

## **ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIA PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the influence of electronic-voting System on infrastructural development in Nigeria. The study used secondary data to generate relevant information to explore the justification for adopting Card Reader machine in the 2015 election as a initial experiment for the e - voting system in Nigeria. The result shows that the application of CR and PVC has significantly play down election frauds in the 2015 general election, thus, signifying the chances for adopting e-voting technology in the subsequent general elections. The study also revealed that since non-performing leaders were voted out during the last election, it is an indication that the incumbent leaders and prospective candidates would be committed to infrastructural development especially road construction, provision of effective health facilities, improved education, effective implementation of poverty intervention schemes among others. Excessive interference with INEC activities and failure of CR machines are general challenges encountered during the elections. The study therefore, recommend rigorous practical training for the ad-hoc personnel, and ratification of laws with severe punishment to allow INEC discharge its duties as an independent institution to restrain unnecessary interruption.*

**Keywords:** e-voting, Card-Reader, infrastructure, development

### **Introduction**

The return of political power from the military to civilian administration saw the introduction of new political campaign slogan which was redirected to infrastructural development in the facets of construction of road network, health facilities, agriculture provision of electricity services in the rural and urban centers. The vision to utilize the advantage of the domiciled human and material resources of democratic nations across the globe and particularly in sub-Saharan African (Nigeria inclusive) ignites rural and urban development (Bates, Fayad, & Hoeffler, 2012; Trotter, 2016). Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa continent and indeed the largest among the black nations of the world with a projected population of 180 million (NPC, 2013). Nigeria is a wealthy state and naturally endowed rich resources such as crude oil, agriculture, mineral fossils, innovative and resilient human capital (Chindo, Naibbi, & Abdullahi, 2014). Yet, Nigeria is ranked as the third country with the largest population of poor as a result of poor infrastructural facilities (Olaleye, Edun, Bello., & Taiwo, 2014).

Infrastructure development involves identifying and implementing the right project, conducting feasibility studies vis-à-vis physical development of the country. The development of any country is a function of effective policy on infrastructure as it is the basis of measuring the performance and specifically development. The desire for infrastructural development is complex and the resources to provide it across the globe and Nigeria in particular are inadequate. Infrastructure is the rudimentary organizational structures required for societal operation like industries, buildings,

roads, bridges, health services, and governance and so on. It is the initiative or the products, services and facilities essential for national development (Sullivan and Sheffrin, 2003). Over the years, provision of infrastructure services has been perceived by researchers and policy makers as a fundamental element for economic development (Calderon & Boreux, 2016). Sub-Saharan Africa has consistently been ranked at the bottommost of all developing regions in terms of infrastructure assessment, and as a major impediment for growth and poverty alleviation across the region. For instance, in the strive to combat poverty and improving the living conditions of the citizens in Burkina Faso, the government in its socio-economic development policy identifies poor infrastructure particularly electricity sector as a major obstacle to poverty alleviation (Peters, 2016). Literature established that the military regime in Nigeria experienced a robust economic yet, there was a gap in infrastructural provision to the citizens.

Studies reveal that succeeding governments have committed substantial resources into varied programs to improve infrastructure and combat the high rate of poverty and to bridge the gap between economic growth and prosperity of the citizens. Prominent among them are: Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Agricultural Development Project (ADP) and many more (Dugguh, 2014; Ogwumike, 2002). Studies shows that awful governance, absence or poor political will, corruption, absence of visible policy agenda for infrastructural development, the dilemma of continuity syndrome, political fraud and horrific looting are foremost factors that causes poverty of infrastructure in Nigeria (Arogundade, Adebisi, & Ogunro, 2011; Kanayo, 2014). In spite of all policy measures improve infrastructure through agencies like War Against Indiscipline and Corruption, Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission to combat financial crimes and more recently whistle blowing policy, Nigeria infrastructure remain pitiable (Abinbola, 2012) as a result of inefficiency, discriminatory and selective justice among its officials (Amaraegebu, 2011; Inokoba & Ibegu, 2011; Nwosuji, 2015; Oyelade, 2014). Preceding studies recommends that infrastructural development could better achieve through election of credible and committed leader to national development (Idris, 2018). Similarly, past studies emphasis on the efficacy and usability of e-voting system, however, prospect of this new technology on poverty alleviation (Ayo, Adebisi, & Sofoluwe, 2008; Ishaq, Osman, & Jaleelkehinde, 2012; Nu'man, 2012; Oostveen & Van den Besselaar, 2009; Salimonu, Osman, Jaleel, Shittu, & Jimoh, 2013). However, this study examines the factors that influence the idea of e-voting system and its influence on infrastructural development in Nigeria.

Accordingly, electronic voting (E-Voting) is an electrical system of voting introduced by advanced nations of the world to improve election processes. Literatures have revealed that as a result of technological advancement coupled with the myriad problems of manual voting, USA, Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, France, Japan, United Arab Emirates and others have established different methods of e-voting projects. Namibia was the first African country to adopt the e-voting technology, followed by South Africa. However, the idea was misconceived and thus was initially not supported by the opposition parties on the ground that the policy was aimed at election manipulations (Obradovic, Hoover, Ikonomakis, & Poulos, 2006).

Researchers aver that e-voting allows eligible voters cast their votes, simplifies the evidence of accuracy, privacy and verifiability (Chillotti, Gama, Georgieva, & Izabachène, 2016). It is a procedure that is auditable, transparent, secured with minimal

human error. E-voting is promising to comfort large countries (Bokslag & de Vries, 2016; Chillotti et al., 2016) like India, Brazil and Phillipine, and facilitate the release of election results within short period of time. The system enables voters to elect credible candidate without any unjustifiable influence; defend the secrecy of their votes at each phase of the voting process; assured accessibility of all voters. Hence, the electorates build trust and confidence in the electoral institutions (Obradovic et al., 2006).

### **Methodology**

This study used secondary data using survey literature to generate relevant information on the justifications for adopting Smart Card Reader in 2015 general election as a preliminary experiment for e-voting in Nigeria and its influence on infrastructural development. The sources include journal articles, INEC bulletins and pamphlets, Newspapers, views of INEC stakeholders, magazines among others

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts frustration-aggression theory to explain how the consequences of unfulfilled campaign promises inspired the citizen of Nigeria to embrace the adopted Card Reader (CR) and Permanent Voters Card (PVC) vis-a-vis turn against their traditional and spiritual leaders who hitherto solely determine the candidate to elect. Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sears (1939) were the proponents of frustration-aggression theory, and they perceived frustration as "the state that emerges when circumstances interfere with a goal response," often leads to aggression Accordingly, when people are banned from achieving a goal, their frustration is likely to instigate aggression (Barker, Dembo, & Lewin, 1943). The closer you approach a goal, the higher the excitement and prospect for delight and vice versa. Traditionally, Nigerian politicians attracts votes and restore their political fortunes through religion and ethnic lines (Whitman, 2015) which is contrary to the global practice. Ideally, prospective candidates are expected to challenge each other with their manifestos and debates, on vital issue like security, education, new reforms system, employment, poverty eradication and infrastructural development (Onwukeme, 2015) and other myriads of challenges confronting us as a nation. In Nigeria reverse is the case. Nigerian citizen were frustrated by primordial sentiments, such as campaigns of religion and ethnicity and inflammatory utterances unfulfilled campaign promises that persistently widen the gap existing between religions and ethnic groups in the country (Whitman, 2015). Thus, during the 2015 election, the trick of using religion and ethnicity failed as a result of untold economic hardship, security challenges - where all members of the two religious and all ethnic groups across the country were victims of insurgency, starvation, poor infrastructural facility. The frustration compelled majority of Nigerians to embrace the new electoral card and support candidate of their choice without consideration to religion or ethnicity.

### **Literature Review**

Historically, elections in Nigeria were conducted manually since independence. This ranges from voter's registration, ballot papers and voting procedures. Thus, the credibility of free and fair elections through this processes have been criticized as a result of series of anomalies perfected therein (Ishaq et al., 2012).

Election fraud is a recurrent and devastating obstacle that bedevils Nigeria democracy over the years. Incompetent and weak electoral institution, the fair of being probed for financial misappropriation, poverty on the part of the electorates, party agents, security agents and thugs are factors accountable for election flaws in Nigeria (Awopeju, 2011). Election scam led to frequent review of electoral acts, change of leadership of the

electoral commission and introduction of several anti-corruption measures. Despite all these actions by preceding governments to ensure credible, free and fair election, the struggle still remains a mirage. The major factors that influences the introduction of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) in 2007 is the desire to regain the lost integrity of INEC, enhance the veracity of the election result and the quest for exoneration of electoral commission from the public accuse of colluding with the ruling party to manipulate election results. Ultimately, the urge by the citizens to elect credible and committed leaders to infrastructural development and the need to curtail post-election violence that have claimed many innocent lives in the past elections is another paramount factor that ginger the idea and support of e-voting system in Nigeria(Adebayo, Ugiomoh, & AbdulMalik, 2013).

However, the idea of EVM was perceived with mix feelings among Nigerians. Albeit, the enthusiasm was high among those who believed that the innovation will minimize the rate of election fraud through the authentication of biometric data and photograph of voters as well as eliminating manifold registration and impersonation. On the other hand, the idea was seen by some group of individuals as an invention to wedge their chances of victory through the usual illicit devices (Duruji & Joshua, 2014). Consequently, desperate political gladiators who felt the new system will affect their victory mobilized the National Assembly to suspend the proposed EVM in the Electoral Act of 2006. This enfeebled the position of INEC and thus, paves way for the usual election frauds in 2007 elections.

In preparing for the 2011election, INEC procured Direct Data Capture Machine (DDCM) to address some challenges encountered during the 2007 election such as multiple registration, the incidence of unimaginable turnouts of voters on the election days. For instance 94%, 96% and even 100% turnout of the electorates (NCSSR, 2015). The idea could not yield fruitful resulted diversion of the machines prior to delivery to the INEC. This bred series of rumour and confusion across Nigeria and beyond.

Based on the 2011 challenges and previous experiences, INEC introduced Smart Card Readers as a new template for the first time in the history of Nigeria to improve the integrity of the electoral processes (Olumide, 2015). Although, the ruling party moved to undermine the new policy, but INEC as an independent body of the electoral processes, alongside with the Civil Society Organizations, and well-meaning citizens resists the attempt(Fabiya, 2015). Thus, CR was introduced with its immense characteristics which include:

Rejection of any card that is not configured by the INEC as experienced during the preceding elections in Nigeria, where politicians transfer voters' cards among their supporters (Idowu, 2015; Jega & Hillier, 2012). CR reads the embedded chip on the PVC hence, it interacts through the secret code with the PVC; so, it was difficult to falsify the cards. The CR validates the identity of the voters by cross-matching the thumbprints that is stored on the embedded chip making it very complex to transfer voters' card. In order to avert fraudulent practice, the CR is configured to operate only on the Election Days and in particular polling units, thus, it cannot be transferred to another unit without reconfiguration by authorized INEC personnel (Idowu, 2015; Jega & Hillier, 2012). CR keeps records of all card, including particulars of all verified voters as well as those that are yet to be verified, and conveys the collected data to a central INEC server through the Global System for Mobile communication (GSM) data service. Statistics of the voters transmitted to the server will enable INEC to verify

results from polling units, and also ensure statistical analysis of the demographics of voting (Idowu, 2015).

Better still; the system had some inadequacy such as rejection of fingerprints, malfunction of card readers, unnecessary delay, mismatch of information, and pocket of violence among others. There was noticeable improvement as problems experienced with the card reader during the presidential and Senatorial elections dropped almost by half to 27% were addressed during the subsequent governorship and State Assembly elections. Election Monitor Observers suggest that INEC should maintain the use of card readers in the subsequent elections as the outcome of the 2015 election confirmed that the technology was very efficient and it has the ability to minimize election fraud in Nigeria. Thus, the opposition party won in presidential position, 20 governors out of 29 states where election was conducted. While in the National Assembly, opposition candidates had 63 senators out of 109, 208 members of the House of Representative out of 360 members (Monitor, 2015).

The persistent nature of election fraud in Nigeria makes it difficult to have a reliable statistic about the misconducts perpetuated by the politicians. However, the local and international observers as well as the Human Right activists described the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections as “deeply troubled” and “fallen far short” of international standard (Berg, 2007).

The consequences of the election fraud led to the death of over 300 people in 2007 election, over 800 died in 2011 and less than 200 during the 2015 general election (Tayo, 2015). Most unfortunate, election fraud in Nigeria internalized more ethos of impunity, where minority influential cliques hijacked the administrative apparatus to serve their selfish interests at the detriments of the citizens, suavity and civility that will prosper and consolidate democracy (Adegbami & Uche, 2016; Ebirim, 2014). Acknowledging the success of the 2015 general election, the Commonwealth, the AU and ECOWAS observers unanimously agreed that the elections were peaceful, transparent and generally credible. The transparent nature of the 2015 general election convinced the incumbent president and some state governors to conceded defeat (Adamu, 2015).

### **E-Voting as a prospect for infrastructural development**

Infrastructure can be described generally as the set of interconnected structural elements that provide framework supporting an entire structure of development. It is the means of achieving an objective or set of objectives and also includes the objectives. It is an important term for judging a country, region or state's and individual's developments/status. The term characteristically refers to the technical structures that support a society, like roads, water supply, drains, electrical national grids, telecommunications, among others, and can be defined as “the physical components of related systems providing wares and services necessary to sustain, or enhance societal living conditions” (Fulmer, 2009). Viewed functionally, infrastructure *simplifies* the production of goods and services, and also the distribution of finished products to end-users vis-à-vis the basic social services such as schools and hospitals; for example, roads enable the transport of raw materials to a factory (American Heritage Dictionary, 2009). The perennial and pervasive problems of poverty in Nigeria were associated with bad governance (Arogundade et al., 2011), lack of political will, corruption, lack of defined policy agenda for infrastructural development, challenges of continuity in power, political deception and horrible looting (Elumilade, Asaolu, & Adereti, 2006; Kanayo, 2014; Ker, 2012).

Literatures demonstrates that poor infrastructure has direct linkage with bad governance and it is more prevalent in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive (Devas, 2012). Since the return of power to a civilian administration in 1999, the government under the auspices of the People Democratic Party (PDP) claimed to have shown commitment to infrastructural development. Azam & Emirullah (2014) contends that infrastructure facilitate sustainable development and poverty mitigation particularly in the emerging world of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In similar studies, scholars established that infrastructure is a prerequisite for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development (Anyang, 2001; Bolton, 2000; Craig & Porter, 2006; Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2006; Frenk & Moon, 2013; Lyakurwa, 2009). Infrastructure calls for improvement of all facets of the society, predetermines human development which is achievable through infrastructure, especially in productive employment, integration of the poor people in the social activities and policies that directly affect their basic needs (Gul, Sajid, Afzal, Khan, & Mughal, 2012). But in reality, this was merely a lip service as the rate of infrastructure decay in Nigeria is becoming more devastating and still pervades the length and breadth of the country (Omotoso, 2013).

The 16 years of the PDP led government was described as a disaster in Nigeria, because, the country has witnessed the downward trend in all spheres of human endeavour such as insecurity, bad economy, and poor commitment to education facilities, unemployment among the teeming youths and the dearth of industries (Yusuf, 2015). Poverty in Nigeria has substantially risen between 1980 and 2011, and today it is ranked as the third country with a large population of the impoverished (Chillotti et al., 2016; Dauda, 2016).

This persistence hardship necessitate the alliance of Nigeria's three biggest opposition parties: The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), as well as a set of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) to form the new party known as All Progressives Congress (APC) (Agbakwuru, 2013). In order to enhance a hitch free election fraud, the APC was firm about the Card Reader (CR) and biometric Permanent Voters Cards (PVC) introduced by INEC which mainly contributed to the victory of the opposition party across the country.

### **Democracy and Infrastructural Development in Nigeria**

The condition of infrastructure of any state is directly connected with the value of life. The quality of life for most people in Sub-Saharan Africa appears to have either not improved or only done so slightly. This state ascended from the mismanagement of initial leaders most of whom directed the fight for independence” (Eregha, 2007). The terrible state of affairs in Africa led to indescribable devastation of economies in the continent; people had to live below the poverty line with food insecurity, no shelter to accommodate them and no medical or educational facilities to give them some hope for the future. In each case, the oppressive conditions in which they lived with no basic infrastructure led these people to evolve gradually into a class of disgruntled citizens desperate for change. In almost all cases, the military provided the answer by way of coup d'état that toppled these political classes. Usually, such military governments professed to have come in as corrective regimes that would stay for only brief periods within which they would right wrong things before handing over to democratic governments. These military governments often ended up entrenching themselves in power. In fact, most of them exhibited all the traits of the much vilified early leaders and even more (Ikpi, 1997).

It is obvious that Africa is the poorest continent in the world and the present condition indicates backward movement in terms of infrastructural provision especially, the technology based. "It has now become clear, even to obstinate and recalcitrant policy makers, that unless drastic measures are taken, living conditions for most people in this continent will continue to fall" (Elu, 2000: 60). The Nigerian civil wars have led to the abandonment of provision of infrastructure such as education amenities and health facilities, and in some cases, agricultural services and transport facilities were demolished. School buildings have been converted to military use. Civil wars in Africa weaken the continent's productive capability, destroy or severely weaken social structures, distort economic policy, pollute the value-systems of the people and perpetuate prolong poverty (Elu, 2000: 60).

Essentially, there are numerous theories of development: they are categorized into modernization and dependency. The modernization theorists based their argument on Economic, Psychology and Diffusion. The economic approach of Rostow (1962) recognized five phases in the process of a nation's economic development. Rostow's supposition is that underdevelopment was an original position from which traditional societies could move through (stages) to development without a recourse to social revolution. Weber (1930: 60), McClelland (1968: 20) and Everret (1983: 31) explained development in terms of presence (or absence) of (i) some individual personality traits or (ii) the general psychological state typifying the general public. McClelland argued that the need for achievement encourages the individual to meet challenges to take risks and to succeed in the face of difficulties. Western industrialized nations contained individuals with high level of achievement motivation, which led to high rate of national growth. Hagen (1962: 16) argued that traditional developing nations produced authoritarian personalities who lacked self-confidence, exhibited a high level of anxiety when faced with new situations and who were content to preserve the status quo.

In addition, developed societies have more inventive dispositions that show self-confidence, derived satisfaction in resolving problems and who are achievers. It was argued further that for development to transpire, individual personalities had to change. Edari (1976:19) employs diffusion theory to explain the process of less privilege societies' development. Diffusion is a process by which developing countries adopts capital, technology, and social structure from western industrialized countries. The author contends that the developing countries would develop to the extent that:

- ❖ *Western industrialized countries provide capital programs*
- ❖ *They adopt modern methods of agricultural and industrial production and*
- ❖ *They adopt those values, attitudes and behavior patterns that are exhibited by western industrialized nations.*

The people approach to development perceive an individual not as a subject- 'but an actor who describes the goals, controls the resources, and directs courses affecting life (Korten, 1984:21). The key elements in this approach are provision of infrastructure through empowerment of people, development of an administrative process, which responds to the needs of the people, human growth and wellbeing, equality, self-reliance, participation and sustainability. White (1987: 60) argued that sustainability is a measure of lasting quality in development program.

An infrastructural development program can be sustained by creating a felt need among beneficiaries about the efficacy of the program, developing institutions which continually adapt, providing (or self-generating) resources and building support among

political elite and community groups. Modernization theories provoked a great deal of criticisms from radical scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank, Claude Ake, Bode Onimode, Segun Osoba, Zwingina Silas and others who argued that colonialism and Western capitalism were the two major factors responsible for the underdeveloped nature of third world countries. The Western industrialized countries developed by exploiting human and natural resources of their colonies and by making them economically dependent on their colonial powers after independence. However, since the demise of the colonialists, the African leaders ought to have found their feet.

In its development agenda with regional member countries, African Development Bank (ADB) has made infrastructure development a foundation (TMSA, 2012). The Bank recognizes that infrastructure is one of the major restrictions to short- and medium-term poverty alleviation in Africa, and has thus been a major force in both private and public sector infrastructure development through the provision of financial and technical resources. Similarly, the bank identifies the increasing significance of governance for infrastructure development and has made good governance domineering in its lending and non-lending operations. As a result, there has been substantial transformation in the delivery of national infrastructure services across Africa. While Nigeria has improved its telecommunication infrastructural situation, it has not improved in other areas like health, education, airport infrastructures, electricity, housing and transportation. On the other hand, performance in terms of infrastructure service delivery and quality continue to vary across countries. Infrastructure is the medium of production of goods and services and forms the national asset of any nation.

Accordingly, Kathmandu (2009) affirms those infrastructures can relief four problems: social; health and environment; development; and, economic respectively. Broadly speaking, regional infrastructure network is the very socio-economic climate created by the institutions those serve as outlets of trade and investment. Conversely, their roles in the context of integration are transformative, helping to change resources into outputs or to enhance trade by removing barriers. Therefore, an improvement in regional infrastructure is one of the key factors affecting the long-term economic growth of a region. The linkages between infrastructure and economic growth are multiple and complex. Not only does infrastructure affect production and consumption directly, it also creates many direct and indirect externalities. It also involves large flows of expenditure, thereby creating additional employment. Studies have shown that infrastructure can have a significant impact on output, income, employment, international trade, and quality of life. Infrastructure development can reduce stress and promote good health. It will also reduce crime level. Infrastructure has always played a key role in integrating economies within a region. Well developed and efficient infrastructure is essential for a region's economic development and growth. In dynamic concept, infrastructure is seen as a regional public good that moves factors of production within and across countries, thus helping the region attain higher productivity and growth.

### **Conclusion**

The poor rate of infrastructural development in Nigeria has been obstructed by leaders who came to power through elections fraud. In an attempt to curb this ugly trend, the INEC placed her confidence in machinery by adopting Smart Card Reader Machine and Automated Permanent Voters Cards. The preliminary test has proven its efficacy in combating election frauds which will also pave way for the implementation of substantive e-voting machine in Nigeria. Considering the overwhelming acceptance of



these innovations (PVC and CR) among the citizens that led to the defeat of the incumbent political leaders, one can deduce that prospective candidates will be committed to genuine infrastructural development which is anchored on active participation and evaluation of people oriented policies and programs for the wellbeing of the citizens. The transparent nature of the e-voting will minimize post-election violence and encouraged defeated contestants to concede defeat as epitomized by PDP presidential candidate in 2015 general elections. The outcome of 2015 general elections has demonstrated that, the masses can determine their leadership, and it goes along to confirm that non-performance leaders can easily be voted out of power; therefore, all leaders must be committed to infrastructural development to improving the wellbeing of the masses. This study has methodological inadequacy as it sources its data through secondary data which might be deficient to make generalization. Consequently, future study should adopt quantitative survey generate data through the electorates, politicians and INEC stakeholders and possibly conduct interview vis-a-vis focus group discussion to validate the information from the quantitative data.

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