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**Public relations perspectives on electoral reforms as a  
panacea for consolidating Nigeria's democracy**

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**Abstract.** Electoral reforms have been considered as sustainable means of improving on the quality of elections in Nigeria, this is especially as it avails the country, tremendous opportunities in admitting new policies such as new techniques, technologies and improved systems of protecting the welfare of electorates. It is evident from the literature that, public relations overtime has been a unifying factor in accelerating Nigeria's democracy and sustaining its need for periodic elections and encouraging the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Based on the level of malpractices and issues associated with the conduct of elections in Nigeria, it was concluded in this paper that, there are several benefits attached to the process of electoral reforms in Nigeria, hence, it gives government the opportunity to revamp its electoral policies through campaigns, introduction of new technologies, voting and more importantly, the nature of conducting elections bearing in mind that, poorly adopted electoral policies normally lead to the outbreak of crisis from aggrieved parties. It is recommended amongst others that, government at all levels should consider periodic electoral reforms as a strategy for development and as such; they should ensure that only people with credibility are charged with the mandate of presiding over electoral reform committees (ERC).

**Keywords.** Electoral reforms, Public relations, Democracy and elections.

**JEL.** D72, D73, D78.

## 1. Introduction

Universally, election is regarded as the heart of representative democracy. It is a process of testing the performance of a government, the level of political participation and the credibility of an existing administration. Election is often considered as the heart of democracy and as such carries an intense weight in the success of representative democratic politics all over the world. However, conducting free and fair elections has been a weighty problem in Nigeria' repeated attempts at sustained democratic governance (Inkoba & Kumokor, 2011). Electoral process according to Idike (2014:133) refers to the necessary stages in the preparation and organization of an election. He then added by saying that:

For elections and electoral process to be considered as fair it must have some basic structures, which include: statutory provisions establishing the electoral, bodies, delineation of wards/constituencies, registration of political parties, registration of voters, recruitment and training of ad-hoc staff, procurement of electoral material, logistic, screening of candidates, provision

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of polling agents, monitoring of agents, accreditation of voters, actual voting, counting of votes and providing avenues for settlement of disputed results.

From the assertion above, it is evident that a disturbing phenomenon is the fact that the electoral processes in Nigeria's history was devoid of transparency and fairness, which rendered the conduct of election not to be free and fair. It is in regard to these challenges that reforms became imperative in order to correct these anomalies and improve transparency and efficiency through fairness, accountability and integrity in the system.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistant (IDEA) (2001: 217) in Nachana'a, Yusuf & Auwalu (2014) emphasized that the process of election in Nigeria are characterized by stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers, over-bloating of voting registers, special treatment of voters, disappearance of or destruction of ballot boxes as well as distortion or doctoring of election results and that electoral malpractice and become an entrenched practice in Nigeria political system. IDEA stresses that, election provides citizens with the freedom to choose their rulers and to decide on public policy. Under any democratic system, citizens who is legally qualified to exercise franchise are provided with opportunity to choose political alternatives and to make decisions that express their preferences. At worse, the ruling elite resorted to using judicial tribunals to unjustifiably uphold their elections.

Analysis of irregularities that attended far gone and present elections in the country especially that of the 2003 general elections revealed that events before the elections were deliberately designed strategies to manipulate elections. According to Garuba (2013) cited in Nachana'a, *et al.*, (2014) evidence in this regard are the attempt to regulate party registration and the attempt to insert a clause in the 2001 electoral Act was a manipulation of the electoral process, delay in voters registration exercise and display of voters register, non-transparent party primaries, questionable fund-raising dinners and anger over recruitment of electoral and returning officers. However, the manipulations affected the preparations because of insufficient time required for campaigning, display and correction of names omitted in the voter's register.

From the forgoing observed irregularities in the conduct of the 2003 elections, the conduct of the 2007 election is thus considered. Going by the laws of the Third Schedule, part 1, Section 15-Sub Section a-1 of the 1999 constitution and the Electoral Act 2006 that empowered Prof. Maurice Iwu led INEC to conduct the 2007 first transition from civilian-to-civilian leadership general elections. INEC came out with a timetable and schedule of activities to cover collection and submission of nomination forms by parties and publication of list of nominated candidates. INEC (2007) cited in Omotola (2007) opined that the activities were scheduled to take place between November 8, 2006 and March 8, 2007. The Governorship and State Assembly elections were fixed for 14, April 21, 2007.

The 2007 election testified eloquently to the desperation of the political elite in hanging on to power. In that regards, Kwaja (2008) observed that, INEC introduced a computerized Direct Data Capturing Machine (DDCM) to modernize voter registration and to prevent multiple voting, unfortunately the result of the exercise failed to meet national and international electoral standards. Even though, according to Kwaja (2008) the commission lacked the technical capacity and material resources to successfully implement this laudable project. For example, the commission could not supply the DDCM in several places across the country. This was because, of the 33,000 DDCM needed to cover the 120,000 registration centres, and only about 1,500 were available at the commencement of the exercise. Consequently, millions of Nigerians were disenfranchised due to this insufficiency. Kwaja (2008) reiterated that:

In some areas where these machines were available, there was no electricity to charge the batteries when they run down. In fact, Nigerians made contributions in some places to hire generators and to buy petrol in order to operate these registration machines. Evidence abound that in some parts of the country, particularly in Eastern Nigeria, INEC ad-hoc staff collected

bribes from qualified Nigerians before they were registered. Many Nigerians were roaming about during this registration exercise trying to find a place to register, since they were denied registration in their place of residence.

In spite of these challenges, Nigeria's third national elections since the country returned to democratic rule were held on April 14 and 21, 2011, with widespread election malpractice a fact affirmed by the elected President Umar Musa Yar'adua (late) in his inaugural speech and promised to undertake an electoral reform (Ajayi & Olaniyi, 2007). He admitted openly during his inaugural speech that the general election which brought him to power, was seriously flawed and promised to correct the weakness in the electoral system, and decided to set up the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC), mandated to fashion out how to improve on the quality of future elections. The committee which was headed by Justice Uwais submitted its findings in December, 2008. Among the most significant of the reforms were those to increase INEC's independence and fiscal autonomy. Some of the recommendations of the ERC were implemented and became handy in the 2011 elections under the watch of Professor Attahiru Jega the then INEC Chairman.

The 2011 election conducted by INEC under its chairman Professor Jega was applauded by both local and international observers of being credible and transparent. But the conduct of the 2011 elections was not without some challenges before, during and after the election. These challenges were amongst others the problem associated with the then ruling party, PDP's zoning formula and the rampant cases of underage registration and voting; Ad-hoc INEC officials who resisted the pressure to register minors and allow them vote were threatened and harassed into submission; cases of ballot box snatching in spite of the open/secret system of voting as well as multiple thumb printing despite the availability of Direct Data Capturing Machine that were used electronically; 60% of polling units were unable to receive the necessary materials and also accusation of outright fraud and collusion amongst INEC agents etc. These shortcomings were noted by the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) (Garuba, 2013).

## 2. Public relations

Public Relations is defined variously by different scholars, it means different things to different people. It can be said that Public Relations is a planned cyclic and interactive process which involves action, inaction and reaction from either the organization or the public's and their effect. International Public Relations Association (IPRA) prior to its meeting in Mexico in 1978 as quoted by Keghku (2005) defined PR as 'the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization's leadership, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public's interest. Fatima (2014) posits that PR is concerned with how and what people think about you either as a person or an organization. These images or views are either favourable or unfavourable. Hence, the effort of Public Relations is to change negative impression to positive impression or image.

Fatima (2014) also added by saying public relations is a management function supplying development and maintenance of relations based on benefit and mutual communication between the institution and target communities which play a fundamental role in the success and failure of an institution.

Public Relations programmes are important because they help organizations achieve their goals by creating relationships with strategic publics. "Individual communication programs such as media relations, community relations, or customer relations are successful when they affect the cognitions, attitudes, and behaviours of both publics and members of the organization, that is, the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural relationships among organizations and their publics" Grunig, & White (2002). Thus, effective public relations programs are valuable to organizations because of their contribution to the organization's mission, goals, and bottom line. It can be explained from the various definitions of public relations that

its level of effectiveness at the organizational and individuals levels play major parts in reforming the Nigerian electoral system to its present day situation.

### 3. Electoral reforms

Electoral reforms on the other hand, generally entail an overall change in the practices, ways and systems of the electoral business to improved means of consolidating on the mandates and desires of the voters in a country. This normally includes vast improvements in voting procedures, introduction of new technologies, correction of electoral ills such as launching measures against bribery, ballot box/paper snatching and avoiding political conflicts of interests. Electoral reforms avails a country or nation an opportunity to restructure its fallen electoral nuisances and when not properly looked at, leads to high level political unrest far beyond control. In Nigeria, there have often been recorded cases of gross electoral unrest ragging from hard-fought inter-political wars and individual aspirants.

An electoral reform according to International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistant (IDEA) (2012) is a broad term that covers,, among other things, improving the responsiveness of electoral processes to public desires and expectations. Odion (2012) in Nachana'a *et al.*, (2014) says electoral reform describes the process of introducing fair electoral systems where they are not in place, or improving the fairness or effectiveness of existing system. Therefore, electoral reform can be seen as the process of bringing amendments to the electoral process in order to enhance fairness, accountability and integrity in the electoral system by strengthening the existing legal framework. The final resolutions of electoral reforms become binding laws or act. An electoral law is a constituted rule and regulations set to guide the process and conduct of elections. It is in respect of this that Aminu (2008) sees electoral Act/laws as the rules and regulations that guide the conduct of an election. Rendering credence to electoral laws, Oni, Chidozie & Agbude (2013). Stated that;

Electoral law is one of several laws governing all aspects of the electoral process. In other words, Electoral Act/law can be seen as an embodiment of rules and regulations formulated to guide the conduct of the electoral process so as to ensure a level playing ground for all stakeholders in the electoral system.

In Nigeria since the inception of election in the 1950's to date, elections and electoral processes are short of transparency, accountability and fairness. Even with the existence of the electoral act/laws in place governing the conduct of elections which give the electorate the avenue to participate in selecting new leaders or retain old ones. But nowadays, election procedures have been grossly violated. Section 91(2) of the Electoral Act deals with the issue of political party financing and placed on a ceiling of the maximum campaign expenditure to be incurred by political parties in an election cycle; Section 95(2) of the electoral act deals with prohibition of certain conduct during political campaigns. It states that "a political campaign or slogan shall not be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly like to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings". Moreover, Section 99 (1) stipulates that for the purpose of "this Act, the period for campaigning in public by every political party shall commence 90 days before polling day and end 24 hours prior to that day". Section 94 (1) states that "for the purpose of peaceful conduct of political rallies and processions, the Commissioner of Police in each state of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) shall provide adequate security for processions at political rallies in the States and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja". These and many more are guidelines that are encapsulated in the Electoral Act in order to ensure sanity in the electoral process but it is rather unfortunate that only less attention is paid to these guidelines.

Generally, no government can be considered as legitimate if the electoral process is not free, fair, transparent and peaceful. Ogwu (2016) is of the view that, for any government to be legitimate, it has to be devoid of manipulative tendencies

and transparent to all the stakeholders, which the 2010 Electoral Act as amended stand to safeguard. He further stated that;

Nigeria' history of elections indicates that the electoral process had been marred by irregularities such as ballot snatching, stuffing of ballot boxes, electoral violence, and falsification of election results, political corruption, connivance between politicians and electoral bodies to favour a candidate or a political party and so on. These irregularities in the electoral process and the desire to improve on the conduct led to the numerous reforms aimed at changing the electoral process in line with global best practices. The 2010 Electoral Act/law (as amended) represents such electoral reform.

In an effort to turn around the nation of conducting elections in Nigeria, immediately Umaru Musa Yar'adua received his certificate of return as the elected President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, he made a pledge to examine the country's electoral process. He was responding to demands by Nigerians and the international community to strengthen the electoral process to remove the observed shortcomings of the 2007 General Elections. According to Aminu (2008) the calls were many even though several election petitions had been filed and were being expected to be heard and determined by the various Election Petition Tribunals throughout the country. The Electoral Reform Committee, which President Yar'Adua constituted had a six-point term of reference which were to:

- i. Review general elections in Nigeria and identify factors that affect the quality and credibility of the polls and their impact on the democratic process.
- ii. Examine relevant provisions of the 1999 Constitution, the Electoral Act, and other legislations that have a bearing on the electoral process and assess their impact on the quality and credibility of general elections.
- iii. Examine the roles of institutions, agencies and stakeholders in shaping and impacting on the quality and credibility of the electoral process; such institutions include governments, electoral commissions, security agencies, political parties, non-governmental organizations, the media, the public and the international community.
- iv. Examine electoral system relevant to Nigeria's experience and identify best practices that would impact positively on the quality and credibility of the nation's electoral process.
- v. Make general and specific recommendations, including but not limited to constitutional and legislative provisions to ensure:
  - (a) A truly independent electoral commission imbued with administrative and financial autonomy;
  - (b) An electoral process that would enable the conduct of elections to meet acceptable international standards.
  - (c) Legal processes that would ensure that election disputes are concluded before inauguration of newly-elected officials.
  - (d) Mechanism to reduce post election tensions, including the possibility of introducing the concept of proportional representation in the constitution of governments; and
  - (e) Make any other recommendations.

#### **4. The role of public relations in electoral reforms in Nigeria**

For a long period of time in Nigeria, the major issue that characterized the Nigerian political system was the problem of inadequate sensitization and information issued to the public on the best practices of having free and fair elections. This particular problem has for long hindered the effectiveness of achieving public certified peaceful elections. In spite of these challenges, several media organizations, professional bodies and non-profit organizations saw the need to partnership with governments and its major electoral body, INEC to establish an informed society in Nigeria, that may understands the importance of having peaceful pre-election and managing post-election situations. There is no doubt that, with the nature of education and adoption of new communication initiatives, there

has been a better level of understanding amongst Nigerians concerning elections. In this way, public relations has stood as a vital means and tool for shaping the nature of political participation ranging from campaigns, promoting new electoral policies and encouragement of purposeful adoption by the Nigerian masses.

The following are major roles played by public relations in shaping the Nigerian electoral reforms system as noted by Animashaun (2010).

### 5. Composition of election oversight body

One of the foremost issues for reform in Nigeria's electoral system is the composition of the election oversight body. At the heart of this debate is the indisputable fact that the extant process of appointing members of the electoral body both at the federal and state levels does not confer the requisite institutional autonomy on the electoral body. Section 154(1) of the 1999 Constitution vests the powers to appoint the chairman and other members of the Independent National Electoral Commission in the President subject to confirmation of the Senate. At the state level, governors are constitutionally empowered to appoint members of State Independent Electoral Commission subject to confirmation by House of Assembly (Section 198 of 1999 Constitution). Given the underdeveloped nature of political culture in Nigeria, this process cannot guarantee the impartiality of the electoral body as members of the electoral body tend to see themselves more as appointees of the President/Governor.

#### 5.1. Penalty for electoral violence

Violence has remained an enduring character of electoral politics in Nigeria. The tendency to rely on violence as a weapon of electoral competition is aggravated, among others, by two factors. First is the perception of state power by the governing elites as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. The second is the immensity and ubiquity of state power and its exclusive control of the forces of coercion. These two factors have combined to make state power attractive and thus political contest is reduced to warfare. Electoral violence in Nigeria has two major dimensions: violence against political actors (politicians and voters) and violence against election-related institutions (election management bodies and security agencies). These two dimensions manifested in the previous elections in pre-election assassinations, intimidation of political opponents and voters, hijack of election materials as well as organized attack on security personnel and on officials of election management body.

#### 5.2. Media Access

Access to the media is a crucial asset in electoral competition as it affords parties and candidates the opportunity to sell themselves to the electorate. During election periods, state funded media in all democracies have a public service obligation to inform the voting public about election-related issues such as the competing political parties, their candidates, programs of the parties, salient campaign issues and other related matters. In Nigeria, Section 102 of the 2006 Electoral Act requires public media to grant "equal access" to all political parties and candidates. But the reality in Nigeria is that publicly-funded media have grossly failed to give balanced or equitable coverage to parties and candidates. Access to state media whether at the state or federal level has always weighed heavily in favour of the ruling party/government and its candidates.

#### 5.3. Technology – based election (TBE)

The need to discard paper-based election should also be on the reform agenda. In this age of advanced communication technology, human elements in election management should be reduced to a barest minimum. Nigeria's experience with paper-based balloting has produced challenges to election such as the snatching of ballot boxes and alteration of election results. Technology-based election most

especially the use of Electronic Voting Machines will go a long way to arrest some of these electoral crimes. Technology-based elections are not, however, without their own challenges. Among these are the high costs of procuring the needed technology as well as the limitations imposed by the high level of illiteracy, grueling poverty, electricity failure and low ICT prevalence among the general populace.

### 5.4. Timeline for disposing election petition

One of the chief inadequacies of the current electoral laws in Nigeria is the failure of the Electoral Act to prescribe a specific deadline for the conclusion of legal challenges to election results. While Section 141 of the 2006 Electoral Act states that ‘an election petition shall be presented within thirty (30) days from the date the result of the election is declared’, the Act does not put a ceiling on when such petitions should be concluded by the tribunals and the court. However, with the recent reference on country’s constitution by the national assembly, this problem will seize to exist.

## 6. Review of related literature

It has been argued in the literature on elections, electoral reform and democracy that the effectiveness of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) as institutional organs of electoral governance depends largely, but not exclusively on their autonomy from the government Ogwu, (2016). However, electoral fraud continues to characterize the management of elections in emerging democracies, producing large-scale protest and violence recently in Iran, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Fraud also threatens citizen perceptions of government legitimacy, making it less likely that people think it is worth their time to turn out and vote in the future. Gyekeye-Jando (2013) states that, due to lack of clarity on the causal links between elections and violence, policy makers may not have the information they need to ensure that elections help solve rather than instigate conflict. This information is vital because post hoc solutions to electoral violence (power-sharing, for example) have not proven fruitful and, in many cases, have been destabilizing. This is very important in order to ensure the proper conduct of elections in the first instance (Long 2010). Long (2010) cited in Gyekeye-Jandoh (2013) suggests that:

The international community should re-focus on the important institutional components that are required for free and fair electoral processes, including the creation and maintenance of independent electoral commissions. Due to the fact that “all parties to an election may have incentives to cheat- especially when polling reveals that races are close -meaningful independent and robust commissions serve as important third party guarantors that alleviate credibility problems between parties otherwise willing to resolve their disputes through extralegal means. Without this check, the uncertainty of outcomes in the shadow of elections makes all sides more likely to rig the process and spark violence” (Long 2010).

Several instances or aspects of electoral reform abound in the literature. A significant aspect of electoral reform is the nature and structure of the institutions engaged in the management of elections or in delivering electoral services. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA 2012), these reforms “may enhance the independence of the EMB for example, the creation of independent model EMBs in countries such as Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Romania and South Africa. Electoral responsibilities may be reassigned amongst existing and/or new bodies to promote better service delivery as in New Zealand, Sweden, and the U.K. In some cases, such as in Sweden, the suggestions for reform of electoral management were initiated by the EMB itself. According IIDEA (2012) in others, as in New Zealand and the U.K., the reforms of electoral management were initiated by the government. Pressure from local civil

society or international groups may also instigate reform of electoral management arrangements, as in Georgia and Liberia”.

### 7. Yar'Adua's electoral reform initiative

The civilian administration of President Umar Yar'Adua was hit with a severe legitimacy crisis after its inauguration in May 2007. The primary cause of the crisis was the flawed process that gave birth to the regime. Both the nomination process and the actual election that produced the regime were far from being credible. Indeed, at the time of his inauguration, many Nigerians had lost faith in the electoral process. This was aggravated by the worsening material conditions of the citizenry (which many believed was a consequence of the anti-people policies of his predecessor) which had left many people disillusioned about the promises of democratic rule.

This crisis apparently unsettled the government resulting in a major delay in the appointment of ministers and other senior administration officials. President Yar'Adua chose to contain this crisis in two ways which he unveiled in his inauguration speech. These are: the formation of a government of National Unity and Commitment to the reform of the electoral system. While the first instrument (National Unity Government) did not elicit any significant public support even as major opposition parties distanced themselves from the coalition arrangement, the reform of the electoral process won wide applause for the president across the polity. Animashaun (2008) observed that, the president was commended not only for admitting that the election that produced his presidency was fraught with irregularities, but also for having the courage to initiate the process of reform. President Yar'Adua made good of his promise of reforming Nigeria's electoral system with the inauguration of a 22-member Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) in August 2007. The Committee, which had former Nigeria's Chief Justice, Muhammadu LawalUwais as Chair, submitted its final report to the government on December 12, 2008.

The Committee in its report made some recommendations which are capable of sanitizing Nigeria's electoral process. They included:

- i. The introduction of independent candidacy.
- ii. Introduction of proportional representation.
- iii. Appointment of INEC chairman by the National Judicial Council subject to senate ratification.
- iv. The resolution of election petitions within a timeline of 6 months-4 months at the tribunals and 2 months at the appeal court.
- v. The non-assumption of office by the candidate declared as winner until the petition challenging his/her victory is finally decided and
- vi. The imposition of a 10-year ban, from elective office, on any politician convicted of election malpractices.

These recommendations received wide spread applause for the Uwais panel as it was widely believed that if the Yar'Adua presidency could muster the political will to implement the recommendations; the quality of the election process in Nigeria would be greatly improved. However, the government later rejected the recommendation of the panel that the president should no longer appoint the chairman and members of INEC. It also rejected the recommendation that election petition should be concluded before winners are sworn in. In what many saw as an assault on the federal framework of the Nigerian state, the Government White Paper also contained a recommendation that seeks to abrogate the State Independent Electoral commissions (SIECs) thereby making INEC the only electoral agency in the federation. The Government White Paper on the Uwais panel report called into question the commitment of the Yar'Adua administration to reform Nigeria's election process. Indeed, one can safely argue that the Yar'Adua presidency merely settled for electoral reform as an instrument of regime survival in the face of the legitimacy crisis that plagued the new administration at its inauguration. This tragic turn of events lends credence to the position held by



some observers who had argued that having bountifully reaped from the massively flawed 2007 polls, the late President Yar'Adua could not be genuinely interested in reforming Nigeria's electoral system.

What the foregoing brings out in hold relief is that the Nigerian governing elite do not have abiding faith in representative democracy and its consolidation. They will at every opportunity seek to subvert the democratic process to further personal and group interests. This then thrusts a huge responsibility on the civil society to step up to the plate in defence of democracy. Aminu (2008) asserts that having played an invaluable role in the process the led to the restoration of democratic governance in 1999, the active engagement of the non state sector remains crucial in the post-transition period to check the power of the new democratic regime, demand accountability from its leadership and inspire a strong sense of citizenship among the populace. In this redemption mission, as noted by Animashaun (2008) civil society institutions which include the media, labour, student movement, professional groups and faith-based organizations will need to reclaim the reform initiative from the government, strategize on how to put the reform process back on track and then mobilize the masses for their support. This represents the only sure path to credible electoral reform and the gains therefore are certainly heavier and more enduring than any gains from the guarded reform project of the state. It will, however, be naive to think that this reform path will not be dotted with challenges.

Another obstacle that may dot the reform path is that of funding for sustained civil society intervention. Civil groups in Nigeria heavily depend on foreign funding. Civil society groups now operate within a difficult funding environment as a result of the current global economic recession even as the donor community is reviewing its funding priorities and setting new eligibility rules for accessing grants (Animashaun, 2008). However, in spite of these formidable obstacles, there are high prospects for credible electoral reform in Nigeria. The depth of commitment deployed to the reform efforts both by the government and the people will determine the level of legitimization that will be accorded the reform process. But while Nigerians have always expressed a desire for a truly democratic policy built on credible electoral regime, the governing elite has failed to demonstrate the requisite political will to achieve this goal. (Ugoh, 2004). In a related development, Iwu (2008) in Idike (2014) thus argues that:

All Nigerians, need reforms of the mind and attitude to elections. In this dimension, this paper opines that it is the political class that has a more critical need of the reforms of the mind and attitude to elections. Once the political class reforms their collective attitude that promotes violence and impunity in elections, the rest of the citizens would have logically reformed their resultant apathetic attitude.

In view of the foregoing, Kurfi (2003) concludes that, apart from conforming to the principle of federalism, these reforms should provide some antidote against electoral manipulation by various political players as well as by the different tiers of government.

### 8. Buhari's electoral reforms

Following the lapses that marred the conduct of previous elections particularly those of the 2011 and the recently held 2015 general elections which brought forth President Muhammadu Buhari into power as the president of Nigeria under the watch of the then chairman of INEC Prof. AttahiruJega, Buhari just as Yar'Adua pledged to look into the conduct of elections in Nigeria. It was in the light of this that, he appointed a former Nigerian senate president, Ken Nnamani to head the committee which he inaugurated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2016. The committee just as any other one is saddled with the responsibility of correcting the ills and anomalies hindering the effective conduct of future elections in Nigeria.

### 9. Review of empirical studies

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This section of the paper is mainly concerned with a review of works that are relevant to the paper. Ogwu (2016) carried out a research on 'Electoral Reforms and Democratic Stability in Nigeria', with the objective to ascertain the relevance of electoral reforms on the Nigerian political scenario.

It was found in the study that, electoral reform in Nigeria is not a new development, hence, changes are meant to offset identified problems. It was also found that, electoral reforms are deliberate attempts made by government to correct identified weaknesses, irregularities or illegalities in the electoral process. It stated also that, an election that produces widely disputed result could itself lead to post-election violence stressing that, violence associated with elections, therefore, poses serious threat to stable democratic development in Nigeria.

The study revealed also that, periodic elections are key factors in entrenching a stable democratic policy, hence, the outcome of election is a means, not an end itself.

Based on these findings, it was concluded that, elections as the bulwark of the democratic process engender stability. The preponderance of electoral malaise in Nigeria's as it leads to violence, apathy and insecurity does not augur well for the much needed national development.

Another study that finds relevance to the present is that of Ngwoke (2010) on 'The Impact of Public Relations in Nigerian Political Parties' Campaign Programme in the South East of Nigeria'. The objectives of the study were to: (i) Evaluate the need for an effective public relations in political parties' campaign programme and (ii) To find out the implications of not employing public relations strategies in political parties' campaign. The study adopted survey as its design with questionnaire as its research instrument.

It was observed in the study that political parties use the media as a vehicle for conveying public relations functions during electioneering campaigns, they are, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, internet and billboard. Again, the study discovered that the impact of public relations on political parties' campaign was positive and excellent.

Result also showed that, the cost of public relations activities during electioneering campaign is worth the benefit generated. And, the effect of not using public relations during electioneering campaign include, failure at poll, poor image of the party and her candidate, rumour mongering and had perception of the party and candidate, lack of mutual understanding and crises.

The study concluded that, the political parties' electioneering campaign is meaningless, unless and until, public relations strategies are adequately employed. This is because; it was observed that if public relations strategies are applied during electioneering campaigns, it enhances the chances of electoral victory.

In another study conducted by Oni, Chidozie & Agbude (2013) on 'Electoral Politics in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria's Democratic Governance'. They revealed that, it is how security officers in Nigeria perform their roles of electoral security that needs attention and not the issue of whether these roles are being executed.

They also found that, effective collaboration among the various security agencies with the INEC in the country, and the way they manage confidential information and security reports is critical to election success in Nigeria. Their study concluded that any electoral reform in Nigeria that excludes reformation of the security agencies is an incomplete exercise.

The works revealed above and their themes are found related to the present study and that is why they have been deemed worthy for review in this paper.

### 10. Conclusion and recommendations

There are several benefits attached to the process of electoral reforms in Nigeria, hence this gives the government, the opportunity to revamp its electoral policies through campaigns, introduction of new technologies, voting and more importantly, the nature of conducting elections bearing in mind that, poorly

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adopted electoral policies normally leads to the outbreak of crisis from aggrieved parties.

The dissemination of information to citizens of Nigeria on government's decision to reform its electoral policy is sacrosanct to the growth of the nation's democracy, in this way well informed and experienced noble men of great repute will ease effectiveness in harnessing electoral reforms in Nigeria, especially as their expertise would bear positively on the Nigerian electoral reform policy.

Based on the discussions of electoral reforms to Nigeria's political development, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The judicial and legislative arms of government should consider it necessary in adopting the use of electronic voting and other technologies, hence this will decrease the level of electoral malpractices in the country.
- ii. Government at all levels should consider periodic electoral reforms as a panacea for development, as such; they should ensure that only people with credibility are charged with the mandate of presiding over Electoral Reform Committees (ERC).
- iii. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on its part should be granted independent that will lead it to the conduct of elections in ways they think will impact on the result of elections in country.
- iv. Politicians should be warned to desist from instigating crisis among fellow party men, the electoral body and the electorates, hence that has fared well for the country's politics.
- v. Finally, security operatives in the country should be empowered with the needed capacity to tame the level of conflicts that escalate during electoral events in the country.

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