

# INSECURITY AND MANAGEMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: 2015 AND 2019 IN RETROSPECT AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS IN VOTERS' EDUCATION

BY

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## Abstracts

The study discussed how insecurity affected the management and conduct of elections in Nigeria- with particular focus on the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. It paid close attention to how voters' intimidation, suppression and religious tension affected the conduct of the presidential elections in the years of focus; we also examined how the available security institutions can enhance the security atmosphere in Nigeria for more effective election management. Data was collected from secondary sources and were analyzed using quantitative descriptive method. Our findings showed among others that high level of fear, tension and security uncertainties, caused by intimidation and suppression as seen on the social media and rumors sources in Nigeria, during the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections have resulted in a low turnout for the election. Thus, resulting in the distortion of the electoral playing field and affecting election management. We concluded by stating that election security can largely be made possible by the presence of unbiased and adequately remunerated security agents and that with the help of school management, voters can be educated.

**Keywords: Insecurity, Elections, Election Management, Ethnoreligious Tension, School Administrators**

## Introduction

In a democratic dispensation, election is used to get public representatives into a political office or another position. It is a method by which the individual acquires the power to participate in decisions by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples vote". Thus, election defines and determines what democracy is all about. Election is one of the most prominent features of political events in modern democracy. Indeed, given its conspicuous relevance in democratic political space, election has been described as the 'very heart of democracy' (Heywood, 1997). Elections in most African countries are characterized by uncertainties, due to the possibility of election related insecurity challenge which may take place at different stages of the electoral process; before, during and after election. This phenomenon had continued to threaten the electoral and democratization process leading to insecurity in the conduct of elections. Elections in Nigeria have been largely described as a do or die affair, where every contestant tries at all costs to outdo his perceived political rival. Consequently, cases of arson, high profile killings of opponents, maiming of unsuspecting electorates, snatching of electoral materials and general destruction of properties always become the order of the day (Obialor & Ozuzu, 2019).

One of the key aspects of election management is voter registration. Voter registration is the process by which eligible citizens are enrolled on the electoral roll, allowing them to participate in elections. Accurate and up-to-date voter registration is essential for the integrity of the electoral process, as it helps prevent fraud and ensures that only eligible voters are able to cast their ballots. Election management authorities are responsible for overseeing the voter

registration process, which typically involves collecting personal information from voters, verifying their eligibility to vote, and issuing voter identification cards.

Another important aspect of election management is the administration of the electoral process itself. This includes tasks such as the design and printing of ballots, the setup and staffing of polling stations, the training of election officials, the distribution of election materials, and the collection and counting of votes. Election management authorities are responsible for ensuring that these activities are carried out in a timely and efficient manner, in accordance with legal requirements and best practices. Other crucial forms of election management are voters' education and ensuring the safety of election materials. In Nigeria, the body saddled with the responsibility of election management is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

## Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has been confronted with the growing insecurity problem- which threatens the peaceful co-existence and social harmony. This has taken several dimensions including shootings in elections, ethno religious and communal violence, resurgence of armed gangs, gangsterism, thuggery and hooliganism. These insecurity risks have posed a major challenge to the conduct of presidential elections in Nigeria right from 1964 till date- where carting away of ballot boxes, buying of votes, arms race in the electoral process have been the prevalent. The impact of insecurity on election management processes during these periods has raised critical concerns about the integrity, fairness, and overall credibility of the electoral outcomes. The 2015 and 2019 presidential elections have been adjudged to be neither free, fair nor credible by both local and international observers. This is due to the consistent interference of

insecurity which is said to be orchestrated by ethno religious politics, poverty and unemployment, as well as weak security apparatus.

Political violence and thuggery were prevalent during the 2015 and 2019 elections in Nigeria. There were reports of political parties using violence and intimidation to influence the electoral process, including attacks on opposition candidates, supporters, and election officials. Insecurity led to the disruption of electoral activities such as voter registration, campaigning, and the transportation of election materials. Electoral officials faced challenges in accessing remote and conflict-affected areas, leading to delays and logistical problems that affected the overall conduct of the elections. In some cases, the insecurity was so severe that elections had to be postponed or cancelled in certain regions. Despite efforts to address these challenges, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of the specific dynamics and implications of insecurity on election management in Nigeria. Questions persist regarding the effect of these dynamics of insecurity on the overall credibility of electoral managements in the country. Thus, we set out to find answers to the following research questions:

- i. How did voters' intimidation and suppression affect the 2015 and 2019 presidential election management in Nigeria?
- ii. How did ethno-religious tension affect the 2015 and 2019 presidential election management in Nigeria?
- iii. How can the school administrators enhance electoral management in Nigeria through voter's education?

## **Methodology**

The work utilized a qualitative research framework, with a particular focus on employing content analysis as the chosen methodology. By embracing a content analysis approach, the study aimed to systematically examine a wide array of textual materials to extract meaningful insights. This study made use of secondary sources. The secondary instruments used for data collection were official documents published by International Organizations on election management in Nigeria, journals, textbooks, magazines. Other sources of data used include, the electronic media, published and unpublished materials. Tables were used for the presentation of some statistical figures such as percentage of the voters' turnout, parties' performance in the election and the margin of win as well as other related issues.

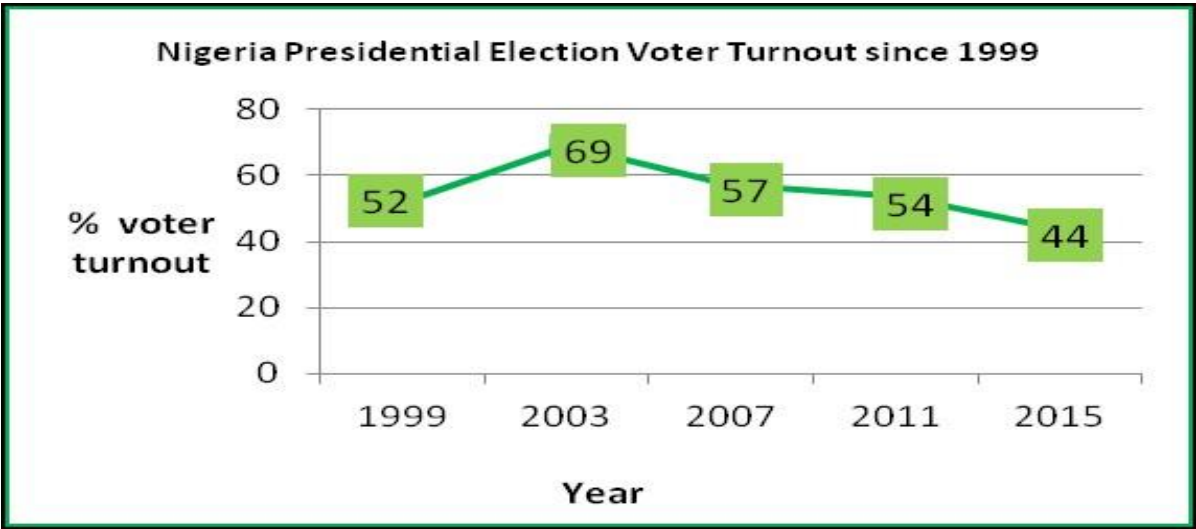
### **Evidence of Voters' Intimidation and Suppression Affect the 2015 and 2019 Presidential Election Management in Nigeria**

Gabriel, (2015) had asserted that the general elections of 2015 (March 28 and April 11) have been adjudged the best election ever conducted in Nigeria. Election monitors from both domestic and foreign divide scored the election high. The election was said to be relatively peaceful with minimal casualties across the country. The technological innovation by INEC- that is the introduction of biometric voters' registration and use of the Smart Card Reader improved the efficiency and standard of the election. Also, sensitive electoral materials such as the result sheets and ballot papers were customized and possessed high- security features and codes. However, despite these improvements in the electoral process, the 2015 election was not without flaws. Some of the anomalies identified in respect to the election include "late arrival of election materials, overcrowding, failure of the card reader, result manipulation and voting of under-aged in some units in the Northern part of the country" (Udu 2015).

According to the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) (2019), the 2015 general election did not witness much electoral violence largely because of the spirit of sportsmanship demonstrated by the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, who conceded defeat and willingly handed over power to the opposition that emerged victorious at the polls. Unlike the 2015 general elections, the 2019 general elections were violence infested. The European Union Observer Mission stated that the election became increasingly marred by violence and intimidation of voters and INEC officials, primarily by party supporters. This harmed the integrity of the electoral process and may deter future voter participation. The source observed that party leaderships did not take sufficient steps to rein in their supporters but accused opponents of using violence to disrupt the process and/or selectively depress turnout. Based on updated information available from media and other sources, during the campaign and the election day, approximately 145 people were killed in election-related violence (European Union, 2019).

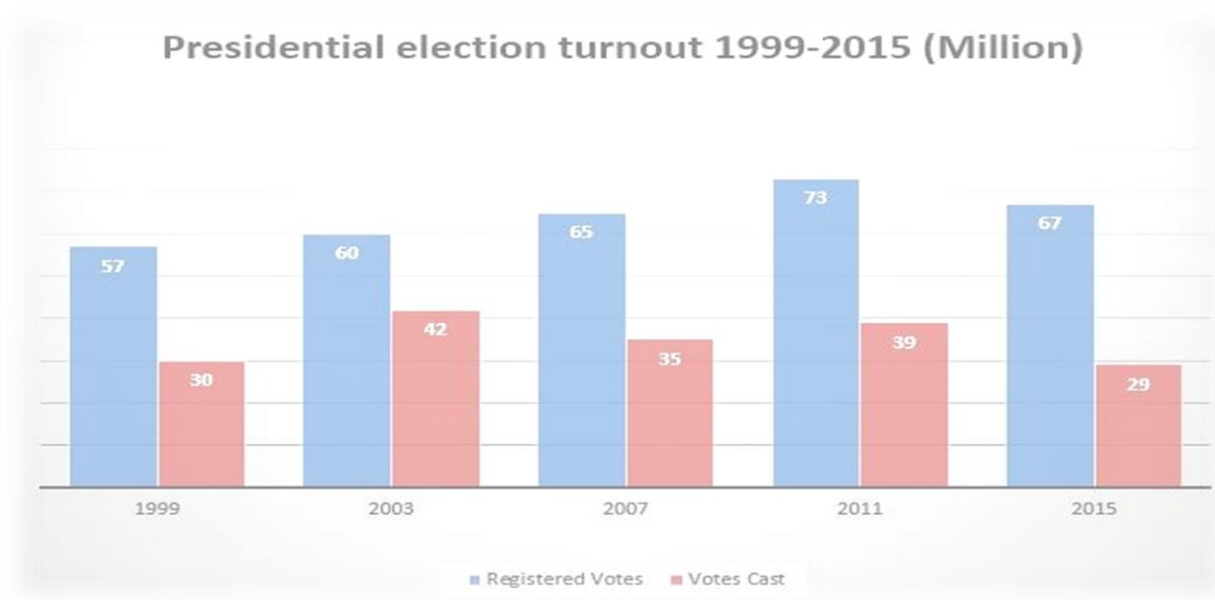
In 2015 presidential election, one issue that did not escape the attention of most observers both international and local, was the extreme level of apathy Nigerian potential electorates expressed freely during the elections (Nigerian Tribune, 2015). Outside the high level of apathy that was recorded, there were still cases of rigging and violence. In the report of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) given days after the elections, it was recorded that across the country over 50 people were killed while voting processes (Vanguard, 2015). These conditions were envisaged by many voters and ad hoc staff of who eventually chose to stay back in their homes on the presidential election day- after their training.

**Table 1: A Chart Showing Approximated Total Percentage of Voter Turnout in Nigerian Presidential Elections Since 1999-2015**



*Source: INEC, 2015.*

Table 2: A bar chart showing the total registered votes against total votes cast from 1999-2015 Presidential elections.



*INEC, 2015*

**Table 3: The 2019 Presidential Election Turn Out Rate**

SN	Voters Index	Total
1	Total number of registered voters	84,004,084
2	Total number of registered voters (as collated)	82,344,107
3	Total number of accredited voters (as collated)	29,364,209
4	Total number of valid votes (as collated)	27,324,583
5	Total number of rejected votes (as collated)	1,289,607
6	Total number of votes cast (as collated)	28,614,190
7	Percentage turns out (as collated)	35.66%

*Source: INEC, 2019*

It is apparent from the above table that there were 82,344,107 registered voters.

While the total number of vote cast was 28,614,190 which shows that turn out percentage



was 35.66%. This is not an encouraging figure to sustain democracy in any country. Attempt to investigate why voters' turn-out was poor Akeem and Idayat. (2020) attributed it to several reasons ranging from poor INEC preparation, perceived threats from previous election violence and election rigging in the past etc.

Thus, we see that the 2015 and 2019 Presidential elections were, indeed, another polling period marked by incidents of electoral violence in Nigeria. There were instances of attacks on political rallies and campaigns, attacks on polling units and clashes between rival political factions. These acts of violence resulted in casualties and disruption of the electoral process in certain areas. It was reported that over 30 people were killed on Election Day, April 11, 2015, according to the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM, 2015). These deaths were reportedly the consequence of attacks on election polling units and clashes between opposing parties. While the 2019 Presidential election were also marred by incidents of electoral violence, it was reported that over 626 killed during 2019 Nigeria elections (Premium Times, 2023). Reports of clashes between rival political groups, destruction of election materials and attacks on electoral officials were observed in different regions. These incidents have a ripple effect that stretches to both voter turnout, credibility of election result and the overall confidence in the electoral process.

### **Evidence of Ethno-Religious Tension in the 2015 and 2019 Presidential Election Management in Nigeria**

The challenge of electoral insecurity comes largely from undue exploitation of ethnic, religious and communal differences by the political elite. Political elites who deliberately exploit

existing social cleavages and fault lines for political advantage are often referred to as conflict entrepreneurs. Nigeria is undoubtedly one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world, with a population of over 186 million (Worldometers 2015). Nigeria is also the most populous black nation with over 250 ethnic groups and several sub-groups (Olayode 2015). Despite these characteristics, the country's political scene is dominated by three major ethnic groups, namely Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Other sub-groups exist but are regarded as minorities. The existence of sub-groups among the large and dominant groups raises the fear of dominance of the minority groups by the major ethnic groups. Consequently, politics is played by these ethnic groups and sub-groups in such a manner as to maintain the domination by the majority groups or to prevent and resist domination by the minority groups.

Thus, the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria generated more tension and controversies than ever before. Apart from being held in a period of insecurity largely orchestrated by the Boko Haram sect, the 2015 general elections have been described as the most competitive election to be held in post-colonial Nigeria. It was claimed that prior to the elections there had been increasing tension between the north and the south. This was attributed to what the northerners saw as a golden opportunity to reclaim the presidency which, in their opinion, would reverse the perceived economic marginalization of their region (Olayode 2015). All these factors aggravated the traditional ethnic, regional and religious cleavages which have characterized Nigerian politics since independence. This is the background to an examination of the extent to which ethnicity influenced the outcome of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Six Geo -Political Zone results of the 2015 Presidential election

S/N	GEO-POLITICAL ZONE	APC (BUHARI)	PDP (JONATHAN)
1.	North-Central	2,264 614	1,558 623
2.	North- East	2, 848 678	796, 588
3.	North-West	7,115 199	1, 339 708
	<b>Total Northern Zone</b>	<b>12, 228 491</b>	<b>3, 694 919</b>
4.	South-East	198, 248	4, 714 725
5.	South-West	2, 433 193	1, 821 416
6.	South-South	418, 590	4, 714 725
	<b>Total Southern Zone</b>	<b>3, 050 031</b>	<b>11, 250 866</b>

Source: *Excerpt from INEC (2015)*

The analysis above clearly indicates that both Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan received bloc votes from their ethnic bases. The bloc votes garnered by the contestants from each candidate's geo-political zone can thus be described as influenced largely by ethnic affiliation. Ethnic bloc voting has far-reaching implications for the development of democracy in deeply divided societies such as Nigeria. Scholars have for years predicted the possibility that elections in deeply divided societies would produce only ethnic consensus. Ishiyama (2016) considers that such elections create hindrances which erode inter-ethnic tolerance. Rather than give rise to harmonious co-existence and political stability, ethnic bloc voting can drive large-scale ethnic confrontation in ethnically diverse societies. Elections under these circumstances

become mere expressions of ethnic bias or prejudice. This position contends that voters employ the act of voting to express (and hence register) their identities as part of an ethnic group.

**Table 5 Showing Voting Pattern in Geopolitical Zones of the 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria.**

<b>Geopolitical zones</b>	<b>APC</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>PDP</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Differences</b>	<b>Winner</b>
Northeast	3, 238, 783	74.36	1, 116, 873	25.6	2, 121, 910	APC
Northcentral	2, 313, 375	54.92	1, 763, 772	45.0	549, 603	APC
Northwest	5, 995, 651	72.45	2, 280, 465	27.5	3, 715, 186	APC
Southeast	403, 968	19.26	1, 693, 485	80.7	1, 289, 517	PDP
Southsouth	1, 051, 396	32.01	2, 233, 232	67.9	1, 181, 836	PDP
Southwest	2, 036, 450	53.41	1, 776, 670	46.5	259, 780	APC
FCT Abuja	152, 224	36.77	259, 997	63.2	110, 773	PDP

*Source: INEC, 2019.*

The voting pattern from the above table shows that the APC candidate secured huge votes from the Northeast and Northwest to emerge victorious while the PDP candidate secured his major votes from the Southeast and Southsouth. This is because President Buhari is perceived in these two regions as religious dogmatist and ethnic chauvinist while Atiku Abubakar who appears to be a true nationalist with alliance across the nation and also- because the PDP has been the dominant party in the regions since 1999 and all the previous Presidential candidates- won in a landslide victory in the regions under the platform of the PDP. The

remaining two zones of North central and Southwest were shared between the two major contenders. Each region in Nigeria voted massively when a candidate is from that region with similar religion and ethnic group since the politics of manipulation of religion and ethnicity have gained ground in the country beyond redemption for many decades. This view has been justified by Falola & Heaton (2008), Sule et al. (2018) and Mudasiru (2015).

Thus, we see that the 2019 Presidential Election has similitude with the previous Presidential Elections in Nigeria from 2015 in terms of political behaviour of the electorates. The electorates voted for their preferred presidential candidates with much emphasis on ethnicity, religion and regionalism. The phenomenon seems to continue despite the development of democracy in the country.

### **The Role of School Administrators in Enhancing Electoral Management in Nigeria**

Electoral management plays a critical role in ensuring free, fair, and credible elections. In Nigeria, one key area of focus is voter education, which ensures that citizens are informed about their rights and responsibilities in the electoral process. School administrators can contribute significantly to this cause by fostering civic education and organizing programs that enhance the awareness and participation of future voters.

#### **Role of School Administrators in Voter Education**

1. **Curriculum Integration:** School administrators can influence the inclusion of voter education in the school curriculum. By embedding topics such as the importance of voting, understanding the electoral process, and the roles of government, students become equipped with the knowledge necessary for active civic participation (Ezegbo & Akume, 2019). Through social studies,

government, and civic education classes, educators can impart critical information about elections and democratic governance.

2. **Organizing Workshops and Seminars:** Beyond the classroom, school administrators can arrange workshops, debates, and seminars on voter education and electoral processes. These forums can invite electoral officials, political scientists, and civic activists to engage students in discussions on how elections work and the significance of voter participation (Ajiboye, 2020).
3. **Role Modelling and Guidance:** School leaders are role models in society. By promoting ethical leadership and civic responsibility, they inspire students to take active roles in the democratic process (Olumodeji & Adeyemi, 2021). This is especially important in Nigeria, where youth involvement in elections is often undermined by political violence or voter apathy.
4. **Collaboration with Electoral Bodies and Civil Society:** School administrators can collaborate with bodies like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance voter education. Such partnerships could provide materials, guest speakers, and real-life simulations of elections (Ikechukwu, 2021).
5. **Use of Technology and Innovative Teaching Methods:** Leveraging technology, such as e-learning platforms and social media, can help in disseminating electoral information to a wider student audience. Interactive methods, including role-playing election scenarios, can also make the learning experience more engaging for students (Oseni, 2017).

### **Challenges Faced by School Administrators**

1. **Lack of Resources:** Despite their willingness to contribute to voter education, many school administrators face challenges related to funding and resources. Schools often lack the necessary materials and infrastructure to implement effective voter education programs (Akanbi, 2018).

2. **Political Interference:** In Nigeria, political interference in educational institutions can hinder efforts at voter education. School administrators may face pressure from political actors who wish to control the content of education or prevent the dissemination of unbiased electoral information (Umeh, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

In retrospect, the presidential elections in Nigeria during 2015 and 2019 were marked by significant challenges related to insecurity. Despite efforts to mitigate these threats, issues such as insurgency, banditry, and communal violence posed substantial obstacles to the electoral process. The management of these elections involved strategic postponements, enhanced security measures, and logistical adjustments to ensure the safety of voters and the integrity of the electoral process. Educational administrators have a crucial role in addressing these challenges through robust voter education initiatives. By integrating voter education into the curriculum, organizing workshops and seminars, engaging in community outreach, and leveraging technology, they can foster an informed and active electorate. Collaborating with electoral bodies and training peer educators further enhances the reach and impact of these educational efforts. Ultimately, the combined efforts of electoral bodies, security agencies, and educational institutions are essential for overcoming the challenges posed by insecurity and ensuring that future elections in Nigeria are conducted smoothly, safely, and with the broad participation of an informed citizenry.

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