**EXAMINATION OF THE INADEQUACY OF THE BVAS ON THE ELECTORAL OUTCOME OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study assesses the inadequacy of the BVAS on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Specifically, the study determines whether the effectiveness of BVAS in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, ascertains the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, determines whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria and determines whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. A total of 50 responses were validated from the survey. The study adopts the technology acceptance theory. From the responses obtained and analysed, the findings reveals that the BVAS was effective in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The study recommends to avoid human errors INEC should make it a point of duty to hire or employ people of proven integrity as returning officers and those handling the BVAS should be given all necessary and adequate training on the use and maintenance of the equipment. The study further recommends that the Independent national electoral commission (INEC) must improve on its cyber security network to forestall future attacks on its system.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of the Study**

The Biometric Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) is a technological gadget that enables the identification and accreditation of voters using fingerprints and face recognition. IReV is an internet gateway via which polling unit-level results are submitted, communicated, and made accessible for public observation. IReV enables the public to register personal accounts and monitor submitted results, therefore enhancing the voting process's openness and credibility. INEC employed IReV for the first time in the 2020 Nasarawa Central by-election (Temitayo, 2023). Since then, it has reportedly been used in 105 elections involving 16,694,461 registered voters. Up to this point, polling stations in rural and urban regions have submitted 32,935 Form EC8A result sheets. INEC introduced BVAS in 2021 as a solution to the problem of overvoting by removing manual voter identification and accreditation and accrediting voters using fingerprint, iris, and face recognition. At the time, BVAS was replacing card readers that were unable to correctly scan permanent voter's cards. After the completion of the presidential and National Assembly elections, doubts have been raised about the effectiveness of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and Election Result Viewing Portal implemented by the Independent National Electoral Commission to improve the electoral process. In this article, Temitayo Jaiyeola describes how BVAS and IReV performed poorly during their first nationwide deployment (Samson, 2022).

At the recently ended presidential and National Assembly elections, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and Election Result Viewing Portal of the Independent National Electoral Commission did not live up to expectations. The poor performance of BVAS and IReV in their first major stress test may have put a shadow over the presidential and National Assembly elections of 2023, since some candidates have already filed lawsuits challenging the results. With its first nationwide deployment, BVAS and IReV did not accomplish the intended ease in the voting process; rather, they have created greater worries about the integrity of the elections in 2023. When BVAS was initially introduced, it was plagued with several issues. On September 10, 2021, at the Isoko South Constituency 1 by-election in Delta State, presiding officers reportedly complained that the system had difficulty capturing the thumbs and faces of some of the voters (Mahmood, 2022).

The presidential and National Assembly elections on February 25, 2023 were plagued by the same issues, indicating that INEC did not learn from its first error. Not only did several BVAS devices fail to record voters, but the IReV platform also failed to function in a number of polling locations. Therefore, this study will examine the inadequacy of the Bvas on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria.

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In recent elections, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Election Result Viewing Portal (IReV) have been lauded for strengthening the openness of election results and promoting public confidence in electoral outcomes. INEC asserts that those technology are addressing the 10 maximum pervasive weaknesses in Nigeria's election end result control process,which include falsification of votes at polling units, forgery of the number of accredited voters, collation of false results, mutilation of results and computational errors, swapping of results sheets, forgery of results sheets, snatching and destruction of results sheets, obtaining declaration and return involuntarily, and making declarants and returnees sign a declaration and return form (Kayode, 2023).

In elections, the roles of both instruments are interdependent and complementary. Before voting, the BVAS is used to identify and authenticate the fingerprints and face recognition of voters. The gadget is also used to capture and submit photographs of the polling unit result sheet (Form EC8A) online. IReV is an internet gateway via which polling unit-level results are submitted, transferred, and made public. Members of the public may register personal accounts on the homepage of the web portal to obtain access to all submitted results preserved as PDF files (Ogunleye,2022). This accessibility of results at the level of the polling unit promotes process openness and public confidence. The adoption of BVAS and IReV is anathema to political players intent on subverting the will of the people at any cost, despite boosting public trust in election results. So, it is not unexpected to hear about purported efforts to sabotage INEC's measures to defend the election's integrity by using the BVAS and IReV. Therefore, this study will examine the inadequacy of the Bvas on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria.

**1.3 Objective of the Study**

The primary objective of the study is to examine the inadequacy of the BVAS on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The specific objectives is as follows:

1. To determine whether the effectiveness of BVAS in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria.
3. To determine whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria.
4. To determine whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria.

**1.4 Research Questions**

The following questions have been prepared for the study:

1. How effective was BVAS in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria?
2. What are the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria?
3. Did the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria?
4. Did the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria?

**1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study is significant to INEC commission and the federal government as the findings of the study will expose them to the challenges faced in using the electronic device. Also, the findings of the study will suggest ways that improvement can be made on the BVAS electronic device.

The study will be of benefit to the academic community as it will contribute to the existing literature.

**1.6 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study borders on the inadequacy of the BVAS on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The respondents for this study will be obtained from political activist in Abuja, Nigeria.

**1.7 Limitation of the Study**

Like in every human endeavour, the researchers encountered slight constraints while carrying out the study. Insufficient funds tend to impede the efficiency of the researcher in sourcing for the relevant materials, literature, or information and in the process of data collection (internet, questionnaire, and interview), which is why the researcher resorted to a moderate choice of sample size. More so, the researcher will simultaneously engage in this study with other academic work. As a result, the amount of time spent on research will be reduced.

**1.8 Definition of Terms**

**BVAS:** The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System

**Electoral Process:** voter registration, candidate registration, electoral campaign, mass media accessibility, voting, vote counting

**General Election:** a political voting election where generally all or most members of a given political body are chosen.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**INTRODUCTION**

Our focus in this chapter is to critically examine relevant literature that would assist in explaining the research problem and furthermore recognize the efforts of scholars who had previously contributed immensely to similar research. The chapter intends to deepen the understanding of the study and close the perceived gaps.

Precisely, the chapter will be considered in three sub-headings:

* Conceptual Framework
* Theoretical Framework
* Empirical Review

**2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

**The Concept of Election**

The term election involves a set of activities leading to the selection of one or more persons out of many to serve in position of authority in a given nation. It is the process by which the people select and control their representative, i.e election give electorates the sovereignty power to decide who will govern them.

According to Lindberg (2006), election is the process whereby an electorate chooses, by voting officers either to act on its behalf or represent it in an assembly with a view to governing or administering. An electorate refers to a class of citizens entitled (by a law course) to vote in an election, by whatever procedure.

Elections provide for a bare minimum of political participation, perhaps the only act of participation for the vast majority of the governed, and therefore create a feeling of belonging and a degree of responsibility for government decisions. The organization of elections in Nigeria have often been carried out without due involvement of the people. Consequently, while elections could not be said to be synonymous with the democratic process is that democracy that encompasses other attributes, but elections are so central to the operation and survival of democracy; that is, it defines the level of freedom exercised by the people in decoding who represent them in government. It also serves as an index of noticing whether the electoral body and the judicial organ of the government are independent of the legislative and executive organs

Elections could be seen as institutionalized procedures for the choosing of office holders by some or all the recognized members of a society. So an electoral system exists to provide the electorate with opportunity and the right to choose their representative and maintain contact with them. Hence, for an electoral system to be democratic, it must provide for equal electorates and the freedom by that electorates to make real and meaningful choice devoid of coercion or intimidation4. In effect, 'election would be deemed to be democratic-and hence good if it is free and fair and not based on patronage of any kind.

**The Electoral Process in Nigeria**

The electoral process in Nigeria began immediately the country gained independence in 1960. The Nigeria Electoral system is the single member constituency type with competitive multiparty and the first past the post winner system. The method of voting used in five out of six past elections, that is, in 1979,1983, 1999, 2003 and 2007 was the Open Ballot System (OBS).

The OBS entails a procedure in which the prospective voter goes through a process of accreditation, receives a ballot paper from the appropriate poll official and thereafter makes the confidential thumb impression in favour of the political party or candidate of choice in a secret voting compartment before dropping the ballot in the box positioned in the open, in the full glare of officials, security agents and party agents. (Okop, 2006 cited in Uhunmwuangho, S.& Aibieyi, S 2017).

There are five key groups involved in the electoral process and these are the electorates, the political players, the electoral officials, the Judiciary and the Government. Each of these groups has their distinct roles in the electoral process which includes the following parties:

**The Electorates**

These are the citizens, and they make up the general populace; the people of the land. In any democracy, there is a clear difference between citizens and subjects. The subjects passively allow the Government to initiate and carry out public policies, while the citizens actively participate in the rituals of democracy (Lyons and Alexander, 2016). The difference between the two is determined by their level of awareness. This group usually takes active part in two major events in the electoral process, which are voters’ registration and voting. In Nigeria, as in most other nations, the voting age is 18 years and above. This group constitutes the most vital component of the electoral system and they determine the success or failure of the system. Consequently, they are supposed to be made aware and sensitized of every development in the electoral process.

**The Political Players**

These are the main players in the electoral process. They include the political aspirants as well as everyone who is registered as a member of a political party.

Some of the key events that involve this group, apart from the registration and voting, are:

‐ Registration of parties

‐ Registration of members into each party

‐ Registration of candidates

‐ Establishment of strategies of wining elections

‐ Primary Elections

‐ Elections

‐ Proper monitoring

‐ Presentation of candidates for elective positions

**The Electoral Body**

Nigeria as a country has a population of about 120 million people, out of which, there are about 60 million registered and eligible voters spread across 120,000 polling centers. As a result of this, election supervision and manning of the centers require about 500,000 officials, a greater number of which are temporary or ad-hoc staff, recruited and trained, usually very late in the elections process (Okop, 2006 cited in Onyekwelu & Akomolafe 2015). The officials are usually appointed and coordinated under the umbrella of the electoral body which is put in place by the government. This has always brought the electoral body under fire from many quarters, such as political parties and civil society any time there is a failure in the electoral process. They have accused the commission of being susceptible to pressure from the ruling Party.

This group is made up of the electoral commission set up by the government to conduct elections and personnel employed either as a full or ad hoc staff. These are the personnel employed specifically to implement the various key events that make up the electoral process as contained in the laws that set up the body. They can be described as the bridge between the electorates and the political players. They are involved in most of the activities of the electoral process. The events that involve the electoral officers, as described by (Nelson, 2001 cited in Onyekwelu & Akomolafe 2015), are:

• Registration of voters or updating of registration records;

• Parties and candidates’ registration;

• educating voters;

• accrediting observers and monitors;

• establishing an electoral campaign period;

• oversight of the process and its machinery;

• preparing for, and then holding the vote and count;

• announcing the results; and

• inauguration of the newly elected officials

**Judiciary**

The judiciary is charged with its normal responsibility of dispensing justice in the electoral process. Any dispute, complaint relating to the election as it affects any of the players and intra-party disputes are adjudicated upon by the judiciary.

**Conduct of Election**

If, in practice, the principal right of electors is to choose their representatives and to maintain contacts with them, it is rational then that the condition of choice should as far as possible ensure equality between voters and equal freedom of would-be candidates to present themselves to the electors. The general rule in democratic countries and in all the African countries, Nigeria inclusive, is direct and universal suffrage. It is essential, therefore, that the detailed rules providing for the conduct of elections should, as far as reasonably possible, not impose conditions that, in practice, introduce inequalities. (See Nigeria electoral Act 2011, Omoleke and Olaiya 2013).

The rationale for the enactment of the Electoral Act is simplicita to create good atmosphere and legal framework to guarantee electoral system that embraces essential elements of democratic processes such as a relatively equal electoral constituency, freedom and right to votes designing register of voters, regulation of parties and their activities, balloting procedures, transparency in counting of votes, enforcement of electoral rights and pronouncement of result and the candidate winning the election.

In brevity, what the authors are expressing is that legal framework for the conduct of election, a necessary condition, for representative democracy, covers issues specific to the rules and regulations that are essential for free and fair election.This necessary condition for election administration can also be referred to as practices based on international standard agreed upon or accorded to by international community.

In essence, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (CFRN) and the Electoral Acts serve to assist electoral administration and conduct of election in Nigeria if the two instruments are respected, enforced and complied with voluntarily.

Herold Laski, in his Grammar of Politics published over 40 years ago also lends credence to the characteristics of representative democracy by laying down four essential conditions that a democratic electoral system ought to fulfill. The first is that the legislature should embody the opinion of the majority and minority on great issues of public interest; the second, that constituent areas should be small enough for candidates to get to know their constituents; third, that there must be regular machinery between elections for maintaining contacts with move- ments of opinion; and the fourth, that voters must be as directly related as possible to the government in power.

Obviously the first condition is relevant to all democratic elections whether under a proportional or a majority system. For an election to result in the emergence of clear majority and minority opinions, the electorate must be organized in such away as to make a real choice possible and it is necessary to be quite clear about what is actually being chosen. Unarguably, electors are not choosing between ‘great issues of public interest’, or indeed between issues of any kind, because an election does not provide machinery to enable them to do so. Conversely, they are choosing between specific candi- dates and parties contesting the election, and of course it is the parties that choose the issues derived from their political manifestoes. They offer the electorates a package deal, in which a great many important issues are left unattended to, and they do not give specific undertakings on those that are not discussed. At best, electorates are choosing which of two or more parties they prefer to govern for the next few years.

It is a trite fact that every party in the legislature, whether a majority or a minority, represents, a hetero- geneous agglomeration of disparate views, because only a limited number of issues have been discussed, and there are no means of discovering with any degree of certainty what individual calculations of pros and cons have determined individual vote.

In a resumè, for a system to be entitled to call itself democratic, this choice must be between two or more candidates in order to enable the electorates to express preferences. Furthermore, no sane and law abiding citizen should be debarred from being a candidate, if there is any reasonable chance of his obtaining significant support. The other side of the coin, that is, total freedom of candidature could result in such a profusion of candidates that the whole purpose of election would be defeated, because no majority for any coherent policy would be apparent or obtainable. The United Kingdom, up to 1918, and the Third French Republic did not restrict candidatures, and the result was that freaks, jokers, clowns, and eccentrics with no serious purpose presented themselves.

However, certain restrictions may or can be defended, as long as they are intended to provide conditions in which real choice is possible and do not discriminate against serious candidate. For instance, to ban a political party would be demonstrably undemocratic, unless its policy was to make the democratic system itself unworkable. For instance, in Germany, the Communist Party is banned precisely on the ground that it is not a democratic party and the Germany Constitution (Art 9:2) requires all parties to be democratic.

The criterion usually adopted in some advanced countries is to require prospective candidates to furnish some evidence of public support in the form of a prescribed number of signatures supporting their nomination and some evidence of their seriousness of purpose in form of the deposit of a sum of money which is being returnable unless they fail to pull a required percentage of the total votes.

This safeguard can be criticized on strictly egalitarian grounds as discriminating in favour of rich eccentrics who are prepared to waste their money, and against poor politicians who cannot raise the amount of the deposit. Surely, it has not entirely eliminated freak candidates, either in Britain or France or even in Nigeria. Certainly the system has discouraged many, and the financial hardship imposed by the deposit system is, in most cases, negligible, since supporters in the constituency or the party can advance the money in the confident expectation of getting it back, unless the candidate obtains very little support meaning that, it is this type of candidature that the deposit system seeks to discourage.

Although this system is not a perfect one but it is difficult to find an alternative method that is not open to more serious objections. The American system of primary elections for example, though it eliminates the difficulty in theory by substituting the choice of candidate to the whole electorate, or to a party electorate, tends to make candidates in practice more subject to control by the party machine.

The second characteristic of democratic electoral system is that the ballot must be secret, so that no pressures can be exerted to induce any elector to vote for or abstain from voting for a particular candidate. This is now the general rule in democracies, and it is noteworthy that Hitler abolished it in Germany precisely in order to exert such pressure. But in actual fact, it is not always easy to provide electoral machinery that ensures absolute secrecy. In other countries, such as France, much of the voting and counting take place in villages or district polling stations serving electorate so small that officials and voters all know each other and good guesses can be made as to who has or has not voted for whom.

The third condition is that there should be a rough equality of basic electoral facilities within constituencies. This requirement would cover such things as nearness of polling stations to voters’ homes, information regarding times and places of voting, together with some indica- tions of what the candidate stands for. According to Pickles (1971), the simplest ways of meeting these requirements are to give candidate the right to send the basic relevant information, postfree, to electors homes and for the state to provide facilities for statements by candidates on public hoardings.

The fourth condition is that there should be equality of campaigning conditions. This is possibly the most difficult condition to fulfil satisfactorily. The most important criteria in modern times are limitations on candidates’ expendi- ture on an election campaign, the existence of effective legal provisions making bribery and corruption both very difficult and punishable in the courts, and the provision of equal facilities for parties to appeal to the general public through the mass media of radio and television.

Where these are state controlled, this is possible, and in both Britain and France equality is ensured during election campaigns by understandings between the parties and the radio and television authorities and in Great Britain by the acceptance of similar arrangements by independent television authorities. In the USA, where radio and television are privately owned, politicians can buy time on the air, and in France, politicians can speak to their compatriots from commercial stations outside French frontiers. In all countries, private resources including party funds, can, of course, also do a great deal to promote the political interests of a party between elections and it is impossible to envisage measures that would prevent this without imposing restrictions on freedom of opinion, of the press and of assembly that no democracy would tolerate.

**Concept of Democracy in Nigeria**

By democratization, we mean legal procedure or laid down rules and regulation that a nation wishing to practice democracy must abide with. Furthermore, the political parties, the candidates and electorate are all involved. Some of these rules and regulations are embedded in Statutes and Constitution of Nigeria. The rationale for these laws is to ensure a credible and acceptable election to all, which consequently will support good governance and democracy.

It would be recalled that Nigeria became an independent nation on 1st October, 1960 under Parliamentary system of democracy. This system went on until January 15 1966 when the Parliamentary system collapsed perhaps due to non-compliance with rules and regulations guiding democracy. Hence the military interregnum which lasted from January 15th to September 30, 1979 and the political crisis that engulfed Nigeria between 1964 – 1966 are not unconnected with non- compliance with democratization processes.

As far as democratization is concerned, there are two basic instruments which guide democratization process as earlier mentioned – the Constitution and the electoral Act. The question and concern is: Are the two instruments well enforced? Do the political functionaries respect the law? Perhaps, this is why the followers could not comply because of the breach of the two legal instruments at times, with all impunity by the political functionaries, political parties and even potential candidates. Ostensibly, these people are supposed to set good examples for the followers/subjects.

However, the International IDEA (2001) in a capacity- building research network tagged ‘Democracy in Nigeria’ observed that democratization process in Nigeria is still at low ebb. It hinges around periodic elections like a religious sacrifice to the gods while leaving germane ingredients of democracy largely unaddressed. As such it inevitably faces the challenges of advancing ‘democracy in a way that is dynamic and sustainable’ (International IDEA, 2001:3). The institute advanced that the Nigerian ‘democratization process must move beyond elections and address such issues as civil liberties, individual and communal rights, basic freedoms, human dignity, the rule of law and good governance’ with a view to enhancing the climate of responsibilities among the citizens and to the society (International IDEA, 2001:3). To achieve this, the institute advocated the concept of ‘social compact’ to grapple with the peculiar anti-democratisation process currently prevailing in the country. Social compact is a variant of social contract with specific concentration on how the government can ensure social justice that will in turn initiate the process of reintegration of the citizens and bridge the yawning gaps, first between the citizens and the government and second between the elites and the commoners. For Nigeria, the idea is to forge ‘a new understanding and relationship between government and the people and among all Nigerians’ (International IDEA, 2001). According to the Institute, the new socio-political order for enhanced social justice is essentially needed to foster an inclusive governance approach that will ensure more participation of a broad section of society; promote transparency and accountability; serve as embodiment of the aspirations of all Nigerians; and possess the ability to break the multi-ethnic elitist pact that has silently and firmly prevailed over the socio-political and economic fate in the last 50 years of Nigeria’s post independent history (International IDEA, 2001).

**Concept of Democratic Elections**

Election is the central institution of democratic representative governments. This is because, in a democracy, the authority of the government derives solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for translating that consent into governmental authority is the holding of free and fair elections. Kirkpatrick (2018) identified the criteria of democratic election to include voters education and democratic elections amongst others.

Opposition parties and candidates must enjoy the freedom of speech, assembly, and movement necessary to voice their criticisms of the government openly and to bring alternative policies and candidates to the voters. Simply put, permitting the opposition access to the ballot is not enough. Elections in which the opposition is barred from the airwaves, has its rallies harassed or its newspapers censored are not democratic. The party in power may enjoy the advantages of incumbency, but the rules and conduct of the election contest must be fair and just ((Ikelegbe, 2004 cited in Onyekwelu. & Akomolafe 2015).

**Democratic elections are periodic**: Democracies do not elect dictators or president-for-life. Elected officials are accountable to the people, and they must return to the voters at prescribed intervals to seek their mandate to continue in office. This means that officials in a democracy must accept the risk of being voted out of office. The one exception is judges who, to insulate them against popular pressure and help ensure their impartiality, may be appointed for life and removed only for serious improprieties (Onyekwelu. & Akomolafe 2015).

**Democratic elections are inclusive.** The definition of citizen and voters education must be large enough to include a large proportion of the adult population. A government chosen by a small, exclusive group is not a democracy, no matter how democratic its internal workings may appear. One of the great dramas of democracy throughout history has been the struggle of excluded groups, whether racial, ethnic or religious minorities, or women to win full citizenship and with it the right to vote and hold office. In the United States for example, only white male property holders enjoyed the right to elect and be elected when the Constitution was signed in 1787. The property qualification disappeared by the early 19th century and women won the right to vote in 1920. Black Americans, however, did not enjoy full voting rights in the southern United States until the civil rights movement of the 1960s. And finally, in 1971, younger citizens were given the right to vote when the United States lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 years (Tomwarri, 2009 cited in Uhunmwuangho, & Aibieyi, 2017).

**Concept of the electoral system**

Nigeria’s president is elected by a qualified plurality vote to serve a four-year term. To be elected in the first round, a candidate must receive the highest number of votes cast and at least 25 percent of the votes in two-thirds of the states (spread). If no candidate wins in the first round, a second round is held between the top two candidates (that is, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes in the election and the candidate receiving the majority of votes in the largest number of states). If a second round of necessary, it will be held 21 days after the first round.

The 109 members of the Senate are elected to four-year terms by simple majority vote in single- member constituencies. Each of the 36 states is divided into three senatorial districts. One senator is elected from each of those 108 districts and the Federal Capital Territory. The House of Representatives has 360 members serving for four-year terms, with seats for each state allotted based on population size. Lagos and Kano have the highest number of seats, with 24 each. The State Houses of Assembly have 993 members who are elected to four-year terms by a simple majority vote in single-member constituencies.

**The legal framework for conducting the elections**

The legal framework for conducting the elections consists of:

1. The Nigeria 1999 Constitution, as amended;
2. The Electoral Act, 2022; and
3. Independent National Electoral Commission Election Regulations and Guidelines for the conduct of elections, 2022.

The presiding officer oversees a polling unit, supported by three other poll workers. They will issue ballot papers to voters upon accreditation using the Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS).

The supervisory presiding officer supervises the conduct of polls in a cluster of polling units in a registration area (RA). He or she collects, distributes, and retrieves election materials within that RA (Adewole, 2022).

**Poll Officials**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Polling Team** | **Polling Responsibilities** |
| Presiding officer | Ballot paper issuance/overseer |
| Assistant presiding officer (APO) I | BVAS verification of permanent voter card |
| APO II | Register: check, inking, and statistics |
| APO III | Queue controller and permanent voter checker |

**Collation Officers**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Local government area collation officer | Receive original copies of results from RA/ward, and collate results to obtain localgovernment area summary |
| 2 | State constituency returning officer | Collate, declare results, and return the names of winners of governorship and state elections |
| 3 | Constituency returning officer | Collate, declare results, and return the name of the winner with the largest number of validvotes cast for the federal constituency election |
| 4 | Senatorial district collation/returning officer | Collate, declare results, and return the nameof the winner with the largest number of valid votes cast at the senatorial district election |
| 5 | Chief returning officer | Collate results from state collation officers, declare results, and return the name of the winner as president-elect of the FederalRepublic of Nigeria |

**Why the 2023 Elections are important**

The 2023 general election is the seventh consecutive general election since Nigeria re- established its democracy in 1999. The elections mark 24 years of uninterrupted democracy— the longest span in Nigeria’s history. They will serve as a critical transfer of power, as President Muhammadu Buhari has served two mandates and is ineligible to seek another four-year term (Adewole, 2022).

The upcoming general elections will be the first nationwide elections conducted within the framework of the new Electoral Act, which President Buhari signed into law in February 2022. Continuing Nigeria’s reputation for using advanced technology in elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) will utilize two technological innovations to improve the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. The Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS) verifies and authenticates voters, and the INEC Results Viewing Portal is a public-facing voter tabulation system that the INEC will deploy nationwide.

One challenge that Nigeria faces in these elections is voter turnout. Turnout was at record lows in the previous election cycle—only about 35 percent of registered voters. However, INEC reported a high number of registered voters for the upcoming elections. As of the date of publication, the total was 93,469,008, over 9 million more than in the last general elections in 2019. Election observers will pay close attention to the number of registered voters who collect their permanent voter’s cards and turn out to vote (Adewole, 2022).

Security issues also present a significant challenge for the 2023 general elections. Since 2019, nearly 50 incidents of vandalism and attacks were recorded against INEC offices and personnel by spoilers including terrorist activity in the North East states, banditry in the North West states, and a secessionist movement in the South East geopolitical zone. Attacks on INEC offices across the country reflected greater security problems in the country, including insurgencies in northern Nigeria and secessionist movements in the southeastern region. Nigeria faced unprecedented levels of insecurity during the country’s republican periods, demonstrating the dissatisfaction of a significant percentage of Nigerians with the conduct of their democratic institutions.

The 2023 general elections will have regional implications for West Africa, as successful elections within Nigeria can provide a positive electoral template in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region. Since 2020, the West African region has faced democratic backsliding, with the ECOWAS governments of Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso toppled by military juntas. A successful election in Nigeria could counter negative perceptions of governance within the region. Successful elections in Nigeria will also set a positive example for the continent, given they will be the first and largest African elections in 2023 (Adewole, 2022).

**Observers of the 2023 Elections**

1. **Election Observers**

Representatives of international observation missions, international organizations, civil society organizations, the media, and political parties may observe all electoral activities in Nigeria if they are accredited in accordance with Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) guidelines for election observation.

Civil society organizations and interested national and international organizations must formally apply to INEC’s Election and Party Monitoring department in writing and receive approval to observe the elections. Each observer group is expected to submit a detailed list of its observers, including a photograph of each observer. Upon approval, observer groups will receive observer kits that include badges with photographs for each observer. Election observers are expected to wear their INEC-issued badges at all times during observation on Election Day or risk arrest (Adewole, 2022).

Observers have the right to observe the entire voting process and the counting of ballots at polling stations, as well as the collation and declaration of results at the collation centers. They are not permitted to interfere with the conduct of elections. They may only observe the process and call the attention of officials to any irregularity without interfering with the process. It is unlawful for election observers to handle election materials.

1. **Election Monitors**

Election monitors are INEC officials who are deployed to oversee the conduct of elections. Election monitors can interfere with the conduct of elections, especially if they notice that poll officials are not adhering to the approved procedures (Adewole, 2022).

1. **Political Party Agents**

A political party agent is an accredited representative of a political party or candidate who is designated to witness voter registration, the display of the voter registry, and the polling and counting processes on behalf of his or her political party or candidate at specified registration, polling, and counting venues. A party agent represents the interests of the party’s candidate at the registration, polling, and counting venues. INEC allows only one agent per political party or candidate at each registration, polling, and counting venue.

A party agent present at a polling unit may demand to have votes recounted, but only once. The refusal of any party agent to countersign the result sheet will not invalidate the results of the poll (Adewole, 2022).

1. **Media**

Only accredited journalists are permitted to enter polling units on Election Day, and only under the condition that they do not interfere with the conduct of elections. Members of the media cannot announce election results before returning officers do so, as only the latter are permitted by law to declare the result of an election.

**Concept Of Election Process**

Election and voting are rituals in a democracy and every democratic society; they are the fundamental elements of a functioning and stable democracy. The concept of election lacks probable definition or acceptable definition, among political and social scientists’ (Isiaka, et al 2019). It is equally not possible to separate the voting from election or vice versa, they are both two sides of a coin. Thus we cannot say one without mentioning the other. For Ikelebe (2016) election is the process by which people decide their rulers and assign persons to leadership positions. It denotes voluntary participation in the choice of leaders and therefore bequeaths or invests legitimacy.

Dye (2001) opines that election is a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies, the key to participation in a democracy and the way of giving consent to government.

Election allows the governed to choose and pass judgment on office holders who theoretically represent the governed (Rose, 1978) cited in Obakhedo (2011). In the words of Babalola (2019), he simply said, ‘elections are all about choosing leaders’. For Zhizhi and Ibrahim (2020) election constitute an essential principle in liberal democracy. Election in a democracy is very important because it is through which that the expression of the people are shown via legitimacy and leadership succession. Huntington is however quick to point out that, a political system is democratic ‘to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes, and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote’ (Huntington, 1991). In its proper sense, election is a process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization or group by the vote of its qualified members (Nwolise, 2007). Anifowose (2003) and Bamgbose (2012) defined elections as the process of elite selection by the mass of the population in any given political system. Elections provide the medium by which the different interest groups within the bourgeois nation state can stake and resolve their claims to power through peaceful means. Elections therefore determine the rightful way of ensuring that responsible leaders take over the mantle of power. Araba and Braimah (2015) noted that an election itself is a procedure by which the electorate, or part of it, choose the people who hold public office and exercise some degree of control over the elected officials. It is the process by which the people select and control their representatives. The implication of this is that without election and voting, there can be no representative government. This assertion is, to a large extent, correct as an election is, probably, the most reliable means through which both the government and representatives can be made responsible to the people who elect them. Eya (2003) however, sees election as the selection of a person or persons for office as by ballot and making choice as between alternatives. Ozor (2009) succinctly gives a more encompassing and comprehensive definition of election when he noted that the term connotes the procedure through which qualified adult voters elect their politically preferred representatives to parliament legislature of a county (or any other public positions) for the purpose of farming and running the government of the country. Thus Osumah (2002) elucidates what the basic objective of election is which is to select the official decision makers who are supposed to represent citizens-interest. Elections, according to him extend and enhance the amount of popular participation in the political system. Voting according to Idike (2014) is at the center of the electoral process in a democratic system of government. It is indeed, the first in the democratic process. The journey to democratic governance not only starts with the voting process but its consolidation is determined by it (Ujo, 2008).

**Election Process and Use of Technology**

-INEC mandated to maintain a National Electronic Register of Election Results – an electronic database of polling unit results and collated election results of every election it conducts, which should be made available to any member of the public upon request and payment of prescribed fees [Section 62(1) and (2)];

-Introduction of the Smart Card Reader (SCR) or other technological device such as BVAS and IReV by INEC for accreditation, verification and authentication of voters [Section 47(2)];

-Electronic Voting Device: INEC allowed to provide ballot boxes or “electronic voting machine or other voting device” for elections. This makes room for e-voting [Section 41(1)];

-INEC empowered to determine mode of voting and transmission of results [Section 50(2)];

-INEC also given discretion to prescribe method of transferring results including total number of accredited voters and results [Section 60(5)];

-Collation and Announcement of Results: Collating Officers and Returning Officers to use the number of accredited voters and votes recorded and transmitted directly from Polling Units (PUs) to collate and announce results [Section 64(4-5)];

-Over-voting: INEC empowered to use number of accredited voters to determine over- voting [Section 51(2)];

-An election conducted without prior recording of the quantity, serial numbers and other particulars of results sheets, ballot papers and other sensitive election materials in the Forms prescribed by INEC shall be invalid. A Presiding Officer who violates this will face prosecution and will be liable on conviction to a fine of N10 million or imprisonment for a term of at least one year or both [Section 73(2) and (3)].

Nonetheless, among the aforementioned provisions under the use of technology, this study focused on the introduction of BVAS and IReV by INEC for accreditation, verification and authentication of voters.

**Concept Of e-Voting And Bvas**

The goal of any voting system is to establish the intent of the voter and transfer that intent to the vote counter. The efficiency of the voting method and the accuracy of the vote counter are the crucial determinants of the ability and capacity of the system to correctly determine the wish of the voters (Iwu, 2008). The ability and capacity of the system to correctly determine the intent of the voter it appears, is the superior technology, inherent in the in e-voting methodology. For Iwu (2006) electronic voting system is one of the several forms of automated voting methods, which employ computer technology devices to improve several aspects of the electoral process. He went further to assert that the electronic system incorporates largely paperless voting methods prominent among which are electronic voting machine (EVM), Internet voting, telephone, IVR voting, digital TV voting, electronic kiosk voting, etc. The Nigeria electronic voting system continued IWU is an image based integrated programme, which consists of the following components.

* Electronic voters register
* Eligible voters’ Authentication
* Electronic Balloting (voting machine)

The electronic voting system also known as e-voting can equally be said to be a development where peoples’ collective intent are electronically determined as votes are cast electronically using what is called barcode (Agena, 2007), it is believed that when the electronic system is employed, it allows for security of the votes cast and which will fundamentally allow the choice candidates by the electorate to carry the day during electrons (Agena, 2007). According to Babalola (2021) electronic voting is a comprehensive system of casting, counting and transmission of votes through electronic means. It may involve both the process of casting and counting of votes or may relate only to the process of counting. E- voting technology includes punched cards, optical scanned voting systems and specialized voting cubicles or kiosks including self-contained direct recording electronic voting systems popularly referred to as DRE. The term E-voting may also refer to transmission of ballots and votes through telephones, private computers or the internet.

The Nigerian election management body started with the experimentation of BVAS in 2021, BVAS was first experimented during the Isoko South constituency 1 bye-election in Delta State, this was followed the deployment and successful use of BVAS in the local government election in Kaduna State, BVAS was first used in a statewide election in November 2021 in Anambra State. Though the innovation reported minimal success due to the failure of BVAS to capture voters in some instances but it showed promising potentials as Odinakalu (2021) puts it, the system deserves time to prove itself but INEC will not get too many more opportunities.

**BVAS? An Answer To Election Malpractice**

Though the experimentation with BVAS was laced with teething challenges, the Ekiti and Osun States governorship election in 2022 was the first major acid test, the challenges encountered during the bye- elections in Delta and Anambra States were deemed to be corrected in the 2022 governorship election in Ekiti and Osun States which made the electorate in both states to believe elections was to a large extent credible and transparent. (Iremeka 2023).

According to Odinakalu (2021) BVAS technology combines voter enrollment, voter accreditation, and result interface capabilities in one device, Odinakalu maintains that that the BVAS technology, “theoretically should eliminate the gaps that enable analogue manipulation of numbers in election. The voter accreditation capability combines fingerprint, Iris and facial recognition supposedly to eliminate guesswork in voter identification and accreditation.” Furthermore BVAS is used to transmit a snapshot of the result sheet at polling units to INEC portal in real time for the public to see, as they logged in to the portal, (Oyemike 2023).

In preparing for the 2023 general elections the demand for the application of BVAS from the civil societies, stakeholders and the Nigerian voters heightened, (Okonji 2023). In order to show its preparedness to conduct transparent, free, fair and credible elections, in the buildup to the 2023 elections INEC insisted on the use of Bimodal Voter Accreditation system (BVAS) to conduct the 2023 elections. The Guardian Newwspaper editorial (2022) maintains that the accessibility of the polling unit results increases transparency and public trust in the electoral process, it went further to support the electoral management body on its insistence on the usage of BVAS. The BVAS technology is considered to be a solution to the following election malpractices;

* Falsification of number of accredited voters at the polling unit
* Falsification of votes at the polling unit
* Collation of false results
* Mutilation of results
* Computational errors
* Swapping of results sheets
* Forging of result sheets
* Obtaining declaration and result involuntarily
* Making declaration and return while collation is still in progress
* Poor record keeping

To most Nigerian electorate, civil society organizations and stakeholders the use of BVAS and strict adherence to the 2022 electoral act was seen as a solution and way out of election irregularities and INEC’s inability to conduct transparent and credible election. “Nigerians, including technology experts who spoke, advised INEC to ensure that all election results are uploaded through BVAS to INEC portal, to avoid repeat of manual collation of election results, as witnessed in the presidential and National Assembly elections” (THIS DAY 2023).

**2023 Elections And BVAS Issues Arising.**

Technology innovation and the deployment of technology into electoral process has been a major factor encouraging citizens to participate in political process, but the deployment BVAS is not without its challenges, it has been observed that the technology has failed in some areas and it is susceptible to manipulations. There have been reported cases of BVAS not capturing older permanent voter card (PVC) or its inability to read some elderly peoples thumb print, this has led to the disenfranchisement of eligible voters. The increasing reliance on e-voting is not without risk of cyber attacks and manipulation by those entrusted with the technology, “there is a high tendency that cyber-attacks will be focused on both the BVAS and IReV. The objective of a cyber-attack on the BVAS will be to prevent the snapped results sheet from being transmitted to INEC Server. A cyber- attack on the IReV portal may include modification of the results on the portal or the disruption of the IReV Portal from the public. Notwithstanding, the modification of the results sheet may only be possible with the cooperation of a malicious insider, but disruption can be done with or without a malicious insider”. (THIS DAY, 2023)

The deployment of e-voting/BVAS may have has its shortcoming as experienced in the just concluded 2023 elections, but there seem to be hope in the horizon as many big wig politicians and political heavy lost election due to the deployment of BVAS. As Iremeka (2023) puts it „the deployment of technologies in the 2023 elections brought about a number of improvements, though some schools of thoughts felt that the technologies, especially BVAS, failed the country despite its achievements. It is on record that for the first time, some sitting governors in the country lost elections in the manner that they did. The improvement associated with the deployment of the technologies, especially BVAS, was seen in Lagos where, for the first time since 1999, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu lost an election to a party considered to be small. By the same reason, a number of sitting governors failed in their attempts to become Senators in the 10th National Assembly. The first governor that comes to mind is Ben Ayade of Cross River State who lost to Sen. Jarigbe Agom-Jarigbe, the sitting Senator in Cross River North district. Titus Zam of the APC, a former aide to Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom, defeated Ortom in the race for the Benue North-West Senatorial seat. Senator Adamu Aliero of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was declared winner of the Kebbi Central Senatorial District election. Aliero defeated Governor Abubakar Bagudu, according to the INEC Returning Officer, Prof. Abbas Yusuf-Bazata, who announced the results in Birnin Kebbi. Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State was defeated in his race for the Senate by Okechukwu Ezea of the Labour Party (LP) as Governor Darius Ishaku of Taraba State, the outgoing two-term PDP governor, lost to David Jimkuta. Governor of Plateau State and Director General of the APC Presidential Campaign Council, Simon Lalong failed to win the ticket to the green chamber. The former Chairman, Northern Governors’ Forum and a political heavyweight lost to PDP’s Bali Napoleon at the Plateau South Senatorial District election. In the same manner, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) defeated the sitting Governor Okezie Ikpeazu at the Abia South Senatorial election.”

From the perspective of election watchers and observers these heavyweight politicians would have done everything possible to win the elections if 2023 electoral act did not give INEC the requisite and needed legal backing to insist on the deployment of BVAS as the only legal means of accrediting voter for the 2023 election.

**2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**The Technology Acceptance Model by Davis, 1989**

The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), or TAM, posits that there are two factors that determine whether a computer system will be accepted by its potential users: (1) perceived usefulness, and (2) perceived ease of use. The key feature of this model is its emphasis on the perceptions of the potential user. That is, while the creator of a given technology product may believe the product is useful and user-friendly, it will not be accepted by its potential users unless the users share those beliefs.

The acceptance and the use of information technologies can bring immediate and long-term benefits at organisational and individual levels, such as improved performance, financial and time efficiency and convenience (Foley Curley, 1984; Sharda, Barr & McDonnell, 1988). The potential of technology to deliver benefits has long motivated IS management research to examine the willingness of individuals to accept innovative technology (Davis, 1989). The research on the adoption of technology became of primary importance in the 1980s, which coincided with the growth of the use of personal computers. However, a major stumbling stone at the development of the research on the adoption of personal computing was the lack of empirical insight into users’ responses to the information system performance. Before the development of TAM, various technological and organisational perspectives had aimed to advance IS-related research (e.g. (Benbasat, Dexter & Todd, 1986; Robey & Farrow, 1982; Franz & Robey, 1986 )). Research had emphasised the importance of factors such as users’ involvement in the design and implementation of information systems (Robey & Farrow, 1982; Franz & Robey, 1986). A second stream of research had been underpinned by the practitioners’ focus on the development of information systems, especially when it came to evaluating and refining system design and characteristics (Gould & Lewis, 1985; Good et al., 1986). Those studies had widely used subjective performance perception scales but neglected the validation of the quality of those measures. As a result, the correlation of those subjective measures with actual use had not been sufficiently significant to confirm their internal and external validity.

According to TAM, technology acceptance is a three-stage process, whereby external factors (system design features) trigger cognitive responses (perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness), which, in turn, form an affective response (attitude toward using technology/intention), influencing use behaviour (Davis, 1989; Davis, 1993). TAM represents the behaviour, as the outcome predicted by perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and behavioural intention (Figure 1). Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness capture the expectations of positive behavioural outcomes and the belief that behaviour will not be labour-consuming (Davis, 1989). According to a follow-up study, behavioural intention can be substituted by the attitude toward behaviour (Davis, 1993), which is an affective evaluation of the potential consequences of the behaviour (Ajzen, 2011). The higher the affective response, the higher is the likelihood that the behaviour will take place. The effect of perceived usefulness on actual use can be direct, which underscores the importance of the variable in predicting behaviour. Although perceived ease of use does not affect use behaviour directly, it underpins the effect of perceived usefulness (Davis, 1993). The model implies that if an application is expected to be easy to use, the more likely it is that it will be considered useful for the user and the more likely it is that this will stimulate the acceptance of the technology (Davis, 1989; Davis, 1993).

The development of the model and measures for technology acceptance have made significant theoretical contributions and have had a great practical value. The application of the model for testing IS usability has made it possible to evaluate the motivation of users to adopt a range of technologies (Hwang, 2005; Gefen, Karahanna & Straub, 2003; Araújo & Casais, 2020), which had not been done before due to a lack of validated subjective measures. The development of constructs which had a strong and significant correlation with use behaviour made it possible to understand the cognitive and affective factors mediating the effect of system characteristics on technology acceptance (Davis, 1989).

**The Agenda-Setting Theory**

The Agenda-Setting Theory comes from a scientific perspective, because it predicts that if people are exposed to the same information, they will place importance on the same issues. The Agenda Setting Theory was first discussed “during the 1968 presidential election” (McCombs 1993, p13). According to McCombs, “Agenda Setting is a robust and widespread effect of mass communication, an effect that results from specific content in mass media” (McCombs 2004). Folarin, (2005), asserts that agenda settings implies putting an issue to public through framing, calling of well-known individuals (opinion leaders) to talk about the issues and stimulating audience to think about the issue so that it become subject of interest. The agenda settings refer to total operation of the media which result in prioritization of issues that arise and engage the attention of the society. (Yushau, 2015, p50). The theory provides us with the basis of examine how the press has been able to set agenda for 2015 general election issues by assigning relative importance to them, through frequency of reporting? According to Chaffee & Berger’s 1997 criteria for scientific theories, Agenda-Setting is a good theory. It has explanatory power because it explains why most people prioritize the same issues as important. It has predictive power because it predicts that if people are exposed to the same information, they will feel the same issues are important. It is parsimonious because it isn’t complex, and it is easy to understand. It can be proven false. If people aren’t exposed to the same media, they won’t feel the same issues are 8 important. Its meta-theoretical assumptions are balanced on the scientific side. It is a springboard for further research. It has organizing power because it helps organize existing knowledge of media effects. The strengths of this theory can be analyzed by looking at Baran (2010). The theory focuses attention on audience interaction with the media. Empirically demonstrate links between media exposure, audience motivation to seek orientation and audience perception on public issues. Integrate a number of ideas including framing, story positioning and story vividness.

**2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Ogieva, & Ajisebiyawo (2023) researched on transparent elections in nigeria: an assessment of the introduction of electronic voting (BVAS) in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The study showed that elections are one of the major components of a democratic process. The people must be willing to participate in the election in order to legitimise the power and authority of elected political leaders. It enables a ruler-ship by the consent of a people. For an election to be considered to have integrity, it must be free, fair and transparent, in most nascent democracies elections are manually conducted, which are mostly prone to corrupt practices and manipulations, which in most cases lead to post election violence, crisis and prolong cases at the tribunals and courts. With the introduction of electronic voting (E-voting) and usage of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, this work will be taking a look at the dynamics of the innovation of BVAS as it affects 2023 elections in Nigeria and how INEC can use BVAS to strengthen the electoral process and minimise post election crisis. In preparing this work Technology Advancement Theory (TAM) Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) and e-democracy theory was analysed, and the (IDT) theory was adopted as theoretical framework. In the course of this work qualitative research method in form of secondary literature analysis, books, related websites, newspapers, INEC sources etc, was applied as source of literature. In the final analysis we came to the conclusion that BVAS was a good innovation and the usage must be sustained and improved upon by INEC. Finally this work will not only contribute to other available literature on electronic voting but act as catalyst to further extensive research on BVAS.

Apalowo, Osigwe & Adejumo (2023) also researched on Nigeria’s electoral integrity and bimodal voter accreditation system: an assessment of public opinion and voting behavior. The study pointed out that in the pursuit to enhance public electoral participation, lately the electoral body introduced the adoption of a twin-technology i.e. Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Election Result Viewing Portal (IReV), in subsequent elections. The efficacy of the twin-technology has raised a lot of apprehensions. Thus, it is against this backdrop this study assessed the public opinions and voting behaviours as regarding the worthiness and integrity of new Electoral Act with reference to INEC adoption of BVAS and IReV in Nigeria subsequent elections. The study adopted a survey research design, where data were primarily sourced from randomly sampled 400 Abuja municipal residents using questionnaires. Specifically, the study utilized descriptive analysis methods these include frequencies, percentages, charts and word-cloud in analyzing respondents views as regard awareness of the use of BVAS and IReV in Nigeria elections. It also employed the Fisher’s Exact Test to assess effects of the twin-technology awareness and its adoption on the public confidence in electoral process vis-à-vis their voting behaviour. The empirical findings from the descriptive analysis of the respondents revealed that there is great level of awareness among the public as regard the use of BVAS and IReV in subsequent elections in the country. Also, the study showed that respondents were full of praises for the innovation of the technology in Nigeria elections. Moreover, the Fisher’s Exact results showed that public awareness of use of BVAS and IReV positively influenced the public PVC collection rate. Howbeit, it revealed that public awareness of use of BVAS and IReV positively influenced voters’ turnout in subsequent General Election, if and only if electoral misconducts can be downcast. Thus, the study recommended that INEC could ensure full implementation and deployment of BVAS and IReV technology in coming (subsequent) elections. Also, INEC with NBA collaboration could ensure all electoral misconducts perpetrators are brought to justice as this would downcast electoral misconducts in the country and thereby enhancing voters’ turnout.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

 In this chapter, we described the research procedure for this study. A research methodology is a research process adopted or employed to systematically and scientifically present the results of a study to the research audience viz. a vis, the study beneficiaries.

**3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research designs are perceived to be an overall strategy adopted by the researcher whereby different components of the study are integrated in a logical manner to effectively address a research problem. In this study, the researcher employed the survey research design. This is due to the nature of the study whereby the opinion and views of people are sampled. According to Singleton & Straits, (2009), Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e., mixed methods). As it is often used to describe and explore human behaviour, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research.

**3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

 According to Udoyen (2019), a study population is a group of elements or individuals as the case may be, who share similar characteristics. These similar features can include location, gender, age, sex or specific interest. The emphasis on study population is that it constitute of individuals or elements that are homogeneous in description.

 This study was carried out to examine the inadequacy of the BVAS on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. Selected political activists in Abuja, Nigeria form the population of the study.

**3.4 SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION**

A study sample is simply a systematic selected part of a population that infers its result on the population. In essence, it is that part of a whole that represents the whole and its members share characteristics in like similitude (Udoyen, 2019). In this study, the researcher adopted the convenient sampling method to determine the sample size.

**3.5 SAMPLE SIZE SELECTION TECHNIQUE AND PROCEDURE**

According to Nwana (2005), sampling techniques are procedures adopted to systematically select the chosen sample in a specified away under controls. This research work adopted the convenience sampling technique in selecting the respondents from the total population.

In this study, the researcher adopted the convenient sampling method to determine the sample size. Out of all the entire population of political activists in Abuja, Nigeria, the researcher conveniently selected 65 out of the overall population as the sample size for this study. According to Torty (2021), a sample of convenience is the terminology used to describe a sample in which elements have been selected from the target population on the basis of their accessibility or convenience to the researcher.

**3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

The research instrument used in this study is the questionnaire. A survey containing series of questions were administered to the enrolled participants. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, the first section enquired about the responses demographic or personal data while the second sections were in line with the study objectives, aimed at providing answers to the research questions. Participants were required to respond by placing a tick at the appropriate column. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher.

**3.7 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

Two methods of data collection which are primary source and secondary source were used to collect data. The primary sources was the use of questionnaires, while the secondary sources include textbooks, internet, journals, published and unpublished articles and government publications.

**3.8 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The responses were analysed using the mean and standard deviation, which provided answers to the research questions.

In analyzing data collected, mean score was used to achieve this. The four points rating scale will be given values as follows:

SA = Strongly Agree 4

A = Agree 3

D = Disagree 2

SD = Strongly Disagree 1

**Decision Rule:**

To ascertain the decision rule; this formular was used

|  |
| --- |
| 4+3+2+1 =10**= 2.5** 4 4 |

Any score that was 2.5 and above was accepted, while any score that was below 2.5 was rejected. Therefore, 2.5 was the cut-off mean score for decision taken.

**3.9 VALIDITY OF THE STUDY**

Validity referred here is the degree or extent to which an instrument actually measures what is intended to measure. An instrument is valid to the extent that is tailored to achieve the research objectives. The researcher constructed the questionnaire for the study and submitted to the project supervisor who used his intellectual knowledge to critically, analytically and logically examine the instruments relevance of the contents and statements and then made the instrument valid for the study.

**3.10 RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY**

The reliability of the research instrument was determined. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A co-efficient value of 0.68 indicated that the research instrument was relatively reliable. According to (Taber, 2017) the range of a reasonable reliability is between 0.67 and 0.87.

**3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

he study was approved by the Project Committee of the Department. Informed consent was obtained from all study participants before they were enrolled in the study. Permission was sought from the relevant authorities to carry out the study. Date to visit the place of study for questionnaire distribution was put in place in advance.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the analysis of data derived through the questionnaire and key informant interview administered on the respondents in the study area. The analysis and interpretation were derived from the findings of the study. The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents as well as interpretation of the information gathered. A total of sixty five (65) questionnaires were administered to respondents of which fifty (50) were returned and validated. This was due to irregular, incomplete and inappropriate responses to some questionnaire. For this study a total of 50 was validated for the analysis.

**4.2 DATA PRESENTATION**

The table below shows the summary of the survey. A sample of 65 was calculated for this study. A total of 50 responses were received and validated. For this study a total of 50 was used for the analysis.

**Table 4.1: Distribution of Questionnaire**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Questionnaire**  | **Frequency** | **Percentage**  |
| Sample size | 65 | 100 |
| Received  | 50 | 76 |
| Validated | 50 | 76 |

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

**Table 4.2: Demographic data of respondents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Demographic information** | **Frequency** | **percent** |
| **Gender**Male |  |  |
| 31 | 62% |
| Female | 19 | 38% |
| Age |  |  |
| 20-30 | 18 | 36% |
| 30-40 | 22 | 44% |
| 41-50 | 10 | 20% |
| 51+ | 0 | 0% |
| **Education** |  |  |
| HND/BSC | 30 | 60% |
| MASTERS | 12 | 24% |
| PHD | 08 | 16% |
| Marital Status |  |  |
| Single | 12 | 24% |
| Married | 26 | 32% |
| Separated | 00 | 00% |
| Divorced | 04 | 08% |
| Widowed | 08 | 16% |

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

**4.3 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**Question 1: How effective was BVAS in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

**Table 4.3:** Respondents on how effective the BVAS was in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Very effective  | 35 | 70 |
| Not effective | 10 | 20 |
| Undecided  | 5 | 10 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**Field Survey, 2023**

In the table above on how effective the BVAS was in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, 70% of the respondents said very effective, 20% of the respondents said not effective and 10% of the respondents were undecided.

**Question 2: What are the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

**Table 4.4:** Respondents on the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEM STATEMENT** | **SA****4** | **A 3** | **D 2** | **SD 1** | **X** | **S.D** | **DECISION** |
| 1 | Unavailability of the BVAS | 21 | 22 | 04 | 03 | 3.2 | 2.55 | Accepted |
| 2 | BVAS not in good working condition | 23 | 17 | 05 | 05 | 3.0 | 2.57 | Accepted |
| 3 | Lack of technical know how | 26 | 21 | 03 | 0 | 3.3 | 2.55 | Accepted |

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

In table 4.4 above, on the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, the table shows that all the items (item1-item3) are accepted. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item3) have mean scores of and above 2.50.

**Question 3: Did the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

**Table 4.5:** Respondents on whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affect public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Yes  | 40 | 80 |
| No | 5 | 10 |
| Undecided  | 5 | 10 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**Field Survey, 2023**

In the table above on whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affect public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria, 80% of the respondents said yes, 10% of the respondents said no and 10% of the respondents were undecided.

**Question 4: Did the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affect the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

**Table 4.6:** Respondents on whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affect the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Yes  | 30 | 60 |
| No | 15 | 30 |
| Undecided  | 5 | 10 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**Field Survey, 2023**

In the table above on whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affect the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria, 60% of the respondents said yes, 30% of the respondents said no and 10% of the respondents were undecided.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the findings on the the inadequacy of the BVAS on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The chapter consists of summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

**5.2 Summary of the Study**

In this study, our focus was on the the inadequacy of the BVAS on the electoral outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The study is was specifically focused on determining whether the effectiveness of BVAS in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, ascertaining the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria, determining whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria and determining whether the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria.

The study adopted the survey research design and randomly enrolled participants in the study. A total of 50 responses were validated. And the enrolled participants are all selected political activists in Abuja, Nigeria.

**5.3 Conclusions**

In the light of the analysis carried out, the following conclusions were drawn.

* The BVAS was effective in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria.
* The factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria include:

Unavailability of the BVAS

BVAS not in good working condition

Lack of technical know how

* The ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria.
* The ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria

**5.4 Recommendation**

Based on the findings the researcher recommends that;

1. The Independent national electoral commission (INEC) must improve on its cyber security network to forestall future attacks on its system.
2. To avoid human errors INEC should make it a point of duty to hire or employ people of proven integrity as returning officers and those handling the BVAS should be given all necessary and adequate training on the use and maintenance of the equipment.
3. To improve connectivity, the National Communication Commission (NCC) should upgrade its broadband networks, without this the country will not be able reap the full benefit of BVAS
4. As a way forward INEC should subject the BVAS and IREV to stress tests before elections.

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**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**PLEASE TICK [√] YOUR MOST PREFERRED CHOICE AND AVOID TICKING TWICE ON A QUESTION**

**SECTION A**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Gender**

Male ( )

Female ( )

**Age**

20-30 ( )

30-39 ( )

40-49 ( )

50+ ( )

**Marital Status**

Single [ ]

Married [ ]

Divorced [ ]

Separated [ ]

**SECTION B**

**How effective was BVAS in transmitting result from polling unit during the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Please tick** |
| Very effective  |  |
| Not effective |  |
| Undecided  |  |

**What are the factors which affected the effectiveness of BVAS during the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEM STATEMENT** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree**  | **Disagree**  | **Strongly Disagree**  |
| 1 | Unavailability of the BVAS |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | BVAS not in good working condition |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Lack of technical know how |  |  |  |  |

**Did the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affected public perception on the accuracy and credibility of the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Please tick** |
| Yes  |  |
| No |  |
| Undecided  |  |

**Did the ineffectiveness of BVAS and IReV affect the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Please tick** |
| Yes  |  |
| No |  |
| Undecided  |  |