

**ELECTION ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF 2003-2007 AND 2011-2015 ELECTIONS**

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Abstract

Elections in Nigeria from independence till date have continued to recycle in a vicious violence and unimaginable manipulations especially from the political elites; this has attracted the attention of local and international communities. The perceptions of commentators and election observation reports is that the activities of most of the Election Management Bodies, EMB since independence had become synonymous with electoral fraud and injustice such that they represent no credible institution for facilitating the process of translating the true consent of citizenry into the legitimate representative authority of Nigerian state. However, in this present Fourth Republic, most especially in the 2011 and 2015 elections, the attitude of EMB (INEC) has relatively changed and there are noticeable improvements on the administrations of some of the elections conducted). It is on this note that the paper attempts to draw a comparative analysis of the election administration of the 2003-2007 and 2011-2015 elections using Election Day, which comprises of polling, Counting and Tabulation of results as key electoral cycles to measure and determine the performance and the credibility of the outcome of the four elections. It is then evident that electoral reform and some of the innovations introduced to the electoral process in 2011 and 2015 elections have greatly improved the performance of the election administration and the credibility of those elections. The paper then concludes by imploring INEC and other relevant bodies in election administration in Nigeria to sustain the performance and possibly improve on it for future elections.

Keywords: Election Administration, Election Day, Polling, Counting and Tabulating, Comparative Analysis

Introduction

Democracy as institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples' vote (Schumpeter, 1975, P.127). Meanwhile, election has become an important component of democracy and democratisation debates not only in Nigeria but also in Africa. Repetitive elections, the good, the bad, and/or the ugly,

has democratic self-reinforcing powers, stimulating civic activism and actions often better than free and fair elections (Bratton, 2013, P. 38). Others contend that only high-quality election can lead to democratisation. While each of these arguments holds and perhaps clarifies the extent of democratic commitments, none examined the significance of institutional capacity building of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in improving the credibility of election.

It is gratifying that democracy is regarded as the best form of government; hence, every country across the globe including Nigeria claims to be democratic. Thus, it shows that democracy has gathered momentum across the world as a result of its immense advantages and by implication because of the negative consequences of bad governance. On this note, a reliable democratic system can be put on the right footing if the principle of free, fair and credible election is entrenched. In this regard, election administration forms the central nerve of the conduct of election as strong pillar that can make election to be free, fair and credible. This aspect must be handled by a reliable and credible Election Management Body legally responsible to handle such assignment.

In fact, democracies are all founded upon election for it is the process that confers legitimacy upon power. An electoral contest and context in which political parties compete for the votes of citizens at regular intervals have been viewed as the common defining property of democracy (Adigbuo, 2008, P. 22). In fact, the quality of elections is part of the criteria for assessing the level of consolidation of new democracies. Elections are therefore considered vital and indispensable for determining the democratic nature of a political system. When election is not managed quite satisfactorily, it can pave the way for deeper ethnic and regional divisions, lost of legitimacy of elected authorities, protest, unhealthy contestation, social explosion, and doubt about institutions, violence, and instability or even threaten the entire democratisation process. In fact, poor management of elections is a real and prolific source of conflicts, violence, insecurity and instability.

In this respect, it becomes imperative for any democratic society to establish a reliable and competent Election Management Body saddled with the responsibility of managing and administering elections in their respective societies. The process of election administration in many new democracies continues to generate a lot of controversies, particularly with regards to the level of independence of Election Management Bodies (EMBs), their professionalism and the acceptability of the elections they conduct. In Nigeria, Africa's largest democracy project, the election administration process since the country gained political independence from the British has always resulted in controversies and crises, arising, in part from the perceived collaboration of EMBs with the successive military and civilian regimes of the country's post-Independence era. The implication of this is that the history of election administration in Nigeria has been a history of controversy engendered by electoral malpractices (David, 2015, P.1).

Some of the elections that have been conducted since the beginning of the country's Fourth Republic were also greeted with a number of controversies and manipulations as a result of the poor management of these elections. These incredible elections have several occasions threatened the unity of this nation. However, the election administration of the 2015 elections was adjudged to have been relatively well managed. It is against this background that this paper attempts to draw a comparative analysis of the election administration of the 2003-2007 and 2011-2015 elections by using Election Day which comprises of polling and counting and tabulation of results as key electoral cycles to determine the performance and the credibility of the results. To properly contextualize the paper, after a brief introduction, the paper presents a conceptual framework of election and election administration; examines and draw a comparative analysis on the election administration of the Election Day for the four elections under study; the paper then presents concluding remarks, implores INEC and other relevant bodies in election administration in Nigeria to sustain the performance and possibly improve on it for future elections.

Conceptual Framework

According to Bello-Imam (2015, P. 3), election is defined in semantic term as a technique where by citizens choose their representatives in accordance with mechanisms fixed by the constitution or the established government of a state. It also connotes the process of selecting the officers and representatives of an organization or group by the votes of its qualified voters. The process accords citizens the right to choose at regular intervals, among competing leaders and policies. This scholar's perception of election focuses on the choice of representatives of the people to occupy political positions and this has to be done through mechanism fixed by the law of that society.

The centrality of election to popular participation and representative governance cannot be overemphasised. Election is a civic duty that is expected of every eligible citizen to perform. Disu (2015, P. 21), rightly posits that:

Through electioneering, electorates should be adequately informed about the track records, political parties and policy positions of aspirants for public offices. In a free and fair election, voting for choice candidates - even if such candidates or their parties do not win and form a government - is not a "waste of vote. Each valid ballot that is cast registers a political position, implying that, informed voters' concerns must be taken serious.

This assertion connotes that there must be respect for the right of voters to register their preferences peacefully and conscientiously, as violence undermines freedom of choice. The electoral umpire and political actors must make votes count by ensuring peaceful and secure campaigns with visible commitment to the rule of law and a peaceful conduct of poll. Such election must detest violence, especially those promoted by desperate and selfish politicians, who deploy political thugs that will employ violence towards civilians or disrupt the exercise in anyway. Furthermore, political education is also emphasized as a necessary requisite in election process.

While election does not automatically guarantee the consolidation and sustenance of the democratic process, yet it remains central element in the process of democratization. Though elections and democracy are not synonymous, elections however, remains a fundamental pillar not only for installing democratic government, but also as a necessary requisite for broader democratic consolidation. The regularity, openness and acceptability of elections, according to Bratton (1998, P. 52) signal whether basic constitutional, behavioural and attitudinal foundations necessary for democratic sustainability are being laid or not. Nothing emphasises the centrality of elections to democratisation than the fact that there can be elections without democracy, whereas there can never be democracy without elections.

Meanwhile, the meaning of election administration appears nebulous as a result of the complex set of activities inherent in the concept. Yet, a critical examination of its meaning firmly establishes it as an empirical category. Iwara (2010, P. 24) sees election administration as "organisation and conduct of elections to elective public (political) offices by an electoral body" it is on this note that Samuel (2013, P. 13) expatiates this meaning given by Iwara that subsumes election administration both are the structure and process. By structure it "meant the bureaucracy that is set up or established to organize and conduct elections". The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria is a good example. By process is "meant the rules, procedures and activities relating among others, establishment of electoral bodies, and the appointment of their members. The registration of voters, the nomination of candidates, balloting, counting of the ballots, declaration of results, the selection and training of electoral officials, constituency delimitation, voters and education and, in some cases, registration of political parties and supervision of parties' nomination congress".

These processes are best captured by Ajayi (2007, P.142-144) when he defines election administration as: the management and organisation of all stages of electoral process. It involves the planning, organisation and conduct of elections. Election administration has three stages which are pre-election, actual Election Day and post election activities. The pre-election involves delimitation of constituencies, registration of political parties and eligible voters. It also involves screening and verification of candidates for elections. These are essential activities that must be accomplished before the actual Election Day. Activities on the

actual Election Day include: balloting by registered voters, counting of votes collating of results and announcement of final results and declaration of winners. Activities on Election Day also include: election monitoring, observing and reporting by local and foreign poll watchers to evaluate the freeness, fairness, transparency and credibility of election. The third stage is post election period, which has to do with election complaints and litigations by aggrieved parties and contestants. Such complaints/litigations are usually handled by special election panels or tribunals set up for such purpose.

In the opinion of Idike (2014, P.135) in election administration, the election process (electoral process) relates to the entire cycle ranging from the provision of voter education to the dissolution of the National Assembly. Furthermore, Elekwa (2008, P. 30) deposes that the different phases of the electoral process include the following:

Delimitation of electoral boundaries, registration of voters, notice of elections, Nomination of candidates, Election campaigns, elections, announcement of results and completion of tribunal sittings, Participation of other organizations, resolution of electoral conflicts resulting from the participation of other organisations, people, groups, etc.

The electoral process is therefore a complex process that encompasses the good intentions and undesirable outcomes of election administration, particularly in emerging democracies where general elections are often marred by culturally hued electoral malpractices. In the Nigerian case, the truth remains that the electoral process is immensely characterised by a culture of electoral malpractices. Beckett (2011, P. 17) cited by Samuel (213) argues that there are other critical issues in election administration or management, including but not limited to problems of funding of the Electoral Management Body (EMB), logistics, the pervasive role of the state, tenure of office and autonomy of the EMB, among others.

Comparative Analysis of Election Administration of Election Day for the 2003-2007 and 2011-2015 Elections

All over the world where democratic governance is in vogue, a number of processes are embarked upon before, during and after elections in the administration of elections. Each of the processes is very instrumental to the accomplishment of a free, fair and credible election. Conversely, any of the processes or a combination of some of them, which are wrongly or unreligiously implemented can vitiate the results of the election (Bello-imam, 2015, p.14). Therefore, if elections must pass the acid test of transparency, freedom and fairness, they must be conducted in a free, peaceful and enabling environment.

The most comprehensive electoral processes are 12 in number and the twelve are subdivided into three- pre-election period, comprises of legal framework, election management; design of ballot, nomination and registration of parties and candidates; delimitation of electoral constituency; voter education; voter registration and; election campaign. The second stage is Election Day which comprises of Polling and Counting and tabulation of election results. The third stage is post-election period which also comprises of resolving election related disputes and complaints, verification of final results; certification; election results implementation and; Post-election procedures.

Therese (1999) comprehensively captures most of the important principles and impartial Election Management Body must put into practice to achieve best quality elections. These include: the right to vote, the secrecy of the vote, the quality of access for parties and candidates, the security of the process, and the neutrality, non-partisanship and transparency of the electoral administration. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to examine the Election Day activities as part and the most crucial aspect of the electoral cycles. This has to be done by drawing a comparative analysis of the 2003-2007 elections adjudged to have been fraudulently conducted with incredible results and the 2011-2015 elections which both local and international observers adjudged to have been relatively well managed than the previous two elections and the results were credible.

In the 2003 and 2007 elections, polling units opened very late to the extent that some eligible voters were disenfranchised. It was even reported that some polling units did not open at all and votes were recorded in those polling units. For instance, in 2003 elections, EUEOM (2003) observed late openings of polling units all over the country (only 17% of the observed polling stations opened in time). Delays of 2 hours and more were common. In some cases, polling stations did not open before the afternoon or did not open at all. Despite the serious logistical shortcomings observed at the opening (in 40% of the visited polling stations, some essential materials were missing - seals, aggregation of results forms, stamps, etc - and in one third of the cases, the polling staff was incomplete), the conduct of polling was generally described as orderly. This observation was supported by the IRI report (2003, P.19) that with the exception of the FCT in Abuja, the vast majority of polling stations on April 12, 2003 election failed to open on time at 8:00 a.m. because they lacked essential materials such as ballot boxes and ballots. In many areas, polling stations opened two to three hours late, leaving voters waiting in long lines. A few polling stations did not open until early afternoon, if at all. The source of the problem lay in the inability of INEC, Regional Election Commissioners and Local Government Area Electoral Officers to receive and distribute materials in a timely or properly planned manner.

In 2007 elections, NDI report (2007) also corroborated this development that absence of forms for recording results raised particular concerns in several states and these logistical failures were particularly acute in states where the ruling party, PDP was either out of power or faced a strong challenge. There was delayed in distribution of voting materials to local government areas in Enugu when citizens refused to allow polling officers to leave the Central Bank (where the materials had been stored for safe keeping) until the results sheets were delivered. Voters protesting the absence of results sheets burned down the INEC office in Onitsha, Anambra State.

However, in 2011 and 2015 elections, it was reported that polling units opened on time and little delay experienced and were quickly rectified. The little delay experienced in few polling stations did not negatively affect the election process. This view is supported by the report of the EUEOM (2011, P. 48) that, in 2011 elections, a vast majority of the polling units opened on time and were operational throughout accreditation and voting. Furthermore, Situation Room Report (2015) noted that in 2015 elections, 90 percent of polling units monitored opened on time and that accreditation proceeded smoothly with the card readers functioning with minimal hitches. Thus, the late opening of polling on election days for the first two rounds of elections- 2003 and 2007 under review negatively affected the election process and this reflected on the outcome of the results of the elections. While the second two rounds of the elections- 2011 and 2015 were better in terms of opening of polling units and this had positively reflected on the outcome of the elections, which were relatively adjudged by local and international observers to be free, fair and credible.

On the aspects of the ad-hoc staff engaged during elections, civil servants who were more loyal to the politicians were used in 2003 and 2007 elections. The civil servants that were used were sourced through the politicians and they worked for the interest of the politicians or parties that facilitated their appointments. Thus, electoral malpractices were easily perfected without much stress through them. No wonder these two elections recorded a number of manipulations and rejected by local and international observers. This assertion is supported by the report of International Republican Institute (2003) that in preparation for the 2003 elections, despite the calls to limit the enrolment of civil servants, the recruitment process of the "ad hoc" officials was not managed properly and left entirely in the hands of the Election Officials at the LGA level, with little or no screening mechanism.

However, in 2011 and 2015 elections, ad-hoc staffs engaged by INEC were the NYSC and students of tertiary institutions. The NYSC used were those spending a year working somewhere other than their state of origin. They were perceived by the electorates as being insulated from local politics and more independent. Furthermore, these ad-hoc staffs were adequately trained but in the first two rounds of

elections, reverse were the case. The civil servants engaged were poorly trained. Therefore, the politicians found it extremely difficult to influence the NYSC and Students of tertiary institutions engaged for electoral malpractices. According to INEC (2011), with a voting population of 73,528,040 and 119,973 verified polling units, the total number of polling unit officials – Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers – were about 400,000. The Commission sourced these from among serving NYSC members and Students of Federal Tertiary Institutions. Other ad-hoc staff used included supervisory Presiding Officers, as well as Collation Officers and Returning Officers. The Commission sourced these officials from Federal Universities, Federal Polytechnics and Federal Colleges of Education (Collation Officers) and the Federal Public Service (SPOs).

Another interesting area is the number of polling units used during these elections under review. In 2003 and 2007, 120, 000 polling units were claimed by INEC to have been used for the elections. But when verification exercise was conducted by INEC in 2010, only 119, 973 polling units exist with shortage of 27. This gave room for electoral rigging, which were committed through these unverified polling units. According to Jega (2017), to improve the integrity of elections in Nigeria, INEC created Voting Points to the extent that the polling units and voting points used for the 2011 and 2015 elections were about 158, 000. This system reduced the stress encountered in some polling units with more than 500 registered voters. Therefore, people that have been logically disenfranchised in the past were given opportunity to exercise their civil rights without stress.

It is also evident that accreditations were poorly conducted in 2003 and 2007 elections to the extent that many voters' names could not be found in the registers. Some voters could not even locate their voting units. However, in 2011 and 2015 elections, especially in 2011, accreditation was very smooth. In 2015, it was a little bit controversial because of the difficulty experienced in some parts of the country on the use of Card Readers to identify the finger print of voters. This was quickly abandoned for manual accreditation through the directive of the management of INEC and the accreditation exercise continued smoothly. In 2003 and 2007 elections, polling units were oversubscribed with 1500 to 2000 in some polling stations. This led to overcrowded in those areas and slow down the electoral process. This development created disorderliness and also paved way for electoral manipulations and triggered off violence. This was re-arranged in the 2011 and 2015 elections when voting points were created so as to decongest the polling units for orderliness to be attained.

Modified Open Secret Ballot System (MOBS) was the voting system adopted in the 2003 and 2007 elections. This type of system is where the accreditation and voting take place concurrently. This system allows for multiple voting. This system allowed voters to vote in more than their designated polling units. However, in 2011 and 2015 elections, Re-Modified Open Secret Ballot System was adopted. This type of system is where the voting process is divided into two phases- accreditation period and voting period. In the two elections, accreditations took place from 8.00am to 12.00pm and by 1.30pm, voting commenced and ended until the last person on the queue. For this system, multiple votes reduced drastically.

In support of this view, INEC report (2011) states that, a major way to check multiple voting in the 2011 elections was to have two distinct phases in the voting process: (i) Accreditation of voters, between 8.00 am and 12.00 noon, simultaneous across the country and (ii) vote casting from 12:30 pm, until the last person on the queue has voted. This arrangement makes it extremely difficult for any multiple voting to take place. Naturally, this came with its own challenges especially adequacy of time on Election Day. This necessitated the creation of Voting Points, which are locations within polling units where queues of not more than 300 voters were formed for accreditation and voting, manned by a poll clerk, usually an Assistant Presiding Officer (APO). Thus, a polling unit with 900 registered voters would be divided into three (3) voting points with about 300 voters at each voting point. This way it was possible to accredit about 300 voters within the four-hour period provided for accreditation.

In 2007 elections, EUEOM (2007) observed that during the opening, apart from the late opening of polling units, essential polling materials were missing, in particular polling booths, EC8 series result

forms and ballot papers. A total of 75 per cent of polling stations visited by EU observers did not receive the correct number and type of ballot papers. The newly printed presidential ballot papers were without serial numbers and insufficient quantities were delivered in many parts of the country. EU observers reported that in Ebonyi and Abia States, presiding officers only received 46 per cent of the required number, and that in Borno State; only 36 per cent of the presidential ballots needed were distributed. Once again, no elections took place in many areas. For example, in the minority areas of the LGAs Katsina-Ala, Buruku, Ojo, Otukpo and Okpokwu as well as in one ward in Vandeykya LGA of Benue State, no elections were conducted and most of the ward collation centres were not operational. In Kaduna South in 6 out of 13 wards, no elections were conducted due to the tensions surrounding the delivery of faulty ballot papers. Similarly, in Anambra State, in five LGAs, no elections took place due to the delivery of incorrect polling materials.

Furthermore, National Democratic Institute report (2007) also states that With regard to the legislative races, not all ballot papers included the party symbols of candidates for the elections, while many candidates complained about not being on the ballot at all. The ballot paper problems were so widespread that INEC had to re-schedule elections in 117 of the country's 774 local government areas.

Electoral manipulations were rampant in the 2003 and 2007 elections. There were numerous reported cases of multiple voting, forging of election results, underage voting, ballot box stuffing, snatching of ballot boxes, results sheets filled before closing and in unknown areas etc. These series of identified manipulations have greatly damaged the integrity of the elections. However, in the last two rounds of elections- 2011 and 2015, electoral manipulation was minimal. Although, there were few reported cases of underage voting and multiple voting but very manageable and could not tamper with the integrity of the system and the credibility of election results. This is achieved through various mechanisms put in place. The use of Smart Card Readers (SCR), permanent Voter Card (PVC), ad-hoc staff engaged and other logistic arrangement greatly curbed manipulations to certain extent.

In 2003 elections, EUEOM (2003) reported that its observers directly observed electoral manipulations in several places. Some of these areas were: Benue: voters bribing by PDP was witnessed in Naga LGA.; in PS 020/Modern market Ward of Makurdi LGA, at 13.00, all the voters had allegedly already voted and the polling staff was witnessed ticking one by one the names of the voters on the list (432 alleged voters: 418 for PDP) and, at 13.00, in PS 024 of the same ward, counting was already ongoing (441 alleged voters, 438 for PDP); Katsina: generalized under aged voting coupled with observed cases of stuffing by multiple votes in Daura.

According to IRI (2003) , in four states - Cross River, Imo, Katsina and Rivers - IRI delegates discovered direct material evidence of planned or executed ballot fraud related to both elections. During the April 19 election, there were instances of ballot boxes being forcibly stolen from polling stations in the midst of voting. Prior to the April 19 election, IRI observers in Cross River and Imo states discovered pre-marked ballots and/or voting station results forms in the possession of party officials. And in Cross River and Nassarawa, IRI observers discovered clear indications of ballot box stuffing and gross falsification of results forms. In Katsina and Rivers states, IRI observers discovered direct material evidence that filled ballot boxes had been purposely destroyed after being taken from voting stations on April 12, 2003.

Furthermore, in 2007 elections, there were reports of ballot stuffing and snatching from constituencies throughout the country. NDI (2007) reports that in Kwara and Osun States, NDI observers received reports that soldiers had kept voters at bay while PDP incumbents seized and/or stuffed ballot boxes with pre-marked ballot papers. In Offa in Kwara State, however, the police recovered ballot boxes that had earlier been snatched by club-wielding thugs. In Ekiti State, some party supporters snatched ballot boxes or otherwise attempted to stuff ballot boxes in plain view of voters and observers.

Polling units in 2003 and 2007 elections were militarized but inefficient. Police men and soldiers were deployed to polling units; they scared voters away from the polling units. Election Days- 2003 and 2007 were over militarized and inefficient because the security agents worked for the incumbents. In some

reported cases, security agents connived with the INEC staff to rig election in favour of, mostly the ruling parties. However, in the 2011 and 2015 elections, security, in the process of election was very tight, adequate and efficient. Although, there were reports of minor cases of bridge of security especially in 2015 elections in some parts of the country, most especially, in the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones but this did not negate the results and the credibility of the elections.

On Election Day, there were pronounced reported cases of violence in 2003 and 2007 elections than what were reported in the last two rounds of elections-2011 and 2015. There were sporadic outbreaks of violence in some states during the April 14, 2007 elections. For instance, in 2007 elections, NDI report (2007, P.30) states that three people were reportedly killed in Lagos Island, despite the widespread deployment of soldiers to man roadblocks and control movement on Election Day. The Guardian, April 15, 2007 reported that in 2007 Election Day, two police stations were firebombed in Rivers State. Eight people, including seven policemen, lost their lives in the incident, which the federal government later ascribed to militants from the Niger Delta. This Day April 21, 2007 also reported that in 2007 Election Day, two mobile police officers were shot in Abia State during an apparent attack on the PDP gubernatorial candidate. In Delta State, youth protesting the conduct of the elections burned police vehicles. The perceived vulnerability of the police may have been a factor in deterring would-be voters from going to the polls. Although, there were reported cases of violence on Election Days in 2011 and 2015 elections but very minimal and manageable and could not damage the integrity of the election results.

Another fundamental aspect of electoral process in the elections under study is the issue of voter cards and ballot boxes used in these elections. In the 2003 elections, paper voter cards and “tear-off slips” from Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) were used. These could be easily be forged. However, the INEC resolved to use PVC in the 2015 elections strongly protected from manipulation and forgery of voter cards. And it enhanced the integrity and the credibility of the elections. Find below details comparative analysis of these elections under review in tabular form.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Election Day in 2003 - 2007 and 2011 2015 Election Administration

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
S / N	ELEC T I O N P E R I O D	OPE N I N G P O L L	SOUR C E S O F H O C S T A F F	NUM B E R O F P O L L I N G U N I T S A N D V O T I N G P O I N T S	TRAI N I N G O F H O C S T A F F	VOI N G S Y S T E M	ACC R E D I T I O N	SUB S C R I P T I O N O F V O T I N G S T A T I O N S	DIS T R I B U T I O N O F M A T E R I A L S	SEC R E C Y O F V O I E S	BAL L O T P A P E R
1	2003	Late Opening	Civil servants 500,000	Polling units 120,000	Very poor	Modified Open Secret Ballot System (MOBS)	Poorly conducted	Over Subscribed 1,000 to 2,500	Shortage of Materials	Not respected	Ordinary with serial Number
2	2007	Late Opening	Civil servants Number NA	Polling Units 120,000	Poor	Modified Open Secret Ballot System (MOBS)	Poorly conducted	Over Subscribed more than 1000 to 2000	Shortage of Materials	Not respected	Ordinary with serial Number and some without
3	2011	A little bit late	NYSC and Students of tertiary institutions	Polling units and voting points number NA but more than 120,000	Limited training	Re-Modified Open Secret Ballot System (REMOSBS)	Very smooth	Adequate voting points created not more than 500 per polling unit	Fair, some material missing	Not Respected	Customized ballot paper
4	2015	A little bit late	NYSC and students of tertiary institutions 750,000	Polling units and voting points 152,031 27% higher than 2011	Adequate	Re-Modified Open Secret Ballot System (REMOSBS)	Controversial	Adequate voting points created not more than 500 per polling unit	Fair, some materials missing	Not Respected	Customized ballot papers

11	ELECTION PERIOD	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
S/ N	ELECTION PERIOD	PHASE OF ELECTION PROCESS	SECURITY	LOGISTIC ARRANGEMENT	VIOLENCE DURING VOTING	VOTER CARDS AND BALLOT BOXES	OPENING AND CLOSING OF POLLS			ELECTIONAL MANIPULATION
1	2003	One phase	Militarised and ineffective	Very poor	Pronounced	Paper voter cards and "Tear off slips" from OMR	8:00am-3pm			Rampant: multiple voting, forging of election results, under-age voting ballot box stuffing snatching of ballot boxes
2	2007	One phase	Militarised and inefficient	Very poor	Very Pronounced	Temporary voter registration cards/slips Laminated, transparent ballot boxes	8:00am-3pm			Rampant: multiple voting, forging of election results, under-age voting ballot box stuffing snatching of ballot boxes, res ult sheets filled before closing
3	2011	Two Phases	Tight, adequate and efficient	Improved	Very Minimal	Temporary voter cards (TVC) and coded transparent collapsible ballot boxes (CBBS)	Accreditation 8am-12pm; Voting 12:30pm till the last on the queue			Very minimal: under -age voting, multiple voting
4	2015	Two Phases	Tight	Improved	Minimal	Permanent voter cards coded plastics ballot boxes	Accreditation 8am-12pm; Voting 1:30pm till the last on the queue			Minimal: under-age voting

Counting and Tabulation

The collation, counting and tabulation of election results are the responsibility of Election Officials appointed by the Election Management Body to do so. In Nigeria, the Presiding Officers, assisted by the Poll Clerks and other assistants isolates sort and collate the votes cast, count and add up the total votes scored by each candidate and fill the appropriate forms. He then signs the relevant columns and counter-signed by the candidates or their agents. The Presiding officer thereafter announces the votes scored by each candidate at the centre and provides the candidate/party and security agents with copies of the result sheets. Results from the various polling stations are sent to the collation centre, where the Collation/Returning Officer does the final collation and announces/declares the results.

There were reported cases of widespread and purposeful irregularities in the closing of polling stations and tabulation of votes in 2003 and 2007 elections. This is attributed to insufficient training and rudimentary working conditions of the INEC's temporary staff engaged for the conduct of the elections. The most fundamental reason attributed to the irregularities was the plan to manipulate and rig the elections. Procedures in collation process were marred by irregularities. Ballots were not counted in some polling units before transferred to wards or district level collation centers, making it difficult for the accuracy of the results to be tracked. In 2003 elections, IRI (2003) observed that many polling stations did not close at the prescribed hour of 3:00 p.m. In most of these instances, polling stations closed late in order to fairly make up for a late opening. In a more problematic development, several voting stations closed early even though they opened late or on time. IRI observers noted that several stations closed by noon while reporting 100 percent turnout for a single party. In the most problematic case, during the 2003 Presidential election in Nassarawa state, IRI observers reported that one polling station opened at 10:00 a.m. and closed at noon. The station recorded that 800 people had voted in less than two hours, a seemingly impossible feat. All 800 votes were for the ruling PDP party.

EUEOM (2003) also observed this when it reported that it was observed that in a significant number of cases (22%), the party agents were not given a completed copy of the aggregation of results form. In Port Harcourt, no EC.8.A results forms were observed as delivered to the polling stations, no counting was observed to take place in several locations and the material was delivered directly to the Local Government Area Collation Centres.

However, in 2011 and 2015 elections, procedures for collation process were adequately followed in almost all the polling stations across the states. This was possible because the INEC refined the process for managing results of elections by introducing a hybrid of manual and electronic procedures. The electronic procedure was developed in which excel spread sheet application was used to eliminate computation error. In order to prevent tampering with the manual copies of the results in transit, e-copies of the results were transmitted electronically from the State Collation Center to the Presidential Returning Officer using a secured email address. This process protected the integrity of the election results, because manipulations were difficult to perpetrate. Furthermore, in 2011 and 2015 elections, no significant problems were reported regarding the closing time. Some polling units closed on average around 16:30 hours while a number of polling units closed earlier with all voters on the queue allowed to vote.

In another development, counting did not take place in prescribed locations in the 2003 and 2007 elections. In some cases reported, election results were not collated in the polling units, wards and even Local Government Areas as prescribed but were done in unknown places. This development allowed INEC officials, and security agents, connived to perfect electoral atrocities. Figures were easily altered, unused ballot papers in polls were thumb printed and all other sort of manipulations were perfectly carried out. For instance, in 2003 elections, EUEOM (2003, P. 31) observed that in Rivers and Enugu states, serious anomalies were observed in the transfer of materials and results to the following level of collation, reinforcing the concerns regarding the integrity of the procedure. In Enugu North Local Government, the team present observed various malpractices: Forged signatures being added to

the results sheets, people piling up ballot papers and signing them on the back, implausible results (1 polling station: 343 registered voters, 343 PDP, no rejected ballots). In Rivers, the team observing in Port Harcourt reported serious anomalies in the conduct of the collation. Firstly, no counting could take place at the polling stations in absence of the appropriate record of results forms. Secondly, no collation was organised at the Ward level and the presiding officers were directed to the LGA collation centre, with their materials. Thirdly, the state level collation centre had allegedly been transferred to another location - the city town hall - where they could not observe any activity while, according to INEC, collation was still going on at 08.00 a.m. on the 13th of April, 2003.

Furthermore, in Zamfara State, EUEOM (2007, P.33-34) states that in 2007 elections, no elections took place in five wards but results were included into the gubernatorial elections for these wards. In Enugu State, observers at the LGA Enugu South collation centre witnessed unused ballot papers being openly thump printed in favour of the ruling party, inserted into ballot boxes and then counted by persons that were not wearing any accreditation INEC uniform. An identical case was observed in LGA Ife of Osun State. In LGA Akko of Gombe State, EU observers witnessed the fraudulent alteration of election results of one polling station. At the ward collation centre, the presiding officer inflated the turnout and added these votes to the ruling party's votes after having visited the house of a local PDP leader and the palace of the Emir. Another indication of irregularities at collation centres was noted by EU observers in the LGA Abakiliki in Ebonyi State where at the LGA collation centre for three polling stations more votes cast were recorded than voters were on the register, with one polling station showing a result of 601 votes cast for only one party while there were only 223 voters on the register. Additionally, EU observers in Ogun State received credible reports from Justice, Peace & Development Commission (JPDC), one of the domestic observation groups, about widespread ballot box stuffing in 6 of the 25 LGAs.

However, the 2011 and 2015 elections, counting and collation of election results took place in all the prescribed locations. The hybrid of manual and electronic adopted also immune the system from manipulations. In support of this view, EUEOM (2015), observed that in 2015 elections, The ballot box did not appear to have been tampered with or left unsealed prior to counting and was opened and emptied in full view of all present at the polling unit. Ballots were sorted and counted in the presence of party agents and observers and rejected ballots were, generally, always shown to party agents and observers, with the exception of few polling units in Rivers. There were some isolated instances of party agents becoming frustrated with election officials regarding spoiled ballots during the counting process if they disagreed with the officials' decision that a particular ballot was inconclusive or invalid as a result of multiple thumbprints being reflected on the ballot. This generally did not result in violence, but increased the tension surrounding the counting process. This tension was mitigated when election officials demonstrated consistency when voiding ballots across parties and it became clear that no preferential treatment was being given to one party over another.

Elections results sheets were poorly and wrongly prepared in the first two rounds of elections under review- 2003 and 2007. There were numerous reports that elections results were not prepared in the prescribed locations; signatures were forged; results sheet filled without counting the ballot papers; figures not tally with registration of voters; party agents denied copies of elections results. However, from the data obtained in this study, it is evident that in the 2011 and 2015 elections, result sheets were prepared in the prescribed locations, and in the presence of relevant and accredited people; copies were given to party agents; copies were duly signed by prescribed and recognized persons. Although, in the 2015 elections, there were minor cases of electoral manipulations, especially in the South-South and South-East geo-political zones but very manageable and could not damage the integrity of the elections. On the aspect of publication and display of results, in the 2003 and 2007 elections, results were not publicly displayed as prescribed. Results were not publicly posted at the polling units and even at collation centers. This is contrary to what happened in the 2011 and 2015 elections where results in most cases were displayed for public consumption. Election results were even posted on the INEC

website. Lastly, is the issue of declaration of results, in the 2003 and 2007 elections, some of the elections results were declared when collations were still on. In some cases, elections results were declared by unauthorized persons. For instance, Governorship election results of Delta and Ondo States were declared by INEC chairman in Abuja in 2007 when collation was still on in those states. However, in the 2011 and 2015 elections, results were appropriately declared by authorized persons at appropriate time and locations. Table 2 below draws a comparative analysis of counting and tabulation of election results on the four rounds of elections under review for better understanding.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Counting and Tabulation of the 2003 -2007 and 2015 Elections Results

S/ N	ELECTION PERIOD	1 PROCEDURE	2 CLOSURE OF POLLING STATIONS	3 COUNTING IN PRESCRIBED	4 RESULTS SHEETS	5 DISPLAY OF RESULTS	6 DECLARATION OF RESULTS
	2003	Irregularities: Procedures not followed	Not Close at prescribed Period-early or lately	Did not take place in prescribed Locations	Signature forged, party agents denied copies; filled results sheets without counting the ballot papers	Results not publicly posted	Declared results when collation was still on
	2007	Irregularities: Procedures not followed	Not Close at prescribed Period-early or lately	Did not take place in prescribed location	Signature forged; party agents denied copies; figures not tally with registration of voters	Result not displayed	Declared results by unauthorized persons and when collation was still on
	2011	Procedures were followed	Closed as prescribed	Took place in prescribed locations	Prepared in the prescribed locations and in the presence of relevant representatives; copies given to party agents and others	Result displayed	Results described by authorized person and at appropriate time and place
	2015	Procedures were followed; interactive and ceremonial	Closed as prescribed	Took place in prescribed locations and not in some	Counting and collation done in the presence of party agents and copies given to party agents and relevant agents	Result publicly posted	Results declared appropriately

Concluding Remarks

Nigeria's history of flawed and manipulated elections, traversing the colonial and post-colonial periods, draw attention to a key element in the crisis of the country's electoral democracy. In the present Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the democratic deficits represented by elections reached an unprecedented level in 2007 elections, described as the worst election in Nigeria's post colonial history. This development has had the paradoxical effect of forcing attention on the imperative of the reform in the hope that sufficient political will be garnered to drive through the reform agenda. It is on this note that this paper has attempted to draw a comparative analysis of Election Day administration of the 2003-2007 and 2011 and 2015 elections. The paper used Election Day, which comprises of polling, counting and tabulation of election results as one of the critical areas of electoral cycles as an instrument to measure and determine the performance of the administration and conduct of the last four elections through a comparative analysis.

The paper discovered that the 2003 and 2007 elections were poorly managed and their results incredible. On Election Day, the study confirms and concludes that there are number of areas where the

four elections under study are similar. These areas include: late opening of polls, violence, secrecy of votes not respected, problems on logistic arrangements, security and electoral malpractices. More so, the study also identified some areas where the election administrations of these elections are different. The ad hoc staff used in 2003 and 2007 were civil servants who were loyal to the politicians while NYSC, students of tertiary institutions and university lecturers were engaged in 2011 and 2015 who were not known by the politicians. This and other areas like voting system, number of polling units and creation of voting points, phases of elections, voter card and ballot papers and boxes are the identified areas of differences in 2003-2007 and 2011-2015 elections. The differences identified are the improvement and innovations introduced by the Commission in the election administration of 2011 and 2015 elections. It is then concludes that these improvement and innovations have greatly reduced electoral malpractices and made the last two elections relatively free, fair and credible.

Counting and tabulation of elections results were marred by irregularities in the first two elections under review as identified by this study. The study also identified the followings: Procedures were not followed; polling stations were not closed at prescribed periods; counting and tabulation of elections results did not take place in the prescribed locations; result sheets signed by unauthorized persons; party agents denied copies of results; filling of result sheets without counting the ballot papers; results not publicly displayed; results declared when collation was still on. Therefore, these anomalies facilitated easy perpetrations of electoral malpractices and in turn discredited the results of the elections. The study concludes that in the 2003 and 2007, counting and tabulation of elections results were marred by irregularities and elections results were not free, fair and credible. However, for the 2011 and 2015 election, counting and tabulation of elections results were procedural followed and other things were done in accordance to the rules and regulations. Therefore, the study concludes that elections were better managed and relatively free, fair and credible. The paper then concludes by implore INEC and other relevant bodies in election administration in Nigeria to sustain the performance and possibly improve on it for future elections.

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