

ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND DISENFRANCHISEMENTS IN 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: THE UNEXPLORED ISSUES

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Abstract

This study examined the disenfranchisement of the masses by Nigeria's electoral management body in the 2015 General elections. Much of academic interest in electoral management in Nigeria has focused on election outcomes with particular emphasis on whether the elections were credible, violent, inconclusive etc. Accordingly, it is a general belief that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) succeeded in conducting credible elections in 2015 because the elections were considered relatively free and fair, and for the first time, the opposition party emerged victorious in the General elections. However, there remained some unexplored issues that require the systematic attention of scholars. This paper intervened by adopting the basic propositions arising from the theory of Institutional Legitimacy and examined the technical disenfranchisement of large number of eligible voters by INEC in the 2015 General elections. Qualitative-descriptive method of data collection and analysis together with the ex-post facto research design were employed in investigating the problem. The paper implicated institutional lapses in the massive disenfranchisement of eligible voters. Thus, the paper argued that the inability of INEC to ensure voting by large number of ad hoc staff saddled with election duties and the poor distribution of Permanent Voter's Card (PVCs) in some states translated to technical disenfranchisement of eligible voters. The study recommended that INEC should develop framework that enables every eligible registered voter to exercise his/her franchise in future elections.

Keywords: Election management, Voting, Disenfranchisement, Institutional, INEC.

Introduction

Democracy has been proselytized as the highest form of human government and the 'endpoint of man's ideological evolution' (Fukuyama, 1992:xi) especially in the aftermath of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Socialist bloc. Apparently, the end of Cold War saw the transition of hitherto authoritarian, military or monarchical states to democracy. For instance, between 1990 and 1994 alone, thirty-one of the forty-one African countries that had not held multiparty elections did so (Diouf 1998 cited in Ibrahim, 2003). Meanwhile, all through democratic nations of the world, voting has a special place in conferring legitimacy to the elected government, particularly when eligible voters express the right of governing themselves by choosing who should rule them. It is not only in national elections that voting has a special importance, but also in many institutions, private and public domains. Voting

has been used to resolve very serious problem of selecting leaders in many nations, institutions and private domains, particularly where the process is not characterized by fraud.

One of the key aspects of free and fair election is that every eligible voter who is willing to vote is given the opportunity to exercise his/her franchise. Democracy is a cherished form of government because of the values it professes and protects. Among the features of democracy that made it the most popular form of government are the existence of the rule of law, equality of all citizens, supremacy of the constitution, fundamental human rights, separation of power, periodic elections, etc (Osaghae, 1994: 45). Among all these, periodic elections appear to be a veritable feature for measuring the strength of democracy. Periodic elections allow citizens to exercise their franchise by regularly electing the supreme makers of laws and the executives. Evidently, democracy provides channels for the expression of dissent and opposition within the polity. It provides fewer incentives for both the incumbent and opposition to use violence against each other because there are opportunities for changing political leaders (Huntington, 1991).

Whether elections are credible, free and fair are to a large extent dependent on the management body that conducts elections. In fact, in all democracies, the role of the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) cannot be over-emphasized. The success of elections is primarily tied to the effectiveness and efficiency of the election management bodies. Several election management bodies have existed from pre-independence period to date in Nigeria mainly due to attempt to improve the quality of elections in the country. Despite the mutation in the nomenclature of the election management bodies, election management remains an Achilles's heel of Nigeria's political development. Studies have shown that electoral violence emanating from poorly managed elections in Nigeria has continued to undermine democratic consolidation due to the inadequacy of measures adopted to manage electoral violence (Orji, 2013). Again, the neoliberal market reforms implemented by successive regimes since the transition to democracy have been implicated for alienating the popular masses from elections in the country (Amuwo, 2008).

Nevertheless, the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria recorded very significant success, especially in the management of the elections and the unprecedented successful handover of power to an opposition party by the incumbent. While eulogizing the 2015 electoral outcome, Onapaja (2015) argued persuasively that the success of the 2015 general elections is a direct consequence of the electoral reforms carried out by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). More so, the introduction of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVCs) and Card Readers by INEC was considered milestone achievement which reduced electoral fraud and time wasting (Olakunle & Modupe, 2015). Conversely, Uhembe (2015) opined that despite the sterling performance of INEC during the 2015 General elections, distribution of PVCs and timely movement of election materials to the appropriate destinations impacted negatively on the elections management.

Despite interesting analysis of the 2015 General elections and its outcome by existing scholarship, one area of worry which has not been explored satisfactorily by scholars and practitioners is the disenfranchisement of very large number of eligible voters. This paper therefore seeks to explore this problematic and to fill the academic *lacuna* observed. The next section presents the theoretical perspective of the study.

Theoretical Perspective

This paper abstracted the basic propositions arising from the theory of Institutional Legitimacy as the theoretical framework of analysis. The theory of institutional legitimacy is one of the popular explanatory frameworks for the understanding of organizational actions. The major proponents of this theory are Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Scott (2001). The theory assumes among other things that institutions serve to drive

change and to shape the nature of change across levels and contexts, but particularly, they (institutions) change in character and potency over time. It considers the processes by which structures, including schemes; rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior (Scott, 2004). The nature and manner in which institutions are created and transformed determine how they perform; whether they can bring about change or be changed themselves, or extinguished. Institutions that are created through the due process tendentially acquire legitimacy and support of the populace.

Meanwhile, Oliver (1992) and Scott (2001) noted that much of the emphasis in the institutional theory is on construction and on convergent change process. Also related to the theory of institution is the phenomenon of deinstitutionalization, that is, the process by which institutions weaken and disappear (Scott, 2001: 182). Accordingly, Scott (2001:184) emphasized the usefulness of placing the studies of deinstitutionalization in a broader context of institutional change, since the weakening and disappearance of one set of beliefs and practices is likely to be associated with the arrival of new beliefs and practices. In fact, in the final analysis, the institutional theorists aim at encompassing change processes.

In the application of the theory to the investigation of the problem, the paper considered the nature and manner of the establishment of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The nature and manner of the establishment of INEC is directly proportional to the degree of legitimacy and support acquired and consequent performance. When an institution like INEC is established following the due process, it reduces undue political pressure on the body and gains the necessary support from the populace needed to perform effectively and efficiently. To be sure, the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which currently regulates all elections in Nigeria provides for the appointment of the Commission's Chairman by the President, subject to Senate confirmation. This provision was strictly adhered to in the appointment of the Commission's Chairman. Therefore, the success of the election management body (INEC) as an instrument of change in the 2011 but particularly 2015 general elections is consequent upon following the due process in appointing the supreme head of the Commission.

Arising from the observance of due process in the creation and appointment of the management body of INEC is that it became a driver for change and has changed the electoral system in Nigeria. Among the many innovations of the EMB are the INEC Voters Authentication System (IVAS) otherwise known as the Card Reader, the Permanent Voters Card, the Reverse Logistics, Care for the Physically Challenged and Handling Internally Displaced Person (IDPs), etc. However, the body has also been changed in the process, both in character and potency.

Overview of Pre-2015 Election Management in Nigeria

The first general election that ushered in Nigeria to political independence in 1960 was conducted by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) under the Chairmanship of Mr. R. E. Wraith, a Briton. However, in 1964, Mr. Wraith was replaced with the first indigenous Chairman of FEC, Mr. Eyo Esua. Under him, the first post-independence general elections were conducted in Nigeria. Under the management of elections by Mr. Wraith and Esua, the elections of 1959 and 1964 were characterized by violence and irregularities, yet the EMB declared results. In fact, in an emerging democracy, particularly where the institutions of government are weak, the tendency of the government in power to use several institutions to serve its purposes is apparent. As a result, the FEC did not have the capacity to implement the provisions of the constitution and put the contending political parties within the bounds of order, and thus became an instrument in the hands of the government with the attendant consequences.

In 1979, the EMB was named the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO); and under the Chairmanship of Chief Michael Ani, the 1979 general elections were conducted. The elections were to a large extent a replay of the 1959 and 1964 general elections drama. No significant reform was introduced except that the nation practiced the presidential system of government. The election was alleged to have been marred by irregularities. Again, the election of 1983 was conducted by FEDECO under the Chairmanship of Justice Ovie-Whiskey. Like other elections before it, the 1983 general elections were characterized by irregularities.

Under the military, it is to be noted that Prof Eme Awa headed NEC in 1987 before he resigned in the same year. Thereafter, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) was headed by Prof. Humphrey Nwosu who conducted the 1992-93 elections. As a result of widespread irregularities and allegations of falsification of results in previous elections, the NEC innovated the Open Ballot System to enhance the transparency of elections. After what was considered to be the fairest election to be conducted in Nigeria, the military government under the leadership of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida annulled the result of the presidential election purportedly won by Chief M. K. O. Abiola. Arising from the controversy of the annulment, Prof. Okon Edet Uya was appointed to replace Prof. Nwosu. Following the impasse that followed the cancellation of the June 12 Presidential elections, Chief Ernest Shonekan was sworn-in as the Interim President, but was subsequently overthrown in a palace coup under the leadership of Gen. Sani Abacha. Gen. Abacha disbanded the NEC and formed the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) and appointed Chief Sumner Dagogo-Jack as the head of NECON.

Under the transition programme of the military, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established and was headed by Justice Ephraim Akpata. The INEC has continued to remain the election management body since then with various persons at the helm of affairs like Sir Abel Guobadia, who succeeded Akpata in 2000. In 2005, Prof Maurice Iwu replaced Guobadia. As a result of massive irregularities in the 2007 general elections which Late President Shehu Musa Yar'adua also attested to, the need to reform the electoral system became paramount in the country. In the process of reforming the electoral system, Prof Attahiru Jega was appointed as the chairman of INEC. The Table 1 below shows the list of all the Chairmen of electoral commissions in Nigeria from independence.

Table 1: List of Electoral Commission Chairmen from Independence

S/No	Names of Electoral Commissions	Names of Chairmen	Period in Office
1	Federal Electoral Commission (FEC)	Eyo Esua	1960-1966
2	Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO)	Michael Ani	1976-1979
3	Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO)	Victor Ovie-Whiskey	1983
4	National Electoral Commission (NEC)	Eme Awa	1987-1989
5	National Electoral Commission (NEC)	Humphrey Nwosu	1989-1993
6	National Electoral Commission (NEC)	Prof. Okon Uya	1993-1994
7	National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON)	Sumner Dagogo-Jack	1994-1998

8	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	Ephraim Akpata	1998-1999
9	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	Abel Guobadia	2000-2005
10	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	Maurice Iwu	2005-2010
11	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	Attahiru Jega	2010 - 2015
12	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	Mahmood Yakubu	2015 - 20??

Source: Compiled by the Researchers, 2016.

In fact, on assumption to office, President Yar’adua aptly captured the poor electoral process in Nigeria and the need for electoral reform when he stated that:

One sad recurrent feature of our political developmental history has been the consistency with which every general election result has been disputed and contested. Beginning with the 1959 general elections, almost every poll has suffered controversy resulting from real and perceived flaws, structural and institutional inadequacies, and sometimes deficiencies in the electoral laws and even the constitution... Accordingly, I will set up a panel to examine the entire electoral process with a view to ensuring that we raise the quality and standard of our general elections, and thereby deepen our democracy (President Umar Musa Yar’Adua, cited in Onapajo, 2015:577).

Generally, the four elections (1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011) organized in Nigeria since 1999 had major flaws that questioned the credibility of those elections and threatened the consolidation of the nascent democracy. But the 2015 General elections witnessed marked increase in credibility and transparency relative to others before it. Table 2 presents summary of reports of renowned election monitoring groups on Nigeria’s elections from 1999 to 2011.

Table 2: Summary of Reports of Election Observers on Nigerian Elections, 1999-2011

Election Year	Observer	Report	Remark
1999	Transition Monitoring Group (TMG)	‘The election saw marked increase in the number of electoral malpractices’. There were areas where the incidence of electoral fraud was great enough to completely distort the election result.	Election lacked credibility
2003	Transition Monitoring Group (TMG)	‘There were scores of cases of alleged electoral fraud across the country, often with the collusion of election officials and security personnel’	The Election lacked credibility
	National	‘Serious irregularities appeared more	

	Democratic Institute (NDI)	widespread in certain states; others concentrated in areas within the states'; 'There were irregularities committed by officials, activities, and supporters of the major political parties'	
	EU EOM	'In a number of states the conduct of the elections did not comply with Nigerian law and international standards'	
2007	Human Rights Watch	'Many seasoned observers stated that the 2007 polls were among the worst they had ever witnessed anywhere in the world'	
	EU EOM	The 2007 State and Federal elections fell far short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections'	The Election lacked credibility
	TMG	'...the April 14 and 21 2007 general elections are the worst election that ever took place in the country'	
2011	EU EOM	'The 2011 general elections marked an important step towards strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria, but challenges remain'	The Election was an improvement over the past ones
	NDI	'Nigeria's 2011 general elections...were significantly more transparent and credible than the three preceding polls in 1999, 2003 and 2007'	

Source: Culled Onapajo (2015:576)

Information presented in table 2 shows that all the elections organized from 1999 to 2011 were poorly managed, even though the 2011 elections showed remarkable improvement over the previous ones, the level of credibility of the election was still below internationally acceptable standard.

Analysis of the 2015 General Elections

The 2015 General Elections was a remarkable improvement over the 2011 elections mainly due to the capacity of the election management body to introduce innovation and reform certain aspects of the electoral process. Some of the innovations include the introduction of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVC), Card Readers, and the use of Academic Staff of federal universities as returning officers in all the 36 states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory. Other major reforms included the improvement in the standards of production and security of election materials, revision of the framework for the collation and declaration of elections results, introduction of the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security. Generally, the reform introduced in INEC can be categorized into three. The first was the structural reforms which addressed the issues relating to INEC as an electoral institution like dependence of Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) on the 36 states governors who are politicians, for facilities and other necessary logistics. Secondly, the policy reforms entailed formulation of new policies that would improve the quality of elections like the introduction of the PVCs. The third reform

was in the area of planning and strategy which provided strategic direction for INEC, which acted as the blueprint for the 2015 general elections (Amuwo, 2008). According to Oyeweso and Amusa (2015), the commission identified six principles which must guide the activities of election officials which were: integrity, impartiality, transparency, professionalism, gender sensitivity and due concentration and support for the elderly, pregnant women and the physically challenged.

These innovations enhanced the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy to a very large extent. However, scholars are of the opinion that to consolidate democracy requires ensuring economic development, reduction of poverty level, ignorance and disease; it equally involves waging war against corruption at all levels of Nigeria political life through strengthening governmental institutions and structures for more efficiency and effectiveness (Agbo, 2012; Amuwo, 2008). It is important to observe that the check-list above was not in place before the 2015 general elections, yet, the conduct of the election was satisfactory. This is essentially because of the strengthening of the institution that conducts elections. However, to conduct a credible, free and fair election is not an end in itself and cannot be equated to democratic consolidation, but, it is and correctly too, a very important aspect of democratic consolidation. Nigeria has a culture of struggle for democracy; as a result, notwithstanding the prevalence of economic underdevelopment, poverty, ignorance and disease, the citizens rendered their support to the election management body before, during and after the conduct of the elections because of the apparent legitimacy that it has acquired.

In fact, it is imperative to state that 2015 general elections negated the popular believe of scholars that:

Among other things, any systematic consideration of democratic governance in Nigeria or its blossom would need to come to terms with the challenge and dilemmas of economic underdevelopment, poverty, weak institutional structures, corruption, problem of political legitimacy occasioned by dispute arising from electoral process, ethnic-based conflicts, religious bigotry, prodigious nature of the elites and more embracing, the nature of the Nigerian state (Ogundiya and Baba, 2007; Diamond, 2008: 7; Okolie, 2011).

To be sure, the problem of political legitimacy which could be occasioned by dispute arising from electoral process did not occur because the electoral management body itself acquired legitimacy and support of the populace. Consequently, all the innovations and reforms that were embarked on received massive support from the citizens. Not even the political gladiators with their varied interest, strategies and manipulative skills could resist the reforms introduced. In fact, the introduction of the permanent voter's card, which has to be authenticated by the card reader before one could vote significantly reduced the chances of multiple voting by the electorates.

It is equally necessary to state that a skillful look at the distribution of number of registered voters and those that collected their PVCs showed that the North are more politically aware than the South. To demonstrate this, nine (9) states in the north recorded over 90% collection of PVC while only two (2) states in the south had a record of over 90% collection of PVCs. This does not imply any deliberate attempt to maneuver the election in favour of the north, but rather; it showed the relevance of the north in the political calculus of the nation. This conclusion is predicated on the fact that the same northern voters were massively used to win the 2011 general elections by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). However, with the help of hindsight, one can now say with certain amount of certainty that the nation truly needed a change of government.

Institutional Lapses of Electoral Management Body

A major flaw of INEC in the management of 2015 General elections is in the area of production and distribution of PVCs across the country. The contract for production of PVCs was awarded to Art Technology Limited, with the technical partner “Obature” in France, at the cost of N65 per card with the aim of producing 40 million voter cards before the end of 2012 in the first phase of the distribution of the cards. Regrettably, up to 100,000 PVCs remained unproduced one day before Election Day (EU EOM, 2015).

On the issue of PVCs distribution, INEC stipulated that PVC distribution were to be done at the Polling Unit on specified dates. It added that voters who were unable to collect their PVCs during the specified dates shall collect from the INEC office in the LGA. This system put in place by INEC for the distribution of the PVCs failed to take cognizance of certain classes of voters who may change their location after voters registration but before PVC collection. This mechanism proved problematic to the extent that voters who had changed their locations after registration found it almost impossible to collect their PVCs. Thus, despite INEC’s strong pronouncements on its readiness to conduct elections as originally scheduled in February, it suffered serious shortcomings like extensive under-collection of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and incomplete distribution of Card Readers (EU EOM, 2015). As a result of this lapses in the PVC production and distribution mechanism put in place by INEC, a lot of eligible voters were technically disenfranchised because of inability to collect their PVCs. Table 3 presents statistics of PVC distribution across the 36 states of the federation and the FCT.

Table 3: Distribution of Permanent Voters Cards for 2015 General Elections

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION				
DISTRIBUTION OF PERMANENT VOTERS CARDS AS AT March 3, 2015				
S/N	States	Number of Registered Voters	Number of Cards Collected by Voters	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
				%
1	ABIA	1,396,162	1,137,272	81.46
2	ADAMAWA	1,559,012	1,372,853	88.06
3	AKWA-IBOM	1,680,759	1,587,566	94.46
4	ANAMBRA	1,963,173	1,658,967	84.50
5	BAUCHI	2,054,125	1,938,192	94.36
6	BAYELSA	610,373	460,999	75.53
7	BENUE	2,015,452	1,566,186	77.71
8	BORNO	1,934,079	1,320,667	68.28
9	CROSS RIVER	1,175,623	941,920	80.12
10	DELTA	2,275,264	1,829,542	80.41
11	EBONYI	1,074,273	848,392	78.97
12	EDO	1,779,738	1,197,829	67.30
13	EKITI	732,021	506,535	69.20
14	ENUGU	1,429,221	1,169,408	81.82
15	FCT	881,472	552,381	62.67
16	GOMBE	1,120,023	1,066,243	95.20
17	IMO	1,803,030	1,707,449	94.70
18	JIGAWA	1,831,276	1,756,320	95.91
19	KADUNA	3,407,222	3,159,011	92.72
20	KANO	4,975,701	4,112,039	82.64
21	KATSINA	2,827,943	2,620,096	92.65
22	KEBBI	1,470,648	1,369,155	93.10
23	KOGI	1,350,883	926,013	68.55
24	KWARA	1,142,267	862,511	75.51
25	LAGOS	5,822,207	3,714,400	63.80
26	NASARAWA	1,242,667	1,026,657	82.62
27	NIGER	2,014,317	1,642,144	81.52
28	OGUN	1,829,534	864,292	47.24
29	ONDO	1,524,655	1,083,398	71.06
30	OSUN	1,407,107	1,024,070	72.78
31	OYO	2,415,566	1,603,168	66.37
32	PLATEAU	2,001,825	1,508,585	75.36
33	RIVERS	2,537,590	2,091,132	82.41
34	SOKOTO	1,611,929	1,527,004	94.73
35	TARABA	1,340,652	1,252,491	93.42
36	YOBE	1,099,970	824,401	74.95
37	ZAMFARA	1,495,717	1,403,586	93.84
	Total	68,833,476	55,232,874	80.24

(Source: INEC, 2015)

Furthermore, elections in Nigeria remain a labour intensive project considering the poor level of technological development and insecurity challenges that warrants drafting of large number of security personnel to sensitive locations during the election. This labour intensive nature of election necessitated the use of large number of ad hoc staff by INEC during elections. Much as INEC's dependence on ad hoc staff is on its own an institutional challenge (Boloji, 2015), it should be noted that no mechanism is put in place to ensure voting by these ad hoc staff who are eligible voters but would not vote during elections because of the nature of their involvement in the elections. For example, USAID (2014)

estimated that over 1.2 million ad hoc staff would participate in the 2015 general election. This is a large number as most of the people who qualify as INEC ad hoc staff are also eligible voters for the election who would be technically disenfranchised because of the role they would play in the elections.

Statistics of Voters Technically Disenfranchised

Available statistics on the 2015 general elections reveal that the total number of registered voters was 68, 833,476. When juxtapose this figure with the estimated population of Nigeria, which is put at 160,000,000 million, the paper observed that over 80 million (about 50%) of the citizens did not register for the election. Most of these numbers are adult population that are qualified to register and participate in the elections but are technically disenfranchised because they would be participating in the conduct of the elections. Statistics in Table 3 reveal that INEC could not achieve 100% PVC distribution as only 80% of the registered voters collected their PVCs. In fact, in nine (9) states of the federation, the total number of registered voters that collected their PVCs in each of the states is below one million (N1m).

Other classes of citizens technically disenfranchised are those Nigerians that are saddled with various responsibilities relating to the conduct of the elections. These include the INEC permanent staff, security personnel, ad hoc staff including members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), observers, and media men among others. All these are eligible voters, yet could not vote during the 2015 general elections because they were performing election duties and correspondingly negating their constitutional right to vote. To illustrate, INEC recruited not fewer than 750, 000 ad hoc staff to conduct the general elections across the nation (INEC, 2015). This figure exceeds the total number of registered voters in Bayelsa and Ekiti states which is 610, 373 and 732, 021 respectively. Again, the Nigerian Police Force, with a staff strength of 371, 800, directly or indirectly participated in providing security during the elections. The same applies to other security outfits like the Civil Defense Corps, the Military, Customs, etc. More so, the media by their very nature were actively involved during the conduct of the elections but merely as reporters and non-participant observers. Several members of many organizations who are bona-fide and eligible citizens of Nigeria could not exercise their franchise on account of performing other duties during elections. In fact, a total of 107 accredited observer groups participated in the 2015 general elections. These comprised of 82 local observer groups and 25 international observer groups. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria_Police_Force. Therefore, it is estimated that about two million (2m) of ad hoc staff that participated in the conduct of the 2015 general elections were technically disenfranchised and could not exercise their franchise in the elections. Given the fact that this figure (2m) is large enough to change election result, it becomes imperative to rethink a mechanism that accommodates ad hoc workers during election by allowing such citizens to vote and still discharge their duties. Hence, in spite of the relative success recorded, the 2015 general elections suffered some setbacks resulting from the inadequacy of INEC's institutional capacity to ensure timely production and distribution of the PVCs, and to develop framework that could accommodate and ensure that every eligible voter who registered and is willing to vote casts his/her vote.

Discussion and Analysis

As simple as the process of voting is, it is a very important aspect of the electoral process that accord legitimacy to an elected government. The management of election includes among other things the registration of eligible voters. For an election to be credible, it requires absence of irregularities and electoral violence but more importantly, that every eligible voter should be provided a platform to participate in the voting, among others. In the

2015 general elections, the total number of eligible registered voters was 68, 833, 476, while the total number that collected the PVC was 55, 232, 874, which represents 80.24% of the total registered voters. The distribution of more than 80% PVCs is an indication that the electoral management body performed its duty effectively and efficiently.

Now, with the various reforms that were put in place by the INEC, particularly the introduction of the PVC and the card reader, the institutional mechanism for the conduct of elections was able to drive change that are progressive in the political system. This is consequent upon the legitimacy and support that was acquired by INEC following the manner in which it was established. These various reforms and innovations culminated in the successful conduct of the 2015 general elections.

However, these reforms did not take care of large number of eligible voters that did not exercise their constitutional right of voting because of official engagements they were involved in during the elections. The category of eligible voters that were technically disenfranchised by the inability of INEC to put in place a mechanism that can enable them vote in spite of any official duty are all INEC staff, ad hoc staff, members of the media, observer groups, and security personnel among others. At any rate, since the election management body has the expertise to successfully introduce the use of card reader, they can equally use the same expertise to provide a platform and mechanism that ensures that all eligible voters cast their votes. The legitimacy acquired by INEC can guarantee changes in the electoral process, since institutions are created to effect change in the political system.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

In the concluding remarks, the paper had demonstrated that the management of 2015 general elections was successfully handled by INEC leading to the conduct of credible, free and fair elections. However, it observed that institutional lapses are implicated in the massive disenfranchisement of eligible voters. The relative successes achieved in the conduct of the 2015 general elections are as a result of the legitimacy and support acquired by the election management body, INEC. As a driver of change, the paper recommended that INEC should develop an electronic mechanism that will ensure that every eligible voter votes in future elections, notwithstanding any official duty. Again, production and distribution of PVCs could be more systematic to ensure that migrant voters are able to register and collect their PVCs from any point in the federation. More importantly, the paper recommended that the armed forces and other members of the security personnel should be made to cast their votes three days before the general elections, and the tallying will be done on the day of the election. This will afford them the opportunity to exercise their franchise as bona-fide citizens of Nigeria and also to provide robust security when other registered voters file out to cast their ballots three days later.

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