC's failure to fulfill its responsibilities and adhere to its mandated functions (Reginald, 2020).

### **Snatching of Ballot Boxes**

It's disheartening that in Nigeria, the lawmakers themselves often become the ones who disregard the laws they create. The recurring problem of ballot box snatching isn't a novel occurrence. It involves desperate politicians who, upon realizing their potential loss in a particular state or ward, resort to sending violent hoodlums to invade and attack those areas. These criminals exhibit extreme violence, willing to kill and even destroy ballot papers. Regrettably, numerous INEC staff and even police officers have lost their lives due to this disturbing trend (Ladan, 2016).

### **Logistics**

During elections, the transportation of people, sensitive materials, and non-sensitive items to various destinations poses a significant challenge. This logistical issue often leads to delays or even the outright cancellation of elections. While some regions, particularly those in riverine areas or prone to violence, present difficulties in accessibility, INEC also contributes to exacerbating these problems. Sometimes, INEC fails to plan adequately in advance, relying on last-minute arrangements on the Election Day itself. These delays could be avoided by proactive planning and preparation well in advance, rather than making arrangements on the day of the elections (Ladan, 2016). Additionally, it's crucial for INEC to secure safe accommodations for ad-hoc staff, as relying on their transportation to INEC offices on the Election Day itself can lead to further delays.

### **Growing Population**

INEC faces a significant challenge in maintaining an accurate voter register due to the country's increasing population. As people age, relocate, or pass away, tracing those who have aged or moved to update their information to prevent disenfranchisement, and identifying deceased individuals to remove them from the register, becomes a complex task for the commission.

### **Delay in Paying the Ad-Hoc Staff Honorarium**

INEC heavily relies on ad-hoc staff—comprising students, NYSC members, and some government employees—for election duties. Despite their crucial roles, these individuals often face delays or non-payment of their honoraria. Following the 2023 elections, numerous ad-hoc staff staged protests due to non-payment, with some receiving incomplete payments. This neglect by INEC creates circumstances where these staff members, in need of proper welfare, might resort to accepting bribes from desperate politicians to manipulate the elections. Ensuring their welfare is vital as they face compromising situations and harsh living conditions. Importantly, these payment delays aren't specific to the 2023 elections but have been recurring. INEC should prioritize proper preparation and care for the welfare of these ad-hoc staff (Uzoanya, 2023).

### **2023 General Elections in Nigeria and the Role of INEC**

Before the 2023 general elections, former President Mr. Buhari and INEC Chairman Prof. Mahmood Yakubu assured the Nigerian populace of the elections' integrity, promising a free, fair, and credible process. INEC allocated a budget of N355 billion to cover logistical expenses and implement innovations like BVAS and the INEC Result Viewing (IREV) portal. These were technological advancements aimed to facilitate peaceful elections devoid of manipulation or rigging. The INEC chairman reiterated that the

#### *Citation:*

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188 . WWW.FJPAM.COM



introduction of BVAS would significantly reduce various forms of electoral malpractices during the elections. As Uzoanya puts it:

Many Nigerians looked forward to the 2023 general elections for many reasons, among which were: the fact that the elections were not the traditional two-horse race; the repeated assurances from the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC; the signing of the 2022 Electoral Act which contained the deployment of technology; the increasingly depressing state of the economy, among others. So, the build-up to the elections was one filled with a nostalgia of anxiety, apprehension, and hope that the time has come for us to get things right. But did we? (Uzoanya, 2023)

The introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) aimed to enhance Nigeria's election credibility and transparency by reducing manual manipulation of figures. Initially tested successfully in the Isoko South Constituency by-election in Delta State in September 2021, the BVAS was expected to verify voter card authenticity and authenticate voters during accreditation. However, during the February 25, 2023 elections, the BVAS failed significantly, despite government and INEC assurances that all results would be promptly uploaded via the IREV portal (Uzoanya, 2023).

Nigerians turned out in large numbers with enthusiasm and dedication, arriving as early as 6 am at polling units, with some even staying overnight and offering generators to prevent manipulation. This dedication stemmed from the belief that past electoral malpractices would be eradicated, and their votes would genuinely count, as promised by the electoral body. However, the reality was starkly different. Instead of progress, the elections were tainted by disappointment, deception, intimidation, and failure. The people felt betrayed and deceived by the INEC leadership, realizing that the promised improvements were not fulfilled. Uzoanya in his words observes that:

The election was marred by irregularities, ranging from voter suppression, intimidation, raw violence, sporadic shootings, snatching of ballot papers, and vote buying, among others. Both international and local observers attested to the fact that the election was grossly below standard. A key factor of uploading results from the polling units to the IREV portal looked like “the more you look, the less you see (Uzoanya, 2023)”!

The redesign of Nigerian currency aimed to curtail vote-buying, but on Election Day, politicians were seen distributing Dollars to voters, nullifying the currency redesign's purpose. The CBN's limit on bank withdrawals to counter the Naira swap led to hardship and loss of lives. Tragically, the elections witnessed violence in Lagos, Rivers, Kano, and Adamawa states, undermining their credibility. INEC faced logistical issues, failing to provide adequate vehicles for staff and materials, leading to voter disenfranchisement. Slow result collation heightened tension, while unpaid honoraria added to the chaos (Adebayo, 2023).

The 2023 elections plunged Nigeria into a state worse than Thomas Hobbes' "state of nature." Citizens lost trust in government, some destroying their voter cards due to betrayal. Despite advancements like the BVAS reducing over-voting, INEC's shortcomings were evident. Bad leadership and INEC's failure as an independent body were at the heart of the issue (Adebayo, 2023).

Politicians became the weakest link, causing suffering for citizens and undermining the electoral process. Sowore highlighted the need for a revolution to foster free and fair elections based on ideas, criticizing the destruction of progressive politics by politicians. Nigeria's political landscape juxtaposes bright, young individuals limited to local positions while outdated figures vie for presidency (Adebayo, 2023).

Despite INEC's shortcomings, some progress was evident. BVAS mitigated over-voting, allowing for awareness of voter numbers in certain high-volume areas. The 2023 elections welcomed a diverse range of political parties into office compared to the usual dominance of only two parties in previous years.

Despite these disappointments, there were some improvements, such as the introduction of the BVAS, which reduced issues like over-voting. The 2023 elections saw increased awareness and participation,

*Citation:*

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188 . WWW.FJPAM.COM



bringing a more diverse range of political parties, including PDP, LP, APC, YPP, NNPC, and APGA, into office, a departure from previous years dominated by just two parties.

### **Theoretical framework**

What is used as a theoretical framework in this paper is Harold Lasswell's definition of politics as "Who gets what, when and how?" However, the concept "politics" is changed to Election and the verb "gets" changes to wins.

Therefore, the theoretical framework is "Nigerian Election is who wins, when and how. This stems from the fact that declaration of election result in Nigeria since 1999, worse still the 2023 election did not follow any known law, (constitutional or Acts of the National Assembly). It, therefore, follows that whichever contestant that plays any intrigue can be declared the winner of an election. It is on that note that Atiku (2023) condemned in strongest terms APC's snatch, grab and run agenda as the worst thing that will happen to Nigeria's election. More so, the audacity with which the electoral umpire ask parties that raise observations during the process of collation of election results to "go to court" leaves much to be desired, and portrays election victories as been won by fiat or by the person who will do the magic not necessarily what emanates from what was cast during voting. The Economist notes that "after a chaotically organised vote and messy count, Bola Tinubu, the candidate of Nigeria's incumbent ruling party, has been declared the winner of the closest presidential election in decades". The above observation affirms the above theory that Nigeria's election victory is dependent on the arsenal at the 'winners' disposal and not based on existing extant laws.

### **Ways to Overcome These Challenges Facing Electoral Processes in Nigeria**

Addressing the challenges faced during the 2023 general elections requires concrete solutions beyond simply identifying the issues. Firstly, INEC needs to adhere strictly to its functions, ensuring well-trained and qualified staff, both ad-hoc and permanent, to minimize result discrepancies and cancellations. Secondly, the government holds the key to Nigeria's progress and must allow competent leaders with plans for the nation's advancement to take charge. Citizens must remain resilient, standing for truth and actively participating in elections, believing in eventual justice. The judiciary's commitment to upholding truth and the rule of law is crucial. For desperate politicians, they should model their leadership after stable democracies like Botswana, understanding that collective efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, citizens, electoral bodies, judiciary, and politicians, are necessary to rebuild and reform the nation (Bako, 2023). Most importantly, INEC should consider conducting all the elections one day. This has the potential of shaving resources, electoral fraud and some avoidable undue influence.

**Findings:** this paper found out that;

- i there was a high level of disenfranchisement during the 2023 general election
- ii the 2023 election was marred by electoral violence of large proportions.
- iii the outcome of the election was not a reflection of the wishes of the electorate
- iv the electoral umpire (INEC) did not follow the electoral laws and the constitution in conducting and declaration of election results.
- v INEC compromised the presidential election.
- vi the electorate has lost confidence in Nigeria's electoral processes

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria's challenges stem from entrenched political elites' unwillingness to cede power to competent and dedicated leaders. Rebuilding Nigeria requires leadership that prioritizes improvement. Emulating the credible election processes seen in countries like Senegal, Angola, and Kenya could pave the way for Nigeria's resurgence. Aniobi S. C. & Ewuim N.C worried about the future of democracy in Nigeria, in their paper they concludes with the suggestions that respect and strictly adherence to the tenets of the principles of separation of powers, regular capacity building on basic conflict resolution and management training

#### Citation:

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188 . WWW.FJPAM.COM



with a view to improving their conflict management skills as well as their problem solving skills be constantly ensured among others

These three nations, partaking in President Biden's democracy summit, showcase the importance of strengthening independent institutions like electoral bodies and the judiciary. Additionally, their emphasis on campaign finance reforms promotes diverse participation and minimizes patronage. Such measures are crucial in discouraging violent destabilization in African nations and bolstering confidence in elections as a legitimate pathway for democratization.

### Recommendations:

This paper recommends that;

i in order to prevent disenfranchisement of voters, the electoral umpire should develop software that will enable every registered voter to vote at any polling station anywhere.

ii to prevent violence during election, the perpetrators and their sponsors should be commensurately punished depending on the degree of involvement.

iii the electoral umpire should be transparent and accountable by adhering strictly to the constitutional provisions and electoral laws/guidelines for all elections. Failure which, renders the election null and voids.

iv all election should be conducted the same day. And no INEC chairman should be in an office for more than one election cycle.

v electoral laws barring INEC from withholding election materials when requested by parties in court should be enacted. And no party or individual should be made to pay any sum of money before such material would be released.

vi election tribunal should be composed of retired justices.

vii the report of accredited international and local observers should be made admissible in the tribunal.

### References

- Adebayo, D. (2023), Institutionalizing Democratic Governance through Effective Management of Public Resources: The Role of Legislators. A Paper Delivered on Constitutional Review, Akure, June, 23-24
- Akagha, J. E. (2010), Violence and Political Succession in Nigeria Politics: A Lesson for Emerging Democracy, FUTO, Imo State
- Amadi, H. (2023), Problem of Election Violence in Nigeria; Seminar Paper Presentation, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
- Aniobi S. C. & Ewuim N. C. (2021) Assessment of Executive-Legislature Conflict in Nigeria's Fourth Republic 1999- 2019; *International Journal of Academic Management Science Research (IJAMSR)* ISSN: 2643-900X Vol. 5 Issue 6, June - 2021, Pages: 112-117 [www.ijeais.org/ijamsr](http://www.ijeais.org/ijamsr)
- Atiku, A. (2023): APC's snatch, grab and run agenda dangerous to democracy; Daily Post (Abuja) 21<sup>st</sup> November
- Bako, F. (2023), Problem of Democracy in Nigeria: Cultural Imperatives and Impediments, in Yakubu, N. and Igoli, I. (Eds), Culture and Democracy, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press
- David, U. (2020), Electoral Violence and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms; Daily Independence (Lagos), 27<sup>th</sup> April
- Gani, Y. (2015), Electoral Violence, Arms Proliferation and Electoral Security in Nigeria: Lessons from the 25<sup>th</sup> Elections for Emerging Democracies; Karu, Nasarawa State, Department of Political Science, Bingham University
- Heywood, A. (2019), Politics; London, Macmillan Press Ltd
- Johnson, D. (2023), Election Manipulation, Intimidation and Violence in Nigeria; Vanguard Newspapers; March, 27<sup>th</sup>

#### Citation:

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188 . [WWW.FJPAM.COM](http://WWW.FJPAM.COM)





- Ladan (2016), Enforcement of Electoral Laws and Reduction of Election Violence in Nigeria; Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
- Nnaji, L. (2020), Election Manipulation and Vote Buying in Nigeria Elections; Westview Publishers; Awka, Anambra State
- Obot, M. (2022), Understanding Tenets of Democracy in Nigeria; Vintage Press, Uyo, Akwa Ibom
- Oquaye, M. (2020), The Process of Democratization in Contemporary Ghana; Commonwealth and Contemporary Politics; 38(3)
- Reginald, N. (2020), Thuggery and Election Violence in Nigeria; Johnson Publishers, Ibadan
- The Economist. (2023). Bola Tinubu, Nigeria’s political kingmaker wins a flawed election. 1<sup>st</sup> March.
- Ugiagbe, T. B. (2010), Election Violence in Nigeria: Implication for Security, Peace and Development, A Lesson Handbook
- Uwoh, B. F. (2023), Dissecting the Challenges of Credible Election in Nigeria; Muster Seed Publications; Port Harcourt, Rivers State
- Uzoanya, C. (2023), “Elections: Is Nigeria beyond redemption”? [www.vanguardngr.com](http://www.vanguardngr.com)
- Victor, O. (2019), Reviewing Issues of Election Violence and Election Manipulation in Nigeria; Sandhurst Publications; Port Harcourt, Rivers State
- 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (As Amended)

Citation:

<sup>1</sup>Nweze, Godwin Nonye, <sup>2</sup>Igwe, C.M, <sup>3</sup>Aniobi, S.C. (Ph.D), <sup>4</sup>Mba, C. C. (Ph.D) & <sup>5</sup>Fatima, J. K. S (Ph.D), <sup>6</sup>Azowue, O Emmanuel (2024) Electoral Challenges in Nigeria and the Role of INEC: A Case Study Of 2023 General Elections. *FUOYE Journal of Public Administration and Management Vol. 2 (1)*, pg. 180-188 . WWW.FJPAM.COM