

University Lecturers' Perception of Factors Responsible for Elections Malpractices in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated university lecturers' perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria. A research question and three null hypotheses guided the study. A survey research design was used in the study. The population for this study consisted of lecturers in public universities in Delta State. The sample of this study was 300 lecturers in three public universities in Delta State. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Factors Responsible for Election Malpractice in Nigeria Questionnaire. Experts validated the instrument. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine a reliability coefficient of .79. Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), as well as t -test statistics, were used to answer the research question and null hypotheses, respectively. The findings revealed that disregard for the electoral act by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and vote buying among various political parties to win elections by all means, among others, are perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigerian university lecturers in Delta State. The difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on gender, rank, and religion. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that the government at various levels always uphold the rule of law, especially the electoral act, during and after elections in Nigeria. The INEC should be very transparent at different stages of the election, especially during the collation process. The judiciary should prosecute electoral offenders or politicians who engage in election malpractice to deter others in society. The government at all levels as well as various stakeholders should ensure that there is proper public voter enlightenment before elections in Nigeria.

Keywords: perceptions, university, lecturers, electoral malpractice

Introduction

Electoral malpractice has been defined as flawing or not following the accepted rules, regulations, norms, and principles guiding elections. Election malpractice is done to manipulate or cheat in order to win an election. Ezeani (2005) states that electoral malpractice is 'illegalities committed by the stakeholders with the ulterior motive to change election outcomes in their favor. Election malpractice usually is a global phenomenon, in which Nigeria is not an exception. In Nigeria, election malpractices take various forms, such as vote buying, rigging, massive financial support for political rallies and gatherings, and violence, among others, which in no small measure affect the will and resilience of voters in producing legitimate leaders in the society.

Nigeria has experienced election malpractices virtually in all her elections since the return of democracy in 1999. Elections conducted in Nigeria so far in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023 have a fair share of election malpractices in various forms. Uncommon to all of this is the 2023 general election in Nigeria, where the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced a technology called Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and online transmission of results to avoid any form of election malpractice. With the introduction of BVAS and online results, the umpire (INEC)

raised the hope of all Nigerians that their vote would count. INEC equally promised Nigerians that the election results would be uploaded on the INEC result viewing portal, which was designed to provide real-time transmission of election results from EC 80A across all polling units in the federation to the central collation center in an attempt to enhance the transparency of the electoral process and reduce the incidence of vote rigging and election manipulation (Yusuf, 2023).

However, during the presidential and national assembly elections on the 25th of February, 2023, observations have shown that the said election was marked with lots of malpractices against what INEC promised to Nigerians. Election observers like the Centre for Democratic Development stated that the 25th of February 2023 presidential and national assembly elections were marred by widespread irregularities such as logistics failure, misconduct, and poor technical know-how of INEC's ad-hoc staff and security lapses. Similarly, the United States, European Union, Common Wealth, and other international observer groups trail the conduct of the exercise amid allegations of widespread irregularities, rigging, and manipulations of the results. Atobauka et al. (2022) found that religious factors, lack of adequate security, poor management of election processes, politician utterances, high rate of unemployment and poverty, ethnicity and sectional in politics, in-depth ignorance, and political impunity, lack of

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internal democracy, negative perception and inflammatory campaign are causes of electoral violence in Nigeria.

International observers from the United States of America (USA), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Commonwealth all noted the irregularities in the polls. They also stated that abuse of incumbency by various political officeholders distorted the playing field, which led to allegations of vote buying (Iroanusi, 2019; Yusuf, 2023). In addition, the International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, and Joint Election Observation Mission noted that inadequate communication and lack of transparency by the INEC created confusion and eroded voters' trust in the process. The International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute, in their preliminary statement on the Presidential and National Assembly Elections, presented in Abuja by their leader and former President of Malawi, Dr. Joyce Banda, said despite the much-needed reforms to the electoral act 2022, the election fell well short of Nigerian citizens' reasonable expectations (Yusuf, 2023).

Another foreign-led by Banda stated that the late opening of polling locations and logistical failures created tensions, and the secrecy of the ballot was compromised in some polling units given overcrowding. Furthermore, at the close of the polls, challenges with the electronic transfer of results and their upload to INEC result viewing portal on time undermined citizen confidence at a crucial moment. Furthermore, Banda stated that inadequate communication and lack of transparency by INEC about their cause and extent created confusion, eroded voters' trust, and disenfranchised many voters in the process. Observations from another study on the conduct of general elections in Nigeria indicate that electoral malpractices include deliberate changing of election results, stuffing of ballot boxes, use of violence, misdeeds by security agents, connivance by polling officials and party agents to rig elections, intimidation of voters, vote buying, intimidation, arrest, and detention of election observers, underage voting in some parts of the country (Aluaigba, 2016; Ibrahim, 2011; Jimoh & Olaniyi, 2011; Yusuf, 2011). It is against this backdrop in the history of election malpractice in Nigeria that it is essential to investigate perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria.

Research Question

What are the perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers?

Hypotheses

The following formulated hypotheses were tested at a .05 level of significance

1. The difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on gender.
2. The difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on rank.
3. The difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on religion.

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Perceived Factors Responsible for Election Malpractice in Nigeria among University Lecturers

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD	Remark
There is a leadership failure at all levels of government in Nigeria at an alarming crescendo	100	102	41	57	2.82	1.10	Agree
Overtime in Nigeria, the political class who rig or manipulate elections are not punished or prosecuted	79	98	52	71	2.62	1.11	Agree
The all-means quest for political power by the majority of the political class	105	101	53	41	2.90	1.03	Agree
High existence of corruption among the political class at all tiers of the government	43	21	124	112	1.98	1.01	Agree

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. A descriptive survey research design studies a group of people or items by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered representative of the entire population (Ajayi & Abanobi, 2016). The research design was deemed suitable for this study since this study collected lecturers' views on factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria.

The population for this study consisted of all lecturers in public universities in Delta State. The sample of this study was 300 lecturers in three public universities in Delta State. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Factors Responsible for Election Malpractice in Nigeria Questionnaire. There were two sections in the questionnaire, section A and section B. Section A was titled personal data for the collection of particulars of the respondents. Section B was titled questionnaire items. The instrument was a four-point rating scale with response options of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). Two measurement and evaluation educational psychology department experts validated the instrument at the Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba. The experts were requested to examine the face and content validity of the questionnaire's items regarding their sentence construction, appropriateness of language, adequacy of questions in relation to the purpose, research questions, and hypotheses. The comments and corrections of the experts were reflected before the final copy of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot-testing. 20 Copies of the instrument were administered to a sample of lecturers who were not selected for the study. The Cronbach Alpha technique was used to measure the internal consistency of the research instrument and determine whether the instrument was fit for the study. The reliability coefficient obtained was .79, which indicated that the instrument was fit and reliable for the study.

Three hundred (300) copies of the Factors Responsible for Election Malpractice in Nigeria Questionnaire were administered to the selected lecturers from three public universities in Delta State. The respondents were given enough time to respond to the questionnaire before the researcher collected back the instruments. Because of the nature of the Asaba metropolis, this exercise took the researcher two working days to be completed. The researcher also ensured that the administered copies of the questionnaire were adequately collected. The information gathered from the respondents was used for data analyses. The data collected from respondents were analyzed using mean statistics to answer the research questions. The decision rule was any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agree or great extent, while any item with a mean score below 2.50 was regarded as disagree or low extent. The null hypotheses were tested using a *t*-test. The decision rule was that any null hypothesis with a *p*-value < .05 was accepted, whereas; the reverse was true for any null hypothesis with a *p*-value > .05.

Results

Research question 1, what are the perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers?

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD	Remark
Partiality and corruption of the stakeholders in the INEC	96	62	77	65	2.63	1.14	Agree
Some of the INEC staff are largely corrupt during and after elections	105	78	61	56	2.77	1.12	Agree
Disregard for the rule of law by the incumbent government and some members of the political class	104	64	44	88	2.61	1.23	Agree
Disregard to electoral act by the INEC	95	205	0	0	3.32	.47	Agree
Very poor voter enlightenment by the INEC and the government at the center	106	97	55	42	2.89	1.04	Agree
Corruption of some members of the judiciary across the federation	110	60	79	51	2.76	1.12	Agree
INEC's lack of transparency in the collation process at different stages of the election	71	95	63	71	2.55	1.09	Agree
Lack of independence of the judiciary	61	201	21	17	3.02	.71	Agree
Vote buying among various political parties in order to win elections by all means	109	123	54	14	3.09	.85	Agree
Grand M & SD					2.77	1.00	Agree

Note. Data collected by the author in 2023.

SA = strong agree; A = agree; D = disagree; SD = strong disagree.

Table 1 reveals mean and standard deviation scores on perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers in Delta State. The analysis indicates that the respondents rated all items above a mean score 2.50. This implies that disregarding to electoral act by the INEC and vote buying among various political parties to win elections by all means, among others, are perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers in Delta State. The grand mean score of 2.77 also indicated that the respondents agreed that all items listed in Table 2 are perceived factors responsible for Nigeria's election malpractice among Delta State university lecturers. Furthermore, the grand standard deviation score of 1.00 reveals that the respondents were homogeneous in their response to perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers in Delta State.

Hypothesis 1, the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on gender.

Table 2

Test of Difference between Perceptions on the Factors Responsible for Election Malpractice in Nigeria among University Lecturers Based on Gender

Variables	n	M	SD	df	t	p
Men	183	42.5	8.11	298	12.88	.35
Women	117	43.8	9.18			

Note. $N = 300$. $p > .05$.

Table 2 shows that a *t*-test was run to test the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers based on gender. The result shows no significant difference given that *t*-value = 12.88 and $p > .05$ (.35 > .05) therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted that the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on gender.

Hypothesis 2, the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on rank.

Table 3

Test of Difference between Perceptions on the Factors Responsible for Election Malpractice in Nigeria among University Lecturers Based on Rank

Variables	n	M	SD	df	t	p
Junior	192	46.03	10.06	298	2.16	.06
Senior	108	43.65	8.58			

Note. $N = 300$. $p > .05$.

Table 3 shows that a *t*-test was run to test the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers based on rank. The result shows no significant difference given that *t*-value = 2.16 and $p > .05$ (.06 > .05) therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted that the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on rank.

Hypothesis 3, the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on religion.

Table 4

Test of Difference between Perceptions on the Factors Responsible for Election Malpractice in Nigeria among University Lecturers Based on Religion

Variables	n	M	SD	df	t	p
Christian	276	44.2	7.66	298	5.10	.37
Islamic	24	34.89	8.65			

Note. $N = 300$. $p > .05$.

Data presented in Table 4 indicates that a *t*-test was run to test the different perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers based on religion. The result shows no significant difference given that *t*-value = 5.10 and $p > .05$ (.37 > .05); Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted that the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on religion.

Summary of Findings

The following findings emerged from this study:

1. Disregarding to electoral act by the INEC voting to buy among various political parties to win elections by all means, among others, are perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers in Delta State.
2. The difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on gender.
3. The difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on rank.
4. The difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on religion.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that some factors, such as disregard for the electoral act by the INEC and vote buying among various political parties in order to win elections by all means,

among others, have been perceived as factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers in Delta State. However, the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on gender. Similarly, the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on rank. Finally, the difference between perceptions of factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers is not significant based on religion.

These findings supported by Yusuf (2023) that the Nigeria elections of 2023 were marred by widespread irregularities such as logistics failure, misconduct, and poor technical know-how of INEC's ad-hoc staff and security lapses. Similarly, international observers from the United States of America (US), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Commonwealth all noted the irregularities in the polls. They also stated that various political officeholders' abuse of incumbency distorted the playing field, leading to allegations of vote buying (Iroanusi, 2019, Yusuf, 2023).

Additionally, a triangulation of studies (Aluaigba, 2016; Ibrahim, 2011; Jimoh & Olaniyi, 2011; Yusuf, 2011) found that electoral malpractices include deliberate changing of election results, stuffing of ballot boxes, use of violence, misdeeds by security agents, connivance by polling officials and party agents to rig elections, intimidation of voters, vote buying, intimidation, arrest, and detention of election observers, underage voting in some parts of the country.

Educational Implication

The educational implication of the findings is that if these perceived factors continue to go on unabated, they will influence the political lifestyle of the graduates who are supposed to be future leaders of the country. Nevertheless, if the ugly scenario and situation are arrested and curbed, the government and the political class can influence the younger generations positively to assume a future leadership position. It will also help the younger generation avoid engaging in the perceived factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, this study concludes that some factors, such as disregard for the electoral act by the INEC, lack of independence of the judiciary, very poor voter enlightenment by the INEC, and the government at the center, vote to buy among various political parties to win elections. Others have been perceived as factors responsible for election malpractice in Nigeria among university lecturers in Delta State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study made the following recommendations:

1. Government at various levels should always uphold the rule of law, especially the electoral act, during and after elections in Nigeria.
2. The INEC should be very transparent at different stages of the election, especially during the collation process.
3. The judiciary should prosecute electoral offenders or politicians who engage in election malpractice to serve as deterrents to others in society.
4. The Government at all levels as well as various stakeholders, should ensure that there is proper public voter enlightenment before elections in Nigeria.

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