

Electoral Malpractice as a Challenge to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

Joy U. Egwu

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Abstract

This study on electoral malpractice as a challenge to democratic consolidation in Nigeria was for examine the various manifestations of electoral malpractice and the negative impact on the Nigeria polity in general and the lives of its citizens in particular considering the fact that democracy has come to stay in the Nigerian polity. This study was conducted to provide lasting solutions to the menace of electoral malpractices. To achieve this, the research methodology was a combination of primary and secondary data collection with more emphasis on the primary data. The research hypothesis included that electoral malpractices have significant effect on democratic consolidation in Nigeria; electoral malpractice causes violence in the country and that electoral malpractice cause bad governance. These hypotheses were tested using the elite theory which examined the existence and nature of a single cohesive elite which dominates the affairs of the Nigerian society. The findings included that electoral violence has impeded the growth of democracy in Nigeria, electoral malpractice have disastrous consequences for Nigeria democracy, leading to lack of independence of the Judiciary and other electoral institutions. To resolve these problems, recommendations were made for the total independence of the electoral body (INEC), the enforcement of dialogue and negotiation in the politics of the Nigeria State in order to promote harmony, unity and stability. Also concentration should be placed on job specialization and administration as well as possession of skills, capacities and educational qualification by politicians.

Keywords: *Electoral malpractice, democracy, consolidation and the revamp of electoral body*

I. Introduction

Since the return to civil rule on 29th May 1999, Nigeria has held six general elections (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019) outside many re-run elections and local government polls. The disturbing trend is that each general election became worse than the preceding one [1,2,3]. This trend shows that the country is faring badly at each passing election as nobody can talk of consolidating democracy in such an environment. This is because the leaders seem to have forgotten that conducting a free and fair election is vital to the growth and development of any democratic process. Indeed, one major element of electoral process is that election must be conducted in a free and fair atmosphere, while electoral results must reflect the wishes of the people [4]. Nigeria's experience in this regard had since independence been contrary to expectations. This is because previous and present electoral bodies had conducted elections in a way that favoured the ruling political parties. Through poor planning, the devices of excluding electorates from voting in places considered to be the strongholds of opposition, inadequate supply of voting materials and late arrival of electoral officers to polling stations have ensured a history of electoral was. Example of such was the conduct of the 2013 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, Nigeria [5,6,7,8]. In addition, there have been cases in which candidates that won electoral primaries were replaced by candidates that never contested or were defeated during the exercise [9,10]. A case in point was that of Rotimi Amaechi that was substituted for Celestine Omerbia for the 2007 gubernatorial election in Rivers State by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and that of Martin Elechi who was substituted for Obinna Ogba in the 2011 gubernatorial election in Ebonyi State. Moreover, the scenario in which flag bearers of political parties either in the presidential or gubernatorial elections were disqualified from contesting elections few days to the conduct of elections for no genuine reason by the electoral body as observed in the 2011 and 2005 general elections was an indication that the electoral body was not truly independent of government as those decisions served the interest of the ruling political party [11,12,13, 14]. Looking at the history of the Nigeria's elections -1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 elections were affected by corruption and vote-rigging. The European Union Observer Mission described the 2003 State and Federal elections as "marred by serious irregularities and draft. They commented also that the 2007 general elections fell short of basic international and regional standards of democratic elections "and that "given the lack of transparency and evidence of effort, particularly in the result collation process, there can be no confidence in the results of the elections. Nigeria's sixteen years of uninterrupted democratic experience cannot in any way be compared with that of the United States which is over two hundred years or with Britain

over three hundred years [15,16]. This is because there are still cases of antidemocratic practices, especially in the areas of electoral processes, rule of law and constitutionalism. Also related to this problem is the fact that electoral malpractices often lead to legitimacy crisis which helps to erode democratic practices [17]. Moreover, the culture of impunity especially with reference to corruption is an endemic challenge to democratic stability in Nigeria.

Although, this attitudinal disposition is not limited to the economic realm, it also subsists at the political sphere where elective offices are seen as the quickest means of wealth accumulation. It was therefore, not surprising that winning election was considered a matter of do or die, where candidates and their political godfathers employ illegal strategies including rigging, falsification, blackmail and even killing of opponents in order to clinch power. Election as a democratic practice refers to the system whereby the citizenry (organized as electorate) consciously choose people into civil roles through a competitive selection process [12, 14]. Election is the barometer to measure the political maturity, health, legitimacy and stability of democratic governance. It is generally held to be the most single important indicator of the presence or absence of democratic governance. Thus, how a state arranges and conducts its elections tells a lot about the political; development of that particular state [15]. Election can also be described as a procedure that allows members of an organization, community or a nation to choose representatives who will hold positions of authority within it. According to [16], election is the formal process of selecting a person for public office or accepting or registering a political proposition by voting. They state further that an election is one of the means by which a society may organize itself and make specified formal decisions adding that where voting is free, it acts simultaneously as a system for making certain decisions regarding the power relations in a society and as a method for seeking political obedience with a minimum of sacrifice of the individuals' freedoms. The essence of a democratic election is a freedom of choice. This now brings us to the issue of democratic consolidation which is a product of the democratization process. Democratic consolidation, according to [2], implies the internalization of democratic culture and the institutionalization of democratic best process" by a policy that has successfully embarked on a democratic transition. In essence, according to [7] democratic consolidation is a term which described a vital political goal for new democracies. Democratic consolidation may be further seen as a state of democratic maturity such that it can no longer be threatened or truncated by reactionary forces whether internal or external. But the good thing with the term "democratic consolidation according to [6] is its seemingly infinite patience and malleability. It is a term that contains few semantic constraints.

Statement of the problem

Electoral malpractice is the deliberate manipulation of the process of an election through direct or indirect means to influence electoral results. The commission of electoral malpractice is most often illustrated through other methods such as improper vote control, ballot stuffing and bribery. The irregularities and malpractices that characterize elections in Nigeria proceed to unimaginable conflicts that consume lives and properties during these elections. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) employed all devices using their power of incumbency to suppress any opposition party. They committed the national and state resources to influence the security agents to protect and safeguard their manipulations during elections. Malpractices as manifested by the opposition parties affect both our development and democracy as most of the civil servants and unemployed youths in Nigeria indulge in all kinds of dangerous acts; for instance the Boko Haram insurgency have been linked to the dissatisfaction of those who felt not favoured in the elections. This study therefore seeks to provide answers to the following questions:-

- i. Does electoral malpractice have significant effects on democratic consolidation?
- ii. Does electoral malpractice cause violence in the country?
- iii. Does electoral malpractice cause bad Governance in Nigeria?

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to ascertain the effect of electoral malpractices on democratic consolidation in Nigeria with particular reference to 2011 gubernatorial elections in Ebonyi State.

II. Research Methodology

Research design

Descriptive design was adopted in this work. A descriptive survey design is the one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the active group. The research is a quantitative type due to the use of data derived from questionnaire conducted. The data from the voting centers would be represented, analyzed and interpreted using statistical tools like table, frequency distribution and sample percentages.

Area of the study

The area of study is Afikpo North Local Government Area in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Afikpo North spans an area approximately 164 square kilometers in size. It is located on 6 degrees north latitude and 8 degrees east longitude. It occupies an area of about 164 square miles (164km²)

Population of the study

The population of the study is the entire population of Afikpo North which is estimated at one hundred and fifty six thousand six hundred and eleven = 156,611 drawn from the National Population Commission Census of 2006.

Sample size and sample technique

The population size for the study is 156,611 from drawn where the sample was using Yaro Yamani formula. The calculation is stated below:-

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

where

n = sample size

N = population size

I = constant

e = error limit

$$N = \frac{n}{(1 + 0.25)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{156,611}{(1+156,611+0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{156,611}{(1+156,611x0.0025)}$$

$$n = 156,611 \times \frac{391.53}{399.9}$$

$$n = 399.9$$

Approximately = 400

Source of data

Data for this paper was gathered from two sources. The primary source and the secondary sources. Primary source of data comprised of information gathered through structured questionnaire administered to the sample studied. The secondary data have their source from relevant material such as text books, journals and internet source.

Instrument for data collection: Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire were test piloted and their reliability and validity established.

Method of data analysis

Due to the nature of this paper, the descriptive and inferential statistical tools of measurement and data analysis were both used. This allowed the paper to develop a number of statements with respect to the topic. The data were coded, computed arranged in tables and inferential statistical tools were used to calculate the correlation of the variables generated in the paper.

Data presentation and analysis

Instrument distributed	Returned percentage	Unreturned percentage
400	280 (70%)	120 (30%)

Source: Field Survey 2019

The instruments are in two sections, section A is the social demographic characteristic of the respondents such as sex, age, education qualification, occupation and religion. Section B deals with tables, with rows, scores and means frequency.

SECTION A

Social demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1: Sex Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	200	71%
Female	80	29%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 2: Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	120	43%
Married	100	36%
Divorces	60	21%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 3: Occupational Status

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Politicians	50	18%
Civil servants	95	34%
Traders	75	27%
Unemployed youths	60	21%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 4: Educational Qualifications

Level	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	100	36%
OND	20	7%
B.Sc	130	46%
M.Sc& above	10	4%
Not provided	20	7%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 5: Religious Status

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christian	230	82%
Traditionalist	30	11%
Muslim	20	7%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Section B

Table 6: Does electoral malpractice have adverse effect on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	120	43%
Strongly agree	80	29%
Undecided	10	4%
Disagreed	40	14%

Strongly disagreed	30	10%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 7: Does violence cause of electoral malpractice in Nigeria.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	110	39%
Strongly agree	80	29%
Undecided	40	14%
Disagree	25	9%
Strongly disagree	25	9%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 8: Does Electoral Malpractice cause bad Governance?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	130	46%
Strongly agree	70	25%
Undecided	30	11%
Disagree	20	7%
Strongly disagree	30	11%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 9: Do ethnicim and tribalism cause electoral malpractice?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	135	48%
Strongly agree	90	32%
Undecided	25	9%
Disagree	10	4%
Strongly disagree	20	7%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 10: Does religious intolerance cause electoral malpractice?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	95	34%
Strongly agree	100	36%
Undecided	40	14%
Disagree	30	11%
Strongly disagree	15	5%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 11: Does high level of electoral rigging and political thuggery have negative impact on good governance

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	120	43%
Strongly agree	85	30%

Undecided	45	16%
Disagree	10	4%
Strongly disagree	20	7%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 12: Do electoral malpractices weaken democratic consolidation?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	115	41%
Strongly agree	75	27%
Undecided	25	9%
Disagree	40	14%
Strongly disagree	25	9%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 13: Do electoral malpractices usher in illegitimate and incompetent leaders that rape democracy?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	100	39%
Strongly agree	90	32%
Undecided	15	5%
Disagree	50	18%
Strongly disagree	25	9%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 14: Will the observation of the rule of law and the absence of election rigging and thuggery ensure good governance in Nigeria?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	120	42%
Strongly agree	80	29%
Undecided	10	4%
Disagree	40	14%
Strongly disagree	30	10%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 15: Is there a negative correlation between electoral malpractices and good governance?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	95	34%
Strongly agree	76	27%
Undecided	30	11%
Disagree	40	14%
Strongly disagree	39	14%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 16: Is there a positive correlation between electoral malpractice and good governance?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	20	7%
Strongly agree	30	11%
Undecided	30	11%
Disagree	70	25%
Strongly disagree	130	46%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 17: Will free and fair election will usher in legitimate and competent leaders in Nigeria?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	135	48%
Strongly agree	90	32%
Undecided	25	9%
Disagree	10	4%
Strongly disagree	20	7%
Total	280	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

Testing of hypothesis

The paper adopted the chi-square distribution (X^2) in analyzing and testing the hypotheses. Formula for chi-square is

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$$

$$fe = \frac{\text{row total} \times \text{column total}}{\text{grand total}}$$

Hypothesis One

H1 =electoral malpractice has significant effects on democratic consolidation.

To test hypothesis one, items in table (12) were used

Contingency table (12)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	115	41%
Strongly agree	75	27%
Undecided	25	9%
Disagree	40	14%
Strongly disagree	25	9%
Total	280	100%

To find frequency expected (fe)

Therefore $\frac{280}{5} = 56$

5

Frequency expected is 56

Calculating chi square

fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
115	56	59	3481	62.16
75	56	19	361	6.44
25	56	-31	961	17.16
40	56	-16	256	4.57
20	56	-36	1296	23.14
Total				113.47

Therefore the calculated chi-square (x^2) is 113. Determination of degree of freedom

$$df = (r-1)(c-1)$$

where r = rows (5)

c = columns (2)

$$\therefore (5-1)(2-1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$$

Determination of the critical value at $(0.05)^2$ level of significance and degree of freedom of 4 = 9.488 \therefore The critical value of $x^2 = 9.488$

Decision rule

Since the calculated $x^2 = 113$ is greater than the critical value of $x^2 (9.488)$, H_A is accepted.

Hypothesis Two

Statement of hypothesis

H_A = electoral malpractice cause violence in the country

Using table (7) to test hypothesis

Contingency table (7)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agreed	110	39%
Strongly agree	80	29%
Undecided	40	14%
Disagree	25	9%
Strongly disagree	25	9%
Total	280	100%

Frequency expected (fe) =

$$\text{Therefore } \frac{280}{5} = 56$$

5

Frequency expected is 56

Calculating chi square

Fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
110	56	54	2916	52
80	56	24	576	10
40	56	-16	256	4.57
25	56	-31	961	17
25	56	-31	961	17
Total				100.57

Therefore the calculated chi-square (x^2) is 101. Determination of degree of freedom =

$$df = (r-1)(c-1)$$

where r = rows (5)

c = columns (2)

$$\therefore (5-1)(2-1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$$

Determination of the critical value at $(0.05)^2$ level of significance and degree of freedom of 4 = 9.488 \therefore The critical value of $x^2 = 9.488$

Decision rule since the calculated $x^2 = 101$ is greater than the critical value of $x^2 (9.488)$, H_A

is accepted.

Hypothesis Three

Statement of hypothesis

H_1 = electoral malpractice cause violence in the country

Using table (15) to test hypothesis

Contingency table (15)

Fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
95	56	39	1521	27
76	56	20	400	7
30	56	-26	676	12

40	56	-16	256	4.5
39	56	-17	289	5
Total				55.5

Therefore the calculated chi-square (χ^2) is 56. Determination of degree of freedom =

$$df = (r-1) (c-1)$$

where r = rows (5)

c = columns (2)

$$\therefore (5-1) (2-1) = 4 \times 1 = 4$$

Determination of the critical value at $(0.05)^2$ level of significance and degree of freedom of 4 = 9.488

\therefore The critical value of $\chi^2 = 9.488$

Decision rule

Since the calculated $\chi^2 = 56$ is greater than the critical value of $\chi^2(9.488)$, H_A will be accepted.

III. Discussion Of Findings

The findings are that electoral violence has impeded the growth of democracy in Nigeria, leading to state illegitimacy and unauthorized use of force against the will or desires of pore [2,3]. Nwolise while quoting Albert defined electoral violence as all forms of organized acts or threats-physical, psychological and structural, aimed at intimidating, harming, black mailling a political stakeholder before during and after anelection with a view to determining, delaying or otherwise influencing an electoral process [5].Assassination of political opponents, people perceived as a threat, or burning of opponents houses or cars, shootings, shoot-out, killing of individuals, partisan harassment by security agents, arrests, forceful dispersal of rallies, or terror inflicted by political assassinations which makes people scarred to participate in politics or election. Also excessive fees for collecting party nomination forms. The use of suspected thugs loyal to a political party.The paper also found that electoral malpractice has disastrous consequence for democracy because it deprives elections of their essential purpose as a popular basis for choosing governments. In the first place, a government which by electoral malpractices keeps itself in office as against the votes of the majority of the electorate lacks of legitimacy of the popular mandate, according to the sources [6] and [9].From the point of view of the political parties and their candidates, rigging deprives of its character as a competition in which all the contestants can equally aspire to win. According to the above researcher, one can easily imagine the consequences of electoral malpractices on good government in relation to how it has affected the administration of good governance, transparency, rule of law, accountability and even free and fair election in Nigeria due to election rigging and manipulation of electoral results. The paper that the interference in the judicial by the political class has reduced their independence and dispassionate dispensation of justice. Judicial integrity is a derivative of the level of judicial accountability to itself and judicial accountability can be fosteredwhere there is fair and effective disciplinary process. Limited judicial contamination by civil and criminal proceedings, diminished conflict of interest, income and assets disclosure and high standards of judicial conduct can yet revive judicial ethics.According to [7]the judiciary most often are used in the act of intimidation, injustice and bribery. For the masses they must pledge loyalty to ruling party. Judicial integrity can be fostered only in an environment of pervasive legality that is a socio- political milieusin which there is a constitutional guarantee of judicial independence and the access of all citizens to justice without regard to race, gender, ethnic nationality, socio-economic circumstance and religious persuasions.

IV. Recommendations

Electoral malpractices have posed several problems to the conduct of free and fair elections, especially from 1999 to 2011 respectively, in Ebonyi State and Nigeria.Electoral malpractices and their impacts have resulted in bad governance in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular.This ugly trend regarded can be eradicated from the political system of Nigeria by doing the following:-

- (a) The National Electoral body (ie INEC) should be totally independent of government to enable it organize free and fair elections and successfully handover to a winner of an election.
- (b) The principles of good governance should be upheld in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in order to eliminate the dangers of bad governance or political instability.
- (c) Dialogue and negotiation should be enforced in Nigeria and Ebonyi State politics.
- (d) The bad spirit of ethnicism and tribalism in Nigeria and Ebonyi State politics should be minimized if not eliminated.
- (e) Consideration should be given to job specialization and administration, especially to those seeking for administrative posts. For instance, appointing a judge as a minster of power may be the best for the country.
- (f) Politicians should possess reasonable educational qualifications before joining active party politics at various level.

V. Conclusion

Nigeria as a developing nation requires free and fair elections, which will pave way for legitimate and competent leaders to be enthroned. It is of paramount necessity to Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular. However, electoral malpractices signal danger to all national development plans. Nigeria needs a government free of electoral malpractices to foster good governance. From the analysis so far, the conclusion is that there have been electoral malpractices in Nigerian democracy and Ebonyi State since 1999. This phenomenon is caused by bad leaders, high unemployment level, high level of poverty, the syndrome of get rich quick. Nigeria politicians can avoid economic mismanagement, embezzlement of public funds, electoral malpractices such as rigging and thuggery, and then embrace dialogue and negotiation before decisions are implemented. Lastly, it is high time that Nigerians began to embrace democratic values.

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