

Role of citizenry, politicians and electoral bodies in the conduct of credible elections in democratic nations

Abstract

The paper examines the role of citizenry, politicians and electoral bodies in the conduct of elections. It reviews relevant literature on the role of electorate, politicians and electoral bodies in elections to justify the contribution made by this article to previous election studies. The paper uses a survey method and a questionnaire instrument to elicit the public's view of the role of citizens, politicians and electoral bodies in the conduct of elections being the rationale for the study. It found that the majority of the electorate interviewed in the study have confidence in the Nigerian electoral body, but the citizens wonder why the Independent National Electoral Commission often relates the federal government as though the commission was an arm of the ruling party. This indicates growing public concern over the commission's independence from the federal government's control and influence. The role of the federal government in the election would be to create the enabling environment for the electoral body to conduct elections. As part of the recommendations, the study urges the present leadership of the Nigerian electoral commission to distance itself from the federal government and politicians to avoid being influenced by them, or being seen to have been influenced by them when the public notices that the leadership of the commission relates too closely to the federal government and politicians. The study consequently implores the Nigerian electoral commission to relate to party leaders and politicians in the same way and manner in which the judiciary should relate to the other arms of the government.

Keywords: citizenry, election, parties, judiciary, Independent National Electoral Commission

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Introduction

Democracy gives the citizens of a democratic country the rights to elect qualified individuals from among themselves to subsequently represent the citizenry in the government and parliament giving the interval stipulated in the constitution of the country within which general elections should be conducted for the purposes of good governance. Election therefore can be described as a mechanism which a democratic country uses to recruit candidates to government and parliament. Other forms of government, such as monarchical and military autocracy, often do not rely on a majority vote by citizens to choose the individuals who subsequently serve in governments and parliaments in autocratic nations. Notwithstanding, voters are becoming critical of the ethical inconsistency of politicians, especially when political leaders fail to embody the ideals they profess to uphold in government.¹ Moreover, the capacity of parties to attract competent candidates to government is limited by the number of the citizens willing to serve in governments and parliaments.² It is arguable that the majority of the citizens who often criticize government's policies and decisions may have no intention to serve in government giving the opportunity to correct the things they criticize the government about. So, the quality of the representativeness of citizens in government and parliament is consequent upon a number of factors, including a government being able to organize free and fair elections where the citizens would elect their preferred candidates from among those who have indicated their interests to serve in the government. The extent to which an election is free and fair partly determines the legitimacy of the government that emerges from the election. Democracy currently faces challenges in the world, but the areas that have slid the most toward autocracy in recent years are Northern Africa, the Sahel, and, to a lesser extent, West Africa.³ The challenges confronting democracy

are complex and vary by country. These challenges include the rise of the charismatic notion in governance alongside the efforts by some individuals to ensure that the government's preferred candidates alone win elections.⁴ The voting rights of citizens are important because it is through voting that citizens actively engage and participate in electoral processes.⁵ These processes include the registration of voters, campaign, voting, and declaration of election results, among others.

The foundation of an election is predicated on the registration of the electorate who elect candidates to government in democratic countries. Wholesale alternation is important in an election as it provides the basis for citizens' votes to determine who governs them and offers a clear link between voters' choices in the election and the individual who ends up in power.⁶ Wholesale alternation in politics affords voters the right to choose the party and candidates to elect to power, giving equal opportunity to all parties and candidates to solicit voters' support to win the election. Some scholars have argued the secret-ballot-system often creates for electoral misconduct in election, especially in emerging democratic countries. The open-ballot system of election is transparent and reliable. Yet, the civic responsibility of citizens to vote, or be voted for in an election is the right of the qualified adults in democratic nations, which does not require that voters disclose the party and candidates they voted for in elections. Lever⁷ argues, perhaps to later provide evidence, that secret voting enables people to vote in selfish, unserious ways and be indifferent to the legitimate claims of those who should serve in government. Studies have shown that voters' experiences are connected to their willingness to participate in elections as well as their perceptions of electoral integrity and the trust they have in the electoral system,⁸ which explains why voter verification and ensuring the integrity of the vote is an important goal in elections, especially in an environment

where there is a credible doubt over how free and fair elections are⁹ there has been allegation of electoral misconduct featuring in elections in some African countries. The opposing parties and their candidates who contested the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, for example, indicted the role the Independent National Electoral Commission played in the election. The accountability of the Nigerian electoral body has been undermined by the fact that elections in the country are perennially fraught with irregularities.¹⁰ This paper consequently examines the role of citizenry, candidates and the election authorities in Nigeria.

Election campaign

Constitutionally, it is the electoral body of a country that presents political parties and their candidates to voters in an election. During the campaign, voters have access to a large amount of information and know details about candidates, such as their policies and stances. First-time voters have an opportunity to acquire objective and subjective political knowledge of parties and their candidates in the election.¹¹ The role of political parties, among other functions, is to register party members and conduct party primaries to elect the individuals that will later contest the election. Parties provide the platform for a democratic process, recruit members, and equip them with the leadership skills and competencies they need to serve in public office.¹² The strength of an election process is partly based on the commitment by parties and their candidates to keep to the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the election. Ideally, a campaign should provide the platform for politicians to tell citizens ways in which a particular party intends to serve the public more efficiently, different from the way previous administrations had served the public. Physical campaign spaces are, however, becoming outdated following the advent of the new media alongside the social media networking sites available to politicians to use for election campaigns. Digital technologies are now being used by politicians to design campaign strategies and content and to manage data and determine voters' personality models using AI-generated materials.¹³ The question is, what should politicians do differently on the campaign ground instead of using the medium of a campaign to criticize opposing parties and their candidates? Some politicians would rather use a campaign platform for other things than reflect on the previous administrations and explain how they intend to add value to governance.

It is the responsibility of party leaders to assess the competence and experience of candidates to serve in public office by drawing inferences of ways and how candidates have served the public in previous works or employment to determine as whether or not party leaders will support the candidates in elections.

Voting exercise

Voting exercise, unlike campaign, is a process whereby the electorate votes a proportionate number of citizens into governments and parliaments to represent the other citizens in government. The election of the president of a country requires that the electorate vote for a competent candidate. Evidence suggests that many voters still vote for candidates based on party affiliation and the values, ideas, and interests associated with it.⁷ Recent experience has shown that citizens are becoming more critical of who becomes a country's president, state governor, senator, and member of the House of Representatives, among others. Political parties now find it difficult to convince citizens to vote for the less-deserving candidates in an election because, metaphorically, an election is a "market" where each party presents its candidates to voters and solicits citizens'

support for the candidates to win the election. A competitive election fosters politicians' responsiveness to the electorate, as voters have an opportunity to compare parties and decide which party and candidate should be given the mandate to govern the state.¹⁴

There are extraneous variables, however, that could undermine the chances of competent candidates winning elections. Among these extraneous variables are ethnicity, religion, the family background of a candidate, and the influence of traditional and religious institutions in elections. The elements above can interfere with the chance of a candidate winning an election. There is a correlation between the personality traits of voters and those of the candidates in an election considering the ability of voters to identify and vote for certain individuals in the election.¹⁵ Voters generally have some basic psychological insights that help them to identify candidates in elections and to vote for their preferred candidates in the election. Religion and ethnic determinism have the potential to mitigate the chances of voters being able to identify and vote for their preferred candidates in an election. This is because the commitment by a group of people to promote a religious belief in politics could influence the choices of the parties and candidates they vote for in the election. The hypothesis can be argued that a politician who has a Christian inclination to governance can win an election in a constituency that is populated by Muslims; so are the chances of a politician who is a Muslim winning an election in a constituency where there are more Christians than Muslims.

Nonetheless, traditional and religious rulers have a functional role in a democratic country (to guide citizens on civil matters and advise the members of the public on peaceful ways to resolve conflict). A religious or traditional ruler should not endorse a candidate in an election and request that the members of the community or religious body vote for the candidate in the election, ignoring that in a community or religious body, there are members of other parties and religions in it. It is within the rights of a religious leader to endorse a candidate in an election as long as the religious leader does not do so on behalf of the members of the religious or non-profit organization. The moment a religious leader endorsed a candidate, the endorsement limits the voice and influence of the religious leader to the supporters of that candidate alone.¹⁶ The challenge to democracy in Africa is not the prevalence of ethnic diversity, but the use of identity politics to promote narrow tribal interests. Leaders often exploit tribal loyalty to advance personal gains, parochial interests, patronage, and cronyism.¹⁷ Corruption can impinge on an election process and dampen voters' spirits in a corrupt society, and such corruption has the potential to reinforce public doubt that citizens' votes will be sufficient to bring about a positive change in an election.¹⁸

Declaration of election results

Despite whatever anyone may feel about the outcome of an election, it is unconstitutional for anyone, an organization, or a government to announce a version of an election result that contradicts the result of the election as approved or announced by the election authorities. The announcement of a parallel election result that contradicts the result approved by the election authorities is a recipe for a post-election crisis. The election results compiled by the media or a third party can serve as evidence in the court of law when the petitions filed by the aggrieved candidates in elections are being reviewed by the court.¹⁹ Normally, the chair of an electoral body is responsible for the overall conduct of elections in the country.²⁰ The electoral irregularities that take place at the polling booths in Nigeria, for example, have been reduced because of the presence of the Police and Army deployed

by the federal government to protect the votes cast by citizens in the election; the goalpost of electoral misconduct in the country has been moved by politicians to vote collation centers, where politicians use whatever means to influence election results. Despite each party having an agent at the polling booth and vote collation centers in Nigeria, some politicians are still able to subvert public mandate in elections. For democratic elections to function, citizens need to be able to freely form their opinion of government and contribute to the decision that determine the direction of the country. Notwithstanding, it is the votes cast by voters to elect their preferred candidates in the election that give citizens the key to civil and political rights and mark the value society places on public opinion in the election.²¹

The Nigerian parliament has approved the use of technology in the conduct of elections. After citizens have voted in an election, the results of the election are immediately uploaded from the polling booths into the Independent National Electoral Commission's portal, such that even when the hard copies of the election results were destroyed for whatever reason, the electronic copies of the election results would have been preserved in the portal of the election authorities. For whatever reason, the Nigerian election authorities were unable to download the results of the 2023 presidential election, which were uploaded at the polling booths, into the electoral commission's portal. This perhaps was why many citizens doubted the outcome of the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Developed countries have successfully integrated the e-participation of citizens in governance, whereas the less-developed nations of the world have merely concentrated on administrative service improvement using online-based services.²²

The Nigerian Electoral Commission

Specifically, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the body approved by the Nigerian Constitution to conduct the election of candidates for the office of the President of Nigeria, Senate, House of Representatives, Governorship, and State Houses of Assembly. The election of the President of Nigeria takes place on the same day as the elections of candidates into the National Assembly, while the elections of state governors take place on the same day as the election of candidates into the State House of Assembly. The State Independent National Electoral Commission organizes the elections of the chairs of the 774 Local Governments Councils and their Councilors in Nigeria. A study has noted that when separate elections are held on the same day, voters might be confused, and the number of blank vote cards may also increase in the election.²³ At the time of writing, the Nigerian parliament was discussing a bill to allow the electoral commission to organize all elections on the same day. Simultaneous elections may reduce the cost of voting and the efficiency of the electoral process. A democratic government should provide a transparent process for its citizens to elect candidates into governments and parliaments, as election remains the most visible element of a liberal democracy under parliamentary and presidential systems of government. One of the objections by citizens to the 1999 Nigerian Electoral Law was the loophole in the Act, which allowed the federal government to control the Independent National Electoral Commission through bureaucracy and presidential assent on the major decisions made by the commission. The 2010 Nigerian Electoral Act granted the Nigerian Electoral Commission the autonomy to conduct free and fair elections.

The Nigerian citizens wonder why the Independent National Electoral Commission had related to the federal government as a subsidiary arm of the ruling party. Africa has over 43 election management bodies that are legally independent of the executive, and in theory, autonomous.²⁴ The question is, what are the barriers to the

conduct of free and fair elections in Africa? Besides the government's interference in elections, "the pressure to deliver a positive result amid growing uncertainty on Election Day can incite politicians to manipulate the ballot".²⁵ based on the scope of democracy in the country concerned. Public participation in elections is crucial in democratic countries because it allows citizens to keep their elected representatives accountable and enables citizens to have a role in how their country is governed.²⁶ In Western democracies, citizens determine the chances of candidates to serve in governments and parliaments through a process of free and fair elections. The role of an electoral body is to simply receive the votes cast by citizens in election and announce the results of the election without any recourse to government for its assent or approval of the election, which is why "democracy is the finest form of government for ensuring the practice of good governance".²⁷ The conventional function of the electoral commission in most states is to oversee multiparty contestation in elections and to guarantee a level playing field²⁸ for political parties and their candidates to contest elections. The ability of elections to bring about their desired outcomes is dependent on how well the electoral system is formed and its adherence to the rules guiding elections, rather than an electoral commission protecting the interest of a particular group, such as the government's preferred candidates and party in the elections.²⁹ The President of Nigeria appoints the chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission, but such appointments must be ratified by the Senate. The duties and responsibilities of the Independent National Electoral Commission are listed below.

- i To organize and supervise the conduct of elections in Nigeria;
- ii To register political parties and monitor their activities to ensure that they comply with the rules and regulations guiding elections;
- iii To carry out an annual review of the activities of political parties, audit the statements of accounts of the parties, and publish their findings for public view;
- iv To register voters for elections and educate the public, political parties, and their candidates on the approved procedure for the conduct of elections;
- v To monitor election campaigns to ensure that parties and candidates keep to the guidelines for election campaigns;
- vi To ensure that election officers keep to the oath of office as prescribed by the Nigerian Constitution;
- vii To delegate its power to the Resident Electoral Commissioners to carry out their responsibilities on behalf of the commission.³⁰

The Nigerian Constitution in section 154, sub-section (1), states that the chair and members of any of the bodies established by the state shall, subject to the provisions of the constitution, be appointed by the President and the appointment shall be subject to the confirmation by the Senate.³¹ Part of Justice Uwais's committee recommendations which culminated in the 2010 Nigerian Electoral Act was for the government to grant freedom to the Nigerian election authorities to conduct elections. Justice Uwais was displeased when the committee's report was modified by the government, and that instead of the government implementing the recommendations of the committee holistically, it decided to pick and choose whatever it found suitable for its purposes.³² Now, each succeeding election in Nigeria seems to deepen the culture of corruption, violence, abuse of voters' rights, and crass materialism among the political elite,³³ which explains the marginal increases of the electoral misconduct found in the 2011, 2015, and 2019 Nigerian elections. The outcome

of the 2019 election, in particular, revealed a lack of commitment by politicians to the principles and values of democracy in the country.³⁴ The Independent National Electoral Commission admitted in its post-election review of the 2023 Nigerian General elections that there is no perfectly organized election. It noted that there would always be challenges in elections. What was important in the estimation of the Nigerian Electoral Commission is continuous learning, reforms, and innovation learned, which are aimed at improving in subsequent elections.³⁵

The implications of the 2022 Nigerian Electoral Act

The agitations by citizens over the cases of electoral misconduct in elections led to the National Assembly reviewing the previous electoral laws in Nigeria. The 2022 Nigerian Electoral Act does not impose on the Independent National Electoral Commission the obligation to use the online copies of an election result to validate the hard copies of the result, which perhaps was why the former chair of the Nigerian Electoral Commission was not obligated to explain or apologize to the public for being unable to download the online copies of the 2023 presidential election results. Under the 2022 Nigerian Electoral Act, Section 50 (2), states that voting shall be by an open ballot. Subject to Section 63 of the Act, voting at an election and transmission of the results under the Act shall be by the procedure determined by the Independent National Electoral Commission.³⁶ The Nigerian Constitution recognizes an election to be valid to the extent that the result of the election was signed by the parties' agents and the Returning Officer who conducted the election under a free and fair atmosphere. The electoral body has the right to take a discretionary action to preserve the integrity of an election process and its result without any recourse to the President of Nigeria for approval or assent. Consequently, the chair of the Nigerian Electoral Commission could have argued in 2023 that the non-disclosure of the online copies of the presidential election result prior to the announcement of the result was done in good faith to preserve the integrity of the election and its result. The loophole in the 2022 Nigerian Electoral Act was the failure by the parliament to include in the act that an election becomes valid when there is harmony between the hard and the soft copy of the election result and that the electronic version of the election must be used by the electoral body to validate the hard copy of the election result before the result is approved by the electoral commission. The Nigerian parliaments needs to urgently amend the 2022 Nigerian Act by inserting a clause in the Electoral Act that makes it mandatory for the Independent National Electoral Commission to use the online copies of elections results to validate the hard copies of the same election results; otherwise, there will be a repeat of the incident of the 2023 presidential election in the 2027 Nigerian presidential election.

Notwithstanding, there are provisions in the constitution that allow parties and their candidates to seek redress in the court of law over an election process and its result, which a candidate perceived to have violated electoral laws. There have been claims and objections by politicians on the role the judiciary in elections in Nigeria. The members of the opposing parties often accuse the judiciary of injustice each time the court decides on an election petition or a case in favor of a member of the ruling party. Yet, there have been instances, too, where politicians who were claimed to have lost an election based on the pronouncements by the election authorities later got court judgments that reversed the results announced earlier by the electoral commission. Part of the problem of the Nigerian Judiciary is the conflicting judgments that separate courts give on a particular election petition. There have been occasions where the

lower courts in Nigeria relied on the provisions of the electoral laws to make their judgments on election petitions, while the higher courts may rely more on judicial precedents to deliver their judgments on elections. The function of the Electoral Tribunal is to identify whether a candidate was duly elected or not; it is the Federal High Courts that have the jurisdiction to investigate other issues on elections after the tribunal has answered "yes" or "no" question as to whether a person was validly elected or not in Nigeria. Much of the court judgment on election petitions in the country is decided on the grounds of legal technicalities rather than on the evidence of the presence or absence of electoral misconduct in the election. Otherwise, it would have been pointless for politicians to argue over an election result approved by the electoral commission, given that there are provisions in the Nigerian Constitution to correct the errors of judgments made by the election authorities in the assessment of candidates who contested the election. It is important, however, for the Nigerian election authorities to abide by the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of election because a court judgment which reverses the result of an election approved by election authorities has indirectly passed a vote of no confidence on the ability of the electoral commission to have conducted the particular election.

Study ethics

The paper did not involve vulnerable audiences or children who attract specific and additional ethical requirements for them to serve as respondents in the study. Also, the author did not use third-party materials or datasets that require the approval of the appropriate research committee, agency, or body before such materials or data can be used in the study. The paper used a questionnaire to generate the primary data reviewed in the study. The respondents agreed to support the study and respond to the substantive issues of the questionnaire. Respondents were given a free hand to withdraw from the study for whatever reason they chose to do so. The respondents have approved that the study be published for the benefit of society. The paper preserved the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents. The researchers did not receive funding from an individual, organization, or government to conduct the study. Consequently, there is no conflict of interest in the study. The paper is an original research work written to add value to the existing election studies. Part of the dataset for the study are in the [appendices](#), and any other can be provided under fair request.

Study design

The study employed the survey method and used a structured questionnaire to elicit the public's view of the election and the role of the stakeholders in elections. Democracy gives citizens the right to elect deserving candidates to serve in governments and parliaments in a democratic country. Recent experiences have shown that there are attempts by governments and politicians to circumvent electoral procedures to ensure that the governments preferred candidates win every election. The researcher used the inferential statistics to evaluate citizens' assessment of the role the Nigerian Election Authorities.

Hypothesis one

H1 → There is no relationship between the efforts to stop electoral irregularities and the measures being taken by the electoral body to stop electoral misconduct.

H2 → There is a relationship between the efforts to stop electoral irregularities and the measures being taken by the electoral body to stop electoral misconduct (Table 1).

Table 1 Chi-square test hypothesis one

The electoral body has put effective measures in place to stop misconduct in elections	
Chi-Square	164.753a
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 85.0 (Table 2).

Table 2 Chi-square test hypothesis one

The steps taken by the electoral body has improved transparency in the conduct of elections	
Chi-Square	199.012a
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0

The Chi-square test results revealed a significant relationship between the efforts to stop electoral irregularities and the measures adopted by the electoral body. For both test items on stopping electoral misconduct ($\chi^2 = 164.753$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$) and improving transparency ($\chi^2 = 199.012$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$) the p-values were less than 0.05. This finding consequently affirmed the decision to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, which stated that the measures being taken by the electoral body are statistically valid and related to the efforts by the Independent National Electoral Commission to reduce the incidents of electoral irregularities in the Nigerian democracy. The findings revealed that some of the strategies being employed by the Nigerian electoral body are recognized by the citizens and respondents as being efficient ways to eliminate the instances of electoral irregularities in the Nigerian politics.

Hypothesis two

H1 → There is no correlation between the electoral body and the individual effort by politicians to win election.

H2 → There is a relationship between the electoral body and the individual effort by politicians to win election (Table 3).

Table 3 Chi-square test hypothesis Two

Respondents' perceptions of the interface between the electoral body and politicians	
Chi-Square	195.153a
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 85.0.

The Chi-square test result for Hypothesis Two above showed a value of 195.153 with 3 degrees of freedom and an asymptotic significance of .000. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis which stated that there was no correlation between the electoral body and the effort by the individual politicians to win election is therefore rejected. The alternative hypothesis is hereby upheld to affirm that the respondents believed that was relationship between the electoral body and politicians in election. It is equally possible that the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission may have related closely with politicians and government without being influenced by them. The reason perhaps, why the citizens frown on the electoral body relating to politicians during election might be due

to the instances of the electoral irregularities that happen in election which the respondents believed that politicians usually are the ones who rig election to ascend to power and authority in the government and parliament. Ideally, it would be inappropriate for the electoral body having known that some politicians do rig election and the commission still go ahead to relate more closely to politicians during election. The finding above demonstrates that the assumption of the respondents on the issue is not random, but statistically significant, suggesting that political interference is closely linked to how the electoral body conducts electoral processes based on the view of the citizens.

Hypothesis three

H1 → There is no basis to link the usage of electronic machines for voting and transmission of election results and the effort by the electoral body to conduct credible elections.

H2 → There is a basis to link the usage of electronic machines for voting and transmission of election results and the effort by the electoral body to conduct credible elections (Table 4).

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 68.0.

Table 4 Chi-square test hypothesis three

The adoption of electronic voting machines by the electoral body was primarily to restore public's confidence in elections	
Chi-Square	63.647a
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	0

The Chi-square test result for hypothesis three examined as to whether there was a basis to link the usage of electronic voting machines and transmission of election results to the effort by the electoral body to conduct credible elections in Nigeria. The test item assessing whether the adoption of the electronic voting machines was mainly to restore public confidence in elections produced a Chi-square value of 63.647 with 4 degrees of freedom and an asymptotic significance (p-value) of .000. Based on the fact that p-value is less than the acceptable threshold or level of significance, the study therefore concluded that the null hypothesis which stated there was no justification to associate the use of electronic machines with the commitment by the electoral body to enforce the conduct of credible elections is rejected. Thus, having accepted the alternative hypothesis, paper concluded that there exists a correlation between the introduction of electronic machines for elections and the commitment by the electoral body to facilitate the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria. In practical terms, the findings are indicative of a very strong opinion by the respondents that the use of the electronic voting machines in election was aimed at ensuring accountability and credibility in the conduct of elections in the country. These findings suggest that technology is heavily related to the credibility of elections, therefore, e-voting machines are a reform instrument for enhancing democratic culture in Nigeria.

Conclusion and submissions

The study reviewed the role of the public, politicians and the Nigerian electoral body. The findings revealed that citizens have confidence in the ability of the Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct credible elections in the country. The concern of the citizens about the leadership of the election authorities is the manner in which it relates closely to politicians whom the citizens believed are the problem of election in Nigeria. The public had

expected the previous chairs of the electoral commission to maintain a safe distance from politicians to reinforce public confidence in the neutrality and impartiality of the electoral body in election. Consequently, this study advises the present leadership of the Nigerian electoral body to avoid making the same mistakes which the previous chairs of the commission made when they related very closely to the federal government as though the electoral body was an arm of the ruling party. Nonetheless, there has been not much evidence to prove that the previous chairs of the electoral commission became corrupt due to their closed interactions with politicians. Beyond that notion, there is no statistical evidence to substantiate that the previous leadership of the electoral commission was found to have aided or supported politicians to rig elections in Nigeria.

The argument of the Nigerian electorate is that the electoral body should in line with its constitutional responsibilities distance itself from the federal government and party leaders in the same manner in which the judiciary keep away from politicians to avoid its actions and judgments being mistaken as the ones taken based on external influence. The finding stresses the need for the Nigerian government to implement the recommendations of the Justice Uwais Committee, which asked that the chair of the electoral commission, who is currently a government's appointee, be appointed by the Nigerian Judicial Commission to ensure that the electoral body is free from all encumbrances and nuances of government's interference in the election.³² It could be recalled that the Nigerian parliament and the federal government relied upon the application of the principle of separation of power and the doctrine of checks and balance to have rejected the recommendation by Uwais Committee on the appointment of the head of the electoral body as such appointments will violate the right of the government to conduct elections while the judiciary reviews the claims and objections that arose from the elections. But giving the present circumstances in Nigeria, there is need for the citizenry to review of the appointments of the head of the electoral body. The paper recommends that further studies be done to find out the causes and remedies to electoral irregularities in Nigeria and other African countries.

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None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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