Smart Card Reader and Domocratic Consolidation: A Study of 2015 General Election in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study interrogated Smart Card Reader and the consolidation of Democracy: A study of 2015 General Election in Nigeria. This study was provoked by the need to evaluate the efficacy of the smart card reader introduced by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the 2015 general election in Nigeria. The introduction of smart card reader into Nigeria elections has sparked off controversial debates among scholars as well as policy makers and other stakeholders in the electoral process in Nigeria. The study basically made use of secondary data. The theoretical framework that anchored the study is cybernetic theory. The researcher made the following findings: The use of card reader enhanced the transparency and credibility of the 2015 election results in Nigeria. The use of card reader reduced electoral violence in Nigeria. The use of card reader promoted electoral tolerance among politicians in Nigeria. The researcher made the following recommendations ,that smart card reader should be test runned properly before using it in future elections, INEC should train people who can handle the card reader effectively, INEC should conduct research to know countries that have tried the use of smart reader and determine the level of success or failure, If INEC must continue with card reader in future elections, there must be improvement that will convince Nigerians that it will work effectively, INEC should embark on sensitization of voters before using the card reader again, Subsequent general elections in Nigeria should gradually continue to be technologically driven.

Keywords: *Card reader, Democratic consolidation, Election, INEC.*

Introduction

The idea of using card readers for the 2015 general elections generated heated debate across political divides. While some Nigerians were in support of the use of the electronic device to authenticate voters, some others vehemently opposed it. Despite the misgivings about the use of the card readers, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) insisted that the device will be used to ensure credibility in the electoral process.

INEC went further to conduct a mock test in different states across the country and reported over 90% success rate, although there were some hitches in some states. According to Kayode Idowu (2015: 43) the use of card readers in the 2015 general elections will add tremendous transparency and credibility to the accreditation process on election day while the mock exercise is to enable the commission ascertain its efficiency under different climatic conditions and discover other hitches that could be addressed before using the device for the main elections.

Ekete (2015:28) noted that the use of the card readers is a global practice and following the trend of several less endowed African countries in adopting biometrics in the voters register. Nwosu (2015) stated that the use of card readers will go a long way in preventing election malpractices such as double registration that trailed the 2011 elections and bring about efficient means to ascertain the authenticity of the Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and data of the holder or voter.

Despite the optimism, it was important for the commission to go back to the drawing board and correct some lapses witnessed during the mock test. It should also be of concern to the electoral commission to find out what was responsible for the low turnout of voters for the mock test, battery and machine failure and its inability to capture some finger prints, among other hitches in order to forestall any drawbacks that may pop up during the main elections. Power supply was and still remains an imminent setback to the use of the card readers.

Akpan (2015) noted that during the mock exercise, it was observed that some INEC staff were not too conversant with the use of the device, hence, it was necessary for INEC to further engage them in another training exercise before the polls. Since the then ruling Peoples' Democratic Party, (PDP) expressed its dissatisfaction with the use of the machine, it was also important for INEC to re-orientate them and other political stakeholders and carry out a massive public enlightenment to see the need for the use of the device. In doing this, INEC did not allow itself to be arm-twisted into discarding the use of the card readers the way the commission was successfully persuaded to shift the elections initially scheduled for 14 February. Having committed huge funds to the procurement of the machines and training of staff, dumping the idea was not a good option.

The Concept of Card Reader

The INEC smart card reader is a portable electronic voter authentication device, configured to only read the Permanent Voter Cards issued by the Independent National Electoral Commission. The card reader was designed specifically for the accreditation process; authentication of eligible voters before voting. The machine was configured to only read the PVCs of a particular polling unit and can only work on election day.

Operation

The device uses a cryptographic technology with ultra-low power consumption and one core frequency of 1.2 GHz and an Android 4.2.2. The device is position by its operator (usually a trained INEC official) to reads the embedded chip on the PVC, this procedure display the information of the voter, followed by fingerprinting. It usually takes about 10 to 20 seconds to validate a voter. On completion of accreditation process, a close V key is used to close the accreditation process and the total number of voters accredited can be previewed using a query key beside the close V

key and thereafter, the result may be forwarded to INEC using the Communication key. The card reader was first used for the Nigeria's presidential election that was held on March 28, 2015.

How Smart Card Reader Improved the Conduct of the 2015 Elections.

According to Akpan (2015), the smart card reader improved the 2015 general election. With the use of card reader multiple voting and other forms of electoral malpractices were reduced and checkmated. Before the introduction of card reader, elections in Nigeria were bedeviled with all sort of electoral malpractices. So many people gained opportunity to rig election because the system of was very porous. When INEC introduced the use of card reader in accrediting voters, it became so difficult for people to engage themselves in electoral malpractice. Ekete (2015) also made it clear that card reader improved the conduct of 2015 general election by restoring confidence in voters that their votes will count as rigging was reduced drastically. The use of card reader was the best method to reduce multiple voting. Nobody was able to vote twice in the 2015 election because card reader checkmated that.

The Relationship between Card Reader and Disenfranchisement of Voters in Afikpo North Local Government Area.

Ibekwe **(**2015) opined that card reader has serious relationship with disenfranchisement. This is because most of the eligible voters that were disenfranchised suffered such faith because the smart card reader failed to capture their finger prints for accreditation. Therefore card reader and disenfranchisement had relationship in the 2015 general election in Afikpo North Local Government Area. Kalu (2015) stated that the smart card reader failed in some polling booths in Afikpo North Local Government Area and as a result some people were disenfranchised as the alternative to the card reader called incident forms were not provided to accredit such voters till voting period was over. It is on this note that disenfranchisement came into play in both the first and second election that is the presidential and national assembly election and the governorship and state house of assembly election respectively.

The Impact of Failure of Card Reader on the credibility of 2015 election in Afikpo North Local Government Area.

Nnachi (2015) stated that the failure of card reader in the 2015 general election created negative impact on the credibility of the 2015 general election in Afikpo North Local Government Area. So many scholars had already noted the positive impact created by the card reader on the credibility of 2015 election which is very correct but the area where the smart card reader failed disenfranchised some eligible voters which gave the conduct of election negative and INEC a negative mark. It is imperative to assert that the card reader did not fail in all the polling booths where election took place but in some which impacted negatively on the credibility of the 2015 election in Afikpo North Local Government Area. The 2015 general election in Afikpo North Local Government was actually successful with the use of smart card reader except that the card

reader failed in some polling stations which created negative impact on the credibility of the 2015 general election in Afikpo North Local Government Area.

Smart Card Reader: The Real Issue in the 2015 General Elections

The smart card reader was the most highly contentious and the real issue in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The smart card reader was a critical component in the 2015 general elections. It was used for the first time in Nigeria's electoral process and it remains one of the greatest innovative technologies in the 2015 general elections. Past elections in Nigeria had witness the desperate bid for political power by some stakeholders with vested interests in the Nigerian electoral process. Some of these stakeholders engaged in all forms of electoral malpractices including multiple voting, impersonation, manipulation and falsification of results which had led to legal actions, electoral conflicts and violence. Electoral malpractices make the citizens to lose confidence in the electoral process; and lack of confidence by the citizenry in the democratic process is an impediment in deepening electoral democracy because if the citizenry does not believe in the fairness, accuracy, openness, and basic integrity of the election process, the very basis of any democratic society might be threatened. Electoral fraud according to Ike (2015) has more serious political implications, in that it allows a party or candidate to take over public positions contrary to the popular will. This undermines the democratic process and usually leads to electoral violence, insecurity and political instability. The governments of Cote d"Ivoire, Peru, and Serbia all fell in the year 2000 as a result of popular rebellions against fraudulent elections. Similarly, the so called "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004 caused presidential elections to be completely re-held after extensive fraud was demonstrated (López-Pintor, 2010: 5).

In view of the negative impacts of electoral malpractices, global attention is now focusing on how to mitigate this undemocratic Behavior and improve the electoral process. One of such strategies to combat electoral malpractices is the introduction of information and communication technology into the electoral process. Though, the use of technology in elections is not an end in itself, but assists in the various aspects of electoral administration (ACE Project, n.d). It is against this background that an electronic technologically based device, the smart card reader was introduced into the Nigerian electoral process in 2015 to help improve and deepen electoral democracy. The smart card reader is a technological device setup to authenticate and verify on election day a Permanent Voter Card (PVC) issued by INEC. The device uses a cryptographic technology that has ultra-low power consumption, with a single core frequency of 1.2GHz and an Android 4.2.2. Operating System (INEC, 2015).

In other words, the INEC card reader is designed to read information contained in the embedded chip of the permanent voter's card issued by INEC to verify the authenticity of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and also carry out a verification of the intending voter by matching the biometrics obtained from the voter on the spot with the ones stored on the PVC (Engineering Network Team, 2015). The ability of the card reader to perform the above described functions as well as keeping a tally of the total numbers of voters accredited at the polling unit and forwarding the information to a central database server over a Global System for Mobile (GSM) network

makes the card reader most welcome at this point in time in the nation's electoral history (Engineering Network Team, 2015). Among the fundamental basis for the deployment of the technologically-based device in the 2015 general elections by INEC was to prevent electoral fraud; to allow the electorates votes to count; to reduce litigations arising from elections; to authenticate and verify voters; to protect the integrity and credibility of the election; to audit results from polling units across the federation; and to ensure transparency and accountability. Others are to do a range of statistical analysis of the demographics of voting for the purposes of research and planning; to build public confidence and trust in the election; to reduce electoral conflicts; to ensure a free and fair election and to further deepen Nigeria's electoral and democratic process. In spite of the laudable goals and objectives of the smart card reader, it generated debate among the 2015 general elections stakeholders before, during and after the polls. On the one hand, proponents of the card reader have viewed the innovation as a deliberate effort in ensuring the conduct of a free and fair election while on the other hand there have been arguments that INEC neither has the legitimate authority nor capacity to use the card reader (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2015).The proponent of the device according to Peters (2015)believed that the card reader procedure has the capacity to prevent or minimize rigging in the sense that there would not be multiple voting while the opponents believed that in the peculiar circumstances of the Nigerian situation, the card reader is designed to assist a certain political party to win the general election. Peters (2015) maintained that the major plank of their argument is that the card reader must have been programmed to assist a predetermined winner of the election by ensuring that so many persons would discriminately be disenfranchised to deny other parties of favourable votes thereby ensuring the winning of an INEC preferred or pre-determined party. There is also the sentiment about the use of a faith based bank to transfer money for printing of permanent voters‟ card and the configuration of the card reader. The socio-political sentiments advanced against the use of the card reader could not be established. The allegation of the card readers being designed to favour a political party turned out to be completely baseless and unfounded as we have seen before and after the elections. This unsubstantiated statement led to the invasion and destruction of the APC Data Center in Lagos and subsequent arrest of the supplier of the card readers by the Department for State Security (DSS). The DSS subtly apologized to the APC and later released the supplier of the card readers when no evidence was found. The contention that a faith based bank (JAIZ Bank) was use for the payment of the supply of the card readers appears to me as ridiculous. Was the transaction illegal? Was the bank not a license financial institution in Nigeria? Investigations show later that another bank (First City Monument Bank) was used in the electronic payment transfer for the supply of the card readers. The use of the card reader for the 2015 general elections was also criticized on the premise that its timing was too close for over a sixty eight million Nigerian voters. Considering the fact that the device was relatively a new technology that has not been tested or tried in Nigeria, it was therefore argued that INEC should step aside the card reader in the 2015 general elections. This argument appears to me to be valid to the extent that INEC will conduct an election with 12 such magnitude and deploy a device that will have a far reaching impact on the electoral process, would

not have used the device in previous smaller bye-elections to effectuate its effectiveness and efficiency.

Moving from manual process to infusing technology in voting process is a milestone that requires high efficiency. Between 2011 and 2015, INEC conducted Governorship Elections and bye-elections in some states of the federation. Why would INEC wait for 2015 general elections to use the card reader? To address the issue of the card reader not been tested, INEC hurriedly conducted a test-run for the device on March 7, 2015 (21 days to the commencement of the polls) in twelve states (consisting of 225 polling units and 358 voting points) of the federation. Some of the card readers could not function effectively during the test-run. However, INEC promised to deal with the issue. This test-run exercise was carried out after the general elections were rescheduled. In order words, INEC could have conducted the general elections without test-running the device. This could have created a disaster for INEC that could only be imagined. The legality of the use of the card reader in the 2015 general elections was one crucial aspect of the debates that critics of the card readers contested. To examine this debate, a careful study of the Nigeria's electoral jurisprudence is needed to determine whether the use of the smart card reader by INEC falls within the confines of the law. Firstly, as argued earlier, it is clear that INEC is a creation of the law as it is established under Section 153 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) as a Federal Executive Body. Under paragraph 15 of Part 1 of the Third Schedule to the 1999 Constitution (as amended), INEC is mandated to organize, undertake and supervise all elections in Nigeria, conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the registration of voters for the purpose of any election (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2015).It is also empowered to carry out the functions conferred upon it by virtue of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended).In addition, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (2015) argued that Section 118 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) subjects the registration of voters and the conduct of elections to INEC's discretion while Section 16 of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) gives power to INEC to cause to design, print and control the issuance of a voters card to voters whose names appear on the register. Therefore, according to the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (2015), INEC has express and implied powers to design means, procedures and processes that enable it exercise the powers granted to it under the Constitution including for example, the use of permanent voter cards in the 2015 general elections. No doubt, the legal framework for the 2015 general elections empowers INEC to be the electoral umpire. However, Sections 49 and 52 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) had been subjected to legal debate in respect to the use of the card reader for the 2015 general elections. To some, the deployment of card readers for the accreditation of voters at the elections tactically meant adoption of electronic voting, which the 2010 Electoral Act outlaws (Oderemi, 2015). Section 49 states that: (1) every person intending to vote shall present himself to a Presiding Officer at the polling unit in the constituency in which his name is registered with his voter's card. (2) The Presiding Officer shall, on being satisfied that the name of the person is on the Register of Voters, issue him a ballot paper, and indicate on the Register that the person has voted. Section 52 stipulates that: (1) Voting at an election under this Act shall be by open secret ballot. (2) The use of electronic voting machine for the time being is

prohibited. (3) A voter on receiving a ballot paper shall mark it in the manner prescribed by the Commission. (4) All ballots at an election under this Act at any polling station shall be deposited in the ballot box in the open view of the public. In his contribution, Okoro (2015) averred that the deployment of the card reader by INEC is not illegal. He submitted that INEC has the constitutional power to set the standards and guidelines for elections. In view of this, he argued that the card reader is part of accreditation and not voting. He maintained that what the law proscribed is electronic voting and not the card readers. Therefore, according to him the use of the card reader in the 2015 general elections is legal and legitimate (cited in Oderemi, 2015). The Society for Advancement and Protection of Public Rights (SAPPR) (2015), a civil society in its submission argued that the deployment of the card reader is illegal because it is in violation of Section 52 (1) of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended). SAPPR opined that the use of the card reader for screening of voter cards or which has the effect of preventing a registered voter to vote is beyond the powers of INEC. As such, the civil society maintained that by virtue of Sections 77 (2) and 117 (2) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) of Nigeria, 14 INEC had no power to deprive eligible Nigerians of the right to vote at the election (cited in Oderemi, 2015).

Peters (2015:41) contended that the electronic voting machine and the card reader are two different devices that are not necessarily deployed together for all purposes. He explained that a card reader is not an electronic voting machine buta machine to be used for accreditation of voters only before the actual voting. According to him, electronic voting requires no ballot papers whereas the 2015 general election was ballot paper-based. He submitted that what Section 52(2) prohibits as indicated earlier is the use of electronic voting machine but not the use of card reader for accreditation of voters. Banire (2015:32) therefore argued that the use of the card reader is not prohibited. In view of this, he argued, what is not prohibited is permitted in law. He cited the case of Ojo Bolarinwa Theophilous vs. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2012) LPELR-9846 (CA), wherein the Court of Appeal declared that "The basic canon of interpretation or construction of statutory provisions remains that what is not expressly prohibited by a statute is impliedly permitted". Thus, since the use of card reader for the purpose of accreditation of voters is not prohibited by the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), same is definitely permitted (Banire, 2015).

Furthermore, Banire maintained that accreditation of voters is not the same thing as casting of vote as a person may be accredited without presenting himself to vote. The difference between accreditation and voting is underscored according to him by Section 49(1) and (2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended). In order to separate accreditation from actual voting, he opined that the 2015 INEC Guidelines and Manual for Election Officials provides that accreditation shall hold between 8.00 am and 1pm or such time as the last person on the queue finishes while, voting commences at 1.30pm or so soon thereafter when accreditation must have been completed till the last person concludes. Citing Section 52 of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended), Peters (2015) argued that the use of the card reader is illegal. Section 52 clearly stipulates that the use of electronic voting machine for the time being is prohibited. He maintained that INEC has in respect of the introduction of the card reader gone beyond its limits.

He submitted that the card reader was only mentioned and introduced in the Electoral Manual 2015. In view of this, according to him, it is illegal and void because the ever green policy of the law is that where a statute provides a method of 15doing a particular thing, no other method would be accepted. He cited the case of Ajuta II v. Ngene (2002) 1 NWLR (Part 748) at p. 300 para. C. Muhammad J.C.A said; "It has become trite that where a statute provides for the manner of doing a particular act, only that manner as provided by the enabling legislation would be acceptable. The doing of the act by a vehicle other than that provided by law for its attainment would be declared void". To that extent, according to Peters (2015) every other requirement including the card reader outside the said Section 49 (1) (2) of the Electoral Act that is contained in the Electoral Manual 2015 is illegal and void. He accused INEC of developing false confidence that it can do and undo under the cover of "an umpire" instead of pursuing the amendment of the law to accommodate the new invention (card reader). He advised that the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) be amended to bring in the card reader. Until it is done, he posited that the use of the card reader is illegal. Peters (2015) went further to observe the contradiction between the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) and the Electoral Manual 2015 wherein the card reader was introduced for the accreditation process of the 2015 general elections. According to him, Section 49(1) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), mandatorily stipulated that an intending voter shall present himself to the Presiding Officer for accreditation processes. Contrary to this, the Electoral Manuals 2015 said the intending voter shall rather present himself to an Assistant Presiding Officer (APO).

Peters (2015) cited the Latin maxim –"expressio unius est exclusio alterius"-which means that the express mention of a name or thing in a statute excludes the applicability of the things or names not specifically mentioned therein. To that extent the absence of the name of Assistant Presiding Officer (APO) in Section 49(1) of the Electoral Act underscored the position of the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) that an APO has nothing to do with the accreditation process in our electoral system. When the words used in a statute is clear, it must be given its natural and ordinary meaning. It is therefore clear that electronic voting which the law prohibited in Nigeria is not the same with card reader. As such, the used of the card reader as part of the accreditation process in the 2015 general elections is in tandem with the legal frameworks for the elections. Inspite of the hullabaloo about the card reader, it was eventually used for the 2015 general elections. However, the device had some challenges in its operation during the elections.16 The Challenges of Smart Card Reader in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. In spite of the assurances given by INEC to address the issues that aroused with the card readers after its test-run in twelve states of the federation, the 2015 general elections witnessed the inability of the device to deliver effectively in a large number of polling units especially in the Presidential and National Assembly Elections. Therefore, what are the challenges the card reader was confronted with in its operation for the purpose of accreditation in the 2015 general elections? The level of awareness among the electorates about the card reader was poor. A large number of Nigerians especially the electorates in rural communities are completely unaware of the device. Many of these categories of people have neither seen nor heard about the card reader until the election day. These categories of people have no information on the role of the card reader in the elections. There was a lot misconception about

the device. To some of the electorates, the card reader was a voting device. This inadequate information dissemination and poor sensitization of the electorates on the card reader led to some poor human relations and uncooperative attitudes between some of the illiterate electorates and election officials. The training given to the ad-hoc and INEC staff on the use of the card reader was inadequate. Majority of the Presiding Officers and Assistant President Officers in the polling units were not effectively trained on the proper use and handling of the card reader. In most cases the venues provided by INEC for their training were crowded and not conducive such that most of the trainees did not properly receive the instructions on the use of the card reader.

There were imperfect practical demonstrations of how the card reader would properly be effective. In some cases two card readers were provided for a class of hundred trainees. A large number of the trainees did not have the opportunities of operating the device. In some few cases, those that received training were replaced with those that have no proper idea of the effective use of the device. All of these led to the poor handling of the card reader during the elections to the extent that the protective film of some the card readers were not removed thereby leading to the impossibility of the device to detect thumbprints in some cases. Card reader breakdown was also witnessed during the elections. Some of devices malfunctioned on the day of election. Though, INEC had provided back-up in case of any card reader breakdown. However, some of the back-up failed to also function. For instance, five card readers were deployed for use at the polling unit of the Presidential Candidate of PDP in Bayelsa State yet none of them functioned. Similarly, the card reader at the polling unit of the Vice-Presidential Candidate of APC was non-functional. A number of the smart card readers were not smart to function effectively. A few of the card readers were unable to function due to blank screen, non activation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device and low battery. Some INEC officials according to Vanguard (2015) attributed the failure of the card readers to INEC engineers who could not decode the inbuilt security installation in the card reader. The security code in the card reader is reportedly designed to update the time and date of voting. One official claimed that the cards were initially programmed for February 14 that with the postponement to March 28, some of the cards readers had not been re-programmed (Vanguard, 2015). Wherein the card readers functioned, a few of the devices were confronted with the challenge of PVC authentication and biometric data verification of the voters in the polling units. The authentication and verification of voters was part of the accreditation process for the election. A number of the PVC issued to voters by INEC could not be authenticated thereby disenfranchising some eligible voters in the elections. Wherein some voters‟ cards were authenticated, their biometric data could not be verified after several trials; and where it is verified, it is slow in some cases especially the fingerprints. For instance, in Borno State, ten percent of eligible voters cards were authenticated and biometric data verified by the card readers at most of the polling units (Odiakose, 2015). However, the inability of the device to capture the fingerprints of some voters was attributed to greasy or dirty fingers of the voters. In most cases, people had to scrub their hands on the ground just to ensure that the device recognizes their finger prints (Okoro, 2015).Following the widespread failure of the card reader, Prof. Jega, changed the guidelines (while the election was ongoing and after millions of frustrated voters had gone home

disenchanted) in the conduct of the election on March 28 and approved the use of manual accreditation in areas that the smart card readers malfunctioned during the Presidential and National Assembly elections in the country (Odiakose, 2015). The announcement by the INEC Chairman seemed to have eased accreditation in many places. However, the extent to which this announcement may have inadvertently opened the flood 18 gates for electoral fraud is yet to be fully analyzed (Amenaghawon, 2015). It is unfortunate that the rules of the game were changed in the middle of the electoral competition. In spite of this, the smart card reader had an impact on the 2015 general elections. INEC should always sensitize voters on the use of card reader advising them on what to do to make sure the card detects their fingers. INEC should also fix the operating system of the card readers and provide source of regular power supply to the device to avoid power failure.

4.4.4 Challenges posed by card readers to the conduct of free, fair and credible election in Afikpo North Local Government Area

The challenges posed by the card reader to the conduct of the 2015 election in Afikpo North Local Government Area was also discovered by the researcher. The Challenges include:

1. **Technical Fault:**

In some of the polling units in Afikpo North Local Government area, election was delayed owing to the inability of INEC officials to use the card readers effectively in carrying out accreditation exercise. Some of the INEC officials did not have the technical skills to operate the Smart Card Reader. It is true that INEC trained ad-hoc staff to help conduct the election; most of them were not properly trained especially in the area of handling the card readers.

2. Malfunction of Card Reader:

Following the mal-function of the card readers, it was difficult for INEC to accredit most eligible voters who turned out for the election. It was in a bid to close the gap created by the use of card reader that incident form was introduced to accommodate people that were not accredited for voting. A number of the smart card readers were not smart to function effectively. A few of the card readers were unable to function due to blank screen, non-activation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device and low battery. Some INEC officials according to Vanguard (2015) attributed the failure of the card readers to INEC engineers who could not decode the inbuilt security installation in the card reader. The security code in the card reader is reportedly designed to update the time and date of voting. One official claimed that the cards were initially programmed for February 14 that with the postponement to March 28, some of the cards readers had not been re-programmed (Vanguard, 2015). Wherein the card readers functioned, a few of the devices were confronted with the challenge of PVC authentication and biometric data verification of the voters in the polling units. The authentication and verification of voters was part of the

accreditation process for the election. A number of the PVC issued to voters by INEC could not be authenticated thereby disenfranchising some eligible voters in the elections. Wherein some voters cards were authenticated, their biometric data could not be verified after several trials; and where it is verified, it is slow in some cases especially the fingerprints. However, the inability of the device to capture the fingerprints of some voters was attributed to greasy or dirty fingers of the voters. In most cases, people had to scrub their hands on the ground just to ensure that the device recognizes their finger prints (Okoro, 2015). Following the widespread failure of the card reader, Prof. Jega, changed the guidelines (while the election was ongoing and after millions of frustrated voters had gone home disenchanted) in the conduct of the election on March 28 and approved the use of manual accreditation in areas that the smart card readers malfunctioned during the Presidential and National Assembly elections in the country (Odiakose, 2015).The announcement by the INEC Chairman seemed to have eased accreditation in many places. However, the extent to which this announcement may have inadvertently opened the flood 18 gates for electoral fraud is yet to be fully analyzed.

3. Lack of Adequate Training of Ad-hoc staff on how to operate the Card Reader

The training given to the ad-hoc and INEC staff on the use of the card reader was inadequate. Majority of the Presiding Officers and Assistant President Officers in the polling units were not effectively trained on the proper use and handling of the card reader. In most cases the venues provided by INEC for their training were crowded and not conducive such that most of the trainees did not properly receive the instructions on the use of the card reader. There were imperfect practical demonstrations of how the card reader would properly be effective. In some cases two card readers were provided for a class of hundred trainees. A large number of the trainees did not have the opportunities of operating the device. In some few cases, those that received training were replaced with those that have no proper idea of the effective use of the device. All of these led to the poor handling of the card reader during the elections to the extent that the protective film of some of the card readers were not removed thereby leading to the impossibility of the device to detect thumbprints in some cases.

4. Break Down of Card Readers

Card reader breakdown was also witnessed during the elections. Some of devices malfunctioned on the day of election. Though, INEC had provided back-up in case of any card reader breakdown. However, some of the back-up failed to also function. For instance, five card readers were deployed for use at the polling unit of the Presidential Candidate of PDP in Bayelsa State yet none of them functioned. Similarly, the card reader at the polling unit of the Vice-Presidential Candidate of APC was non-functional. That is the kind of thing witnessed in some polling units in Nigeria.

5. Power Problem

The card reader also had power problem, in some polling booths in Afikpo North Local Government Area, Observes noted that the card readers had problem with their power system as

most of the card readers could not be powered on to be used for the exercise. So many people were disenfranchised through that process as the incident form was not made available in large quantity to accommodate the voters who were not accredited with card reader.

Theoretical Frame work
Relative Deprivation Theory

The theory of relative deprivation was first coined by Sam Stouffer and his associates in their war time study. The theory of relative deprivation was rigorously formulated by W.G. Runciman in 1966. Relative Deprivation occurs where individuals or groups subjectively perceive themselves as unfairly disadvantaged over others perceived as having similar attributes and deserving similar rewards (their reference groups) it is in contrast with absolute deprivation, where biological health is impaired or where relative of the wealth are compared on objective differences or the right of one to carry out his or her responsibility is deprived. Therefore the major assumption of relative deprivation theory is that some people in any case are liable to be deprived of their right and privileges.

This theory is suitable for this research following the traumatic experience eligible voters went through during accreditation process in the 2015 general election. In Afikpo North Local Government Area almost all the polling units had the problem of card readers not detecting the finger prints of eligible voters who were armed with their permanent voters' card. This did not only disenfranchised voters but it also delayed the election paving way for some form of malpractices. The theory of relative deprivation assist in understanding why some eligible voter were deprived of their right to vote as a result of the inability of the card reader to accredit them to vote in the election, that is why the theory of relative deprivation suits this research.

Findings

The use of card reader enhanced the transparency and credibility of the 2015 election results in Nigeria. The use of card reader reduced electoral violence in Nigeria. The use of card reader promoted electoral tolerance among politicians in Nigeria

Conclusion

The use of card reader in the 2015 general election in Nigeria has infused some level of transparency and credibility into Nigeria's electoral process (Okonji, 2015). It was observed that when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) first announced its plan to introduce card reader machine for the March 28 and April 11 2015 general elections, many Nigerians, especially politicians, vehemently opposed it. They felt the country has not developed to a level where such technology can be employed for elections. Besides, they felt the use of card reader would disrupt the entire electoral processes.

The public outcry that greeted the planned introduction of card reader machines was enough to discourage INEC from introducing it. However, because of INEC confidence in the

efficacy of modern technologies in achieving quick results, coupled with its vision to transform the country's electoral process from its old norms that was characterized by ballot box snatching and multiplicity of ballot tomb-printing, INEC went ahead and introduced the technology against all odds. However, many technology experts in Nigeria and outside, who monitored the elections were full of praises to INEC for insisting on the use of card reader machines, saying it is the best thing that has ever happened to the Nigerian electoral process in the area of election transparency. They have called on the electoral umpire to introduce card reader machines in subsequent elections, believing it is a sure way to achieve transparency and credibility in every election. Others who do not believe in the efficacy of the card reader called on INEC to abolish the idea of using card reader in the conduct of future elections to avoid the embarrassment voters faced during accreditation.

Recommendations

1. Smart card reader should be test runned properly before using it in future elections.

2. INEC should train people who can handle the card reader effectively.

3. INEC should conduct research to know countries that have tried the use of smart reader and determine the level of success or failure.

4. If INEC must continue with card reader in future elections, there must be improvement that will convince Nigerians that it will work effectively.

5. INEC should embark on sensitization of voters before using the card reader again.

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