

**THE EFFECT OF SMART CARD READER ON  
ELECTION CREDIBILITY IN NIGERIA:  
2019 GENERAL ELECTION**

By

**EZEKIEL HYELKUZUKU IBRAHIM**

Department of Political Science  
Nigerian Army University Biu  
ezekielbrahim68@gmail.com  
+2348135896583

**BABA MUSTAPHA**

Department of Public Administration  
Gombe State University  
babamusty68@gmail.com  
08062338008

**AMINA NKANDAK KURMI**

Department of International Relations  
Nigerian Army University Biu  
aminakurmi@gmail.com  
+2348037403563

**MICHELLE ONADU OFUBU**

Department of International Relations  
Nigerian Army University Biu  
elle\_kelvin@yahoo.com  
+2348037989685

&

**AUDU TANIMU**

Department of public Administration  
Gombe State University  
audatanimu@gmail.com  
+2348032566534, +2348023558156

Abstract

Over the years Nigeria is faced with the persistent problems of election rigging and manipulations from the politicians, electoral bodies and voters in which the peoples vote is not counted and this resulted to serious crisis during the post election period. The introduction of smart card reader by INEC in the process of election in Nigeria has made a significant impact in sensitizing the electoral process as well as reducing electoral fraud, creating free and fair election. The application of smart card reader has yielded a positive result in consolidating democracy in

Nigeria especially the voter's accreditation process, authentication of the registered voters and control of election malpractices. This study is aimed at examining the effect of smart card reader in the 2019 general election. The study adopted survey method. Data were collected through the primary source, 400 questionnaires were distributed. 285 were completed and retrieved. The study finds out that the inability of the smart card reader to function effectively during the election serves as its biggest challenge. Conclusively, the emergent of smart card reader in 2015 general election and other technological devices unveil the prospect of the country's election to be largely managed by technology appears achievable. The study recommended that enlightenment and sensitizations to Ad-hoc staffs and electorates should be created by the government and electoral bodies through voters' education programme.

Keywords: Election, Credibility, Card Reader and Transparency

### **Introduction**

One success of every democratic organisation, state or country lies on its conduct in free and fair elections of its leaders and political holders. This implies that different people within the state have the chance to elect who governs them. It is the conduct and organisation of a free and fair election that confirms the legitimacy and sovereignty of government in the state. Election has also been described as the post mortem that investigates the record of office holders to ascertain whether they have kept faith with their election promises or not. Election is the process whereby an electorate chooses, by voting, officers either to act on its behalf or represent it in an assembly with a view to governing or administering. Election is the systematic way of allowing the public or citizens to choose leaders into public office, through the use of electoral process which is guided, organized, conducted and monitored by the authorized electoral body. It is also an act of choosing or selecting candidate who will represent the people of country in a parliament or other government positions (Abdulkadir, Kabiru & Mustapha, 2017). Election is seen as the manner of choice agreed on by a group of people which enables them to select one person or a few people out of many to occupy one or more positions of authority (Nnoli, 1990)

A careful analysis of elections in Nigeria since independence reveals that election rigging and malpractices have been a constant factor hindering Nigeria's democratic process. Nigeria General Elections in 1963, 1979, 2003, 2007 and 2011 has been characterized with different election malpractices and incomplete results which have also put some states gubernatorial elections behind schedules. The organization of elections in Nigeria have often been carried out without due involvement of the people. The system operates in a way that suggests a total disregard and misapplication of democratic ethos. Thus, the outcome has always been manipulated in favour of candidates of the powerful few. This is unfair and shameful, given the democratic system we opted for (Beetseh & Akpoo, 2015). This has resulted into different conflict along ethnic and religious line notably at the post election of 2011; lives and properties were lost and destroyed beyond considerations.

These Electoral frauds and malpractices include illegal printing of voters' cards, illegal possession of ballot boxes, stuffing of ballot boxes, falsification of election results, illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers, infant voting, compilation of fictitious names on voters' lists, illegal compilation of separate voters' lists, illegal printing of forms used for collection and declaration of election results, deliberate refusal to supply election materials to certain areas, announcing results in places where no elections were held, switching and unauthorized announcement of results, harassment of candidates, agents and voters, change of list of electoral officials, as well as box-inflation of figures, among others (Adeolu, 2015).

From the above, the Independent Electoral Commission introduces the Smart Card Reader (SCR) in the electoral processes to reduce and minimize the level of election malpractice in Nigeria. The Smart

Card Reader is an electronic/computing device which is use to detain the authentication of one's permanent voters card. The Smart Card Reader was the most highly contentious and the real issue in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. It was used for the first time in Nigeria's electoral process and it remains one of the greatest innovative technologies in the general elections. The smart card reader is a technological device setup to authenticate and verify on election day a Permanent Voter Card (PVC) issued by INEC. The device uses a cryptographic technology that has ultra-low power consumption, with a single core frequency of 1.2GHz and an Android 4.2.2. Operating System (INEC/ICT, 2015). In other words, the INEC card reader is designed to read information contained in the embedded chip of the permanent voter's card issued by INEC to verify the authenticity of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and also carry out a verification of the intending voter by matching the biometrics obtained from the voter on the spot with the ones stored on the PVC (Engineering Network Team, 2015). The ability of the card reader to perform the above described functions as well as keeping a tally of the total numbers of voters accredited at the polling unit and forwarding the information to a central database server over a Global System for Mobile (GSM) network makes the card reader most welcome at that point in time in the Nation's electoral history (Engineering Network Team, 2015). Card reader also provides help and assistant in maintaining credible electoral system in Nigeria. The 2019 general election appears to have been the most intensely contested in the history of elections in Nigeria. Electorates show dissatisfaction in the incumbent administration which causes a demand for change in leadership, political party and system of government appointments. The ruling party All Progressive Congress (APC) prepared to face an uphill from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the polity which they defeated in 2015.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria general elections over the years have been characterized by thuggery and conflict between electorates. This is as a result of election malpractices and rigging over the years by the organization or body set up to organized, and implement credible, free and fair election in the democratic setting like Nigeria. Ruling party have been labelled to manipulated manual election accreditation that results to poor outcome of governance as contestants feels they emerge winners by the purchase of votes with money and corrupt practices within the system, and as such no development and growth is recorded and achieved.

It is against this background that the introduction of smart card readers was introduced in 2015 election by then INEC chairman, Prof. Attahiru Jega. But many electorates have not been satisfied and pleased with the outcome of election results in many states. Election tribunals are setup to carefully check some election malpractices and irregularities in the federal and state elections done in 2019. To some extent the use of smart card readers has not totally fulfill it mandates and objectives of providing credible, free and fair elections in Nigeria.

#### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of the study is to examine the effect of smart card reader on election credibility in Nigeria 2019 general election. Other specific objectives are:

- i. To assess the pattern in which the smart card reader has reduced election rigging
- ii. To examine the problems posed by the use of smart card reader during the general election.
- iii. To proffer solutions and recommendations on how the card reader can be improved in subsequent elections.

#### **Research Questions**

This study seeks answers to the following questions:

- i. To what extend has the use of smart card readers in the 2019 general election in Nigeria provide credibility?
- ii. To what extend has the smart card reader reduced election malpractices, rigging and irregularities in Nigeria general elections?
- iii. What are the problems faced when using the card readers in 2019?

- iv. What are the possible medium can the use of smart card readers be improved in subsequent elections?

Hypotheses

Ho: There is no significant credibility in the use of smart card readers in Nigeria general elections

H1: There is significant credibility in the use of smart card readers in Nigeria general elections

Research Methodology

The study adopted a Survey research design. Survey research was considered the most appropriate for collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly, such as is the case with the present study. The study is conducted in Gombe local government area of Gombe state, Nigeria. The city of Gombe is located at the center of the state with a population of 197, 564,046 (National Population Commission 2016). The sample size of the study is 400 respondents; 200 INEC staffs and 200 respondents selected for the study using simple random sampling technique. The sample size is derived using Taro Yamane formula which is expressed as

$$\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N= population

e= significant level (0.05)

$$n = \frac{197,564,046}{1+197,564,046(0.05)^2} = 197,564,047/493, 910.11 = 400$$

Data for the study was collected through primary source using questionnaires. Tabulation using descriptive statistics and quantitative method for comprehensiveness is use as method of data analysis on research questions. Chi-squares (X2) test of independence, which is used to test the hypothesis were all tests were carried out at 0.05 level of significance.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the System theory by David Easton 1965. According to Easton, political system is an interaction in any society through which authoritative and binding allocations of values are made and implemented. The basic unit of Easton's system analysis is 'interaction'. Interaction is generated from the behaviour of the members of the system when they play their role as such. When these myriad interactions in the perception of the scholar become a 'set of interrelations' they are considered as a 'system'. Easton's subject matter of analysis is only the set of political interactions. Easton exact that Changes in the social or physical environment surrounding a political system produce “demands” and “supports” for action or the status quo directed as “inputs” towards the political system, through political behaviour. These demands and supporting groups stimulate competition in a political system leading to decisions or “outputs” directed at some aspect of the surrounding social and physical environment. After a decision or output is made (for example a specific policy), it interacts with its environment, and it produces change in the environment, there are “outcomes”. When a new policy interacts with its environment, outcomes may generate new demands or supports and groups in support or against the policy (“feedback”) or a new policy on some related matter. The systematic relationship among the major elements in the System Theory is quite apt. Inputs in form of demands and supports are sent into the political system from the environment. Once an input enters the political or conversion process, it undergoes transformation or refinement which translates to output. What happens in the political

system as well as the input determines the output. The output is fed back into the environment and the feedback mechanism ensures that the system endures.

As has been stated earlier, the electoral commission (INEC) is established to help in the organization, provision of adequate legal framework on the context of free and fair elections in the state. Therefore, lack of free and fair elections, constant election rigging and malpractice, election thuggery forms the “Input as demand” from the environment, the electoral commission (INEC); as the “Political System”, presence of credible and fair elections of public holders through provision new facilities and techniques as the “output”. The electorates and citizens of Nigeria serve as the environments that influence the system. The central argument of this paper within the above framework is that, the agency or commission is established to help in the proper organization and provision of credible, free and fair elections into public offices in the country. In other words, the commission with competent, professionally oriented and neutral staffs plays a critical role in the attainment of credible, free and fair election in the country. However, the success of the credible elections depends on the whole system (Nigeria) and the commission which must be built on the principles and on neutral grounds. The scenario of the election in Nigeria when the demands of the electorates on free and fair elections are not carefully handled and the demands increases periodically. Therefore, the commission should be able to harness it resources yearly in implementing programmes that address the demands of the electorates. Whenever the duties and responsibilities of the commission are comprised then the outcome of the election is hampered with election malpractices. Also, any obstacle in the implementation of development policies within the system hinders the achievement and effective performance of the overall credibility of elections even with the advent of smart card reader.

#### Data Presentation

The study provides questions to respondents of the commission and the electorates of the country. The study covers 200 respondents from the commission (INEC) and 200 electorates in Gombe state metropolis, making a total of 400 respondents. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 285 representing 71.25% was completed and returned while 115 representing 28.75% was not retrieved.

**Table 1: Sex of Respondents**

Sex of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	198	69.5%
Female	87	30.5%
Total	285	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 1 show that 198 respondents representing 69.5% of the total population are males while 87 respondents representing 30.5% are females.

**Table 2: Age of Respondents**

Age of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
18 - 25 years	110	38.5%
26 - 35 years	70	24.5%
36 - 45 years	46	16.4%
45 years - above	59	20.6%
Total	285	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 2 above provided that 110 respondents representing 38.5% are between the age range of 18 – 25years, 70 respondents representing 24.5% are between 26 – 35years, 46 respondents representing 16.4% are between 36 – 45years while 59 respondents representing 20.6% are 45years and above.

**Table 3: Occupation of Respondents**

occupation of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Government worker	197	69.1 %
Businessmen/women	63	22.1 %
Unemployed	25	8.7 %
Total	285	100 %

Source: field survey 2019

Table 3 shows that 197 respondents representing 69.1% are government workers, 63 respondents representing 22.1% are businessmen/women while 25 respondents representing 8.7% are unemployed.

**Table 4: Have recent elections in Nigeria been regarded as free and fair**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	248	87%
No	37	13%
Total	285	100%

Source: field survey 2019

Table 4 also explains that 248 respondents representing 87% agreed that recent elections in Nigeria can be regarded free and fair while 37 respondents representing 13% disagreed that recent elections in Nigeria has been free and fair.

**Table 5: Have the electoral commission provided a medium for free and fair election in Nigeria**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	139	48.8 %
No	146	51.2 %
Total	285	100%

Source: field survey 2019

Table 5 illustrates that 139 respondents representing 48.8% agreed that the electoral commission has provided a medium for free and fair election in Nigeria while 146 respondents representing 51.2% disagreed that the electoral commission has provided a medium for free and fair election in Nigeria.

**Table 6: Has the use of smart card readers reduce election malpractices in Nigeria elections since 2015**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	134	47.1%
No	151	52.9%
Total	285	100%

Source: field survey 2019

Table 6 134 respondents representing 47.1% agreed that the use of smart card readers has reduce election malpractices in Nigeria since 2015 while 151 respondents representing 52.9% disagreed that the use of smart card readers has reduce election malpractices in Nigeria since 2015.

**Table 7: Has the use of smart card reader provided credibility in Nigeria election**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	209	73.3%
No	76	26.7%
Total	285	100%

Source: field survey 2019

Table 7 above shows that 209 respondents representing 73.3% agreed that the use of smart card readers has provided credibility in Nigeria elections while 76 respondents representing 26.7% disagreed that the use of card readers has provided credibility in Nigeria elections.

**Table 8: The use of smart card reader developed a lot of operational problems in the 2019 general election**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	163	57.1%
No	122	42.8%
Total	285	100%

Source: field survey 2019

Table 8 above also shows that 163 respondents representing 57.1% agreed that the use faced operational problems during the 2019 general election while 122 respondents representing 42.8% disagreed that the smart card reader faced operational problems.

Test of Hypothesis

This study employed chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) to test the hypothesis of the study. The formula is given as:

Thus:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

Where:

F<sub>o</sub> = Observed frequency

F<sub>e</sub> = Expected frequency

X<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square

Σ = Summation

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no credibility in the use of smart card reader in Nigeria general elections.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant credibility in the use of smart card reader in Nigeria general election.

In order to test this hypothesis presented above, table 6 and table 7 will be used at 5% level of significance.

Decision Rule

In the test of hypothesis using chi square table, when the calculated value is greater than the table value therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. But, when the calculated value is less than the table value therefore the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis is rejected.

**Observed Table**

Responses	Smart card reader has reduced election malpractice in Nigeria	Credibility of election in using smart card reader in Nigeria elections	Total
Yes	134	209	343
No	151	76	227
Total	285	285	570

Df = (Rt-1) (Ct-1)

Where:

Df = Degree of freedom



RT= row total

CT= column total

Df = (2-1) (2-1) = (1) (1) = 1x1= 1

Level of significance 5% (0.05) = 3.841

However, since the calculated value of 41.2 is greater than the table value of 3.841, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. It is therefore concluded that there is there is great significant action of credibility in the use of smart card reader during 2019 general election in Nigeria.

#### Research Findings

During the course of the study, findings were made from the data collected from the field, objectives of the study and research questions formulated. It was discovered that large respondents of the questionnaire are majorly males, where 18-25years age bracket are 38.8% of the respondents. 69.1% of the respondents are mainly government workers in different sectors and agencies of the country, with few into business and less unemployed. It was observed from the respondents that previous elections held in Nigeria has not recorded ultimate success and less election malpractices, rigging and falsification of results which demands for a rapid checks on the electoral operation for a more credible elections. Therefore, this demand made resulted in the introduction of technological devices (smart card reader) in election organization and proceedings.

Also, it is observed that the smart card readers have reduced a handful of election malpractices like multiple registrations and multiple voting in Nigeria general election in 2019 thereby terming the election more credible, free and fair. However, the smart card readers which is deem for election credibility has at some instances provided operational problem in detriment of credibility of the election posing belief in the minds of the electorates that it was done on deliberate intentions to rig the elections. Therefore, there is need for improvement in operation and usage of technological device and other related activities organized by the electoral commission during elections.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

The journey so far from 2015 to 2019 general election in Nigeria on credibility and fairness can not be overemphasised. The introduction of technology in 2015 has created and recorded positive and significant impact on the elections and it outcome. Therefore, all challenges faced during the elections can be minimized and reduce to strengthen and deepen the democratic process in Nigeria. With the use of technology by the electoral commission in it conduct and activities, it also posed for a transparent and credible election in Nigeria; and also the advancement of technological devices in election in countries like USA set the country's (Nigeria) the prospect of having elections greatly managed by technology more achievable and realistic.

The study proffered the following recommendations;

- i. Both INEC and Ad-hoc staffs for election duties and activities should be properly trained on the use of smart card reader which reduces operational problems and challenges.
- ii. Due to technology advancement and discoveries, government and electoral commission should keep up to date on technology progress thereby providing necessary and immediate devices for credible and fair elections in Nigeria.
- iii. Electoral bodies and agencies should organize sensitization, orientation and public awareness on the use of Smart card readers in elections through voter's education programmes.
- iv. INEC should Endeavour to manage information about the technology and changes so that stakeholders and electorates do not have unrealistic expectations and do not impose impossible deadlines on results outcome.

#### Reference

Alebiosu, E. A. (2015). Smart card reader and the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Journal of African Elections Vol. 15. Pp 69 -89.

- Beetseh, K. & Akpoo, T. (2014). Governance and credible elections: a panacea for conflict resolution in Nigeria. *journal of governance and sustainable development in Africa*. Vol.2 No. 2
- Beetseh, K. & Akpoo, T., (2015). The Analysis of the use of smart card reader (scr) and credible elections in Nigeria 2015. *academic research journal*. Vol. 3. No. 11.
- Duru, E. J. C. (2002). *The Electoral Process and Democracy in Nigeria*. Calabar: Baaj Intanafrmal Company.
- Easton, D. (1953). *The political system: an inquiry into the state of political science*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Easton, D. (1965) *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. Wiley: New York.
- Engineering Network Team (2015) Gains of the INEC card reader in the 2015 elections. Retrieved from [Go.engineer ng.net/m/blogpost?id=6404812%3ABlogPost%3A103341](http://Go.engineer.ng.net/m/blogpost?id=6404812%3ABlogPost%3A103341).
- Independent National Electoral Commission (2015). Frequently asked questions. Retrieved from [http://www.inecnigeria.org/?page\\_id=28](http://www.inecnigeria.org/?page_id=28).
- Kabiru, D., Abdulkadir, I. & Baba, M. (2017). The role of card reader in conducting credible election in the 2015Nigeria's general election. *international journal of social sciences and humanities Reviews*. Vol.7 No.2,
- Nnoli, O. (1990). The 1987 local government elections in the eastern zone of Nigeria: Plateau, Benue, Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Cross River and Akwa Ibom states', in L Jinadu, A & T Edoh (eds), *The 1987-1988 local government elections in Nigeria*, vol.1 no. 1 Case Studies. Lagos: National Electoral Commission