

Criminality and election outcomes in Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Barnabas Suleiman
banystef@gmail.com
Covenant University, Ota Ogun
State, Nigeria.

This study explores democratic practice in Nigeria's Fourth Republic in the light of globally prescribed and acceptable norms, tenets and values of democracy as a form of government. The study was conducted in Nigeria and adopted a multistage sampling technique to administer questionnaire to 700 delegates across the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria's 36 States. The results and findings show that Nigeria's democracy is plagued with massive electoral fraud, including intimidation, disenfranchisement of eligible contestants and voters from participating in the democratic process, corruption of the election process, scam, and fraudulent declaration of winners of elections. The implications of such democratic deceit in Nigeria's democracy includes voter apathy resulting from lack of confidence in the democratic process and outcome, violence and political instability and the nonparticipation of qualified and honest citizens in the politics of Nigeria. Consequently, leaders that emerge from Nigeria's democratic politics are not always the choice of the people, which explains why they are not accountable to the people as well as why there is deficit of public trust in Nigeria's democratic system.

KEY WORDS: Election. Election fraud. Democracy. Criminality. Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the myriad of challenges associated with democratic practice (AKE, 2001; SIGNER, 2009), democracy is generally considered to be the best form of government that guarantees collective progress for the people (HELD, 2006; ACHEBE, 2012). This is because, democratic government gives the people the opportunity to elect those who would represent or lead them at the political scene. However, the democratic experiences of some nations have debunked the generally held idea that democracy is the government of the people as democracy has increasingly become associated with vices that undermine democratic norms, values and principles. Leight, Pande and Ralston (2016) note that democracy in both developed and developing countries is threatened by vote-buying; Signer (2009) identified demagoguery as a problem of democracy across the world; Held (2006) emphasized the role of despotic power in undermining democracy; Kirkpatrick (1982) identified dictatorship by democratically elected leaders as a major problem of democracy; and Gberevbie (2014) emphasized the failure of democracies because of weakened democratic institutions in some so called democratic States.

Democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is bedeviled with incidences of criminality ranging from allegations and provable indictments of abuse of power and the use of the military and thugs by politicians to rigging of elections to subvert the choices of the masses (KOFAMATA, 2007; BAKARE, 2013).

DEMOCRATIC NORM FOR ELECTIONS

The Copenhagen document of 1990 articulates international standards for democratic elections (HALL; WANG, 2008) and they include: regular and periodical elections; guaranteed universal and equal suffrage; respect for the rights of citizens to seek political office; respect for the right to establish political parties and ensure that the parties can compete on the basis of equal treatment before the law; ensure that political campaigning can be conducted in a free and fair atmosphere without administrative action, violence, intimidation, or fear of retribution against candidates, parties or voters; ensure unimpeded access to the media on a nondiscriminatory basis; ensure that votes are cast by secret ballot, and are counted and reported honestly, with the results made public; ensure that candidates who win the necessary votes to be elected are duly installed and are permitted to remain in office until their terms expire.

The above standards for credible democratic elections have continued to evade Nigeria because of the antidemocratic postures and attitudes of Nigerian politicians who seldom go into politics for the purpose of selfless service of the people (GBEREVBIE, 2014; BABANAWA 2013; AKE, 1993). And because Nigerian politicians see politics as business, and engage in political affairs as means of enriching themselves (OFEIMUN, 2010), they circumvent the acceptable norms of democratic politics to win elections at all cost (ARIYE et al. 2012).

Bakare (2013) has argued that Nigerian politicians do know for sure that they will fail at the polls if they ever allowed for free and fair elections. Thus, they do not let their electoral fortunes to be determined by the people through free and fair elections. The average Nigerian politician engages in all forms of electoral fraud to achieve election success.

CRIMINALITY

The credence attributed to representative democracy is derived from popular elections (COX, 1997). This highlights the importance of elections in democracy, and makes the credibility of elections essential to the survival, growth and credibility of democracy wherever they exist as a form of government. Importantly, the credibility of elections is measured not just by the existence of electoral laws but by the willingness, on the part of the political actors or electorates, to understand and adhere to the laws and practices that govern such democratic elections. Violations of the democratic norms, values and principles as stipulated by the Nigerian constitution, the electoral acts and other relevant laws in the quest to 'win' elections at all cost is what has been termed criminality in this discourse.

Although all democracies have their flaws in the context of elections (FUND, 2008), the nature and extent of violations of electoral laws and election fraud vary from country to country (DOSANTO, 2008).

It is important to identify the types of criminality that are being perpetrated by political stakeholders in Nigeria, and to determine the extent to which each of these criminal acts determine or influence election outcomes in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although Nigeria currently practices democracy as a form of government, democratic politics in Nigeria has been said to be enmeshed in electoral fraud and violence, particularly in the Fourth Republic, beginning from 1999 to date (NWTU, 2004; OFEIMUM, 2010). Whereas the incidences of political corruption and election fraud have both been identified by Election Tribunal and Court judgments, not much have been determined to ascertain the contributory roles of the various acts of criminality in election outcomes in the democratic politics of Nigeria.

Thus, this paper presents what data says about the nature of criminality in Nigeria's democracy and their influence on Nigeria's election outcomes, with particular reference to primary elections.

STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The study used quantitative data by means of survey questionnaire. Self-administered questionnaire was administered to delegates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC), the two main political parties in Nigeria. The multistage sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study. In the first instance, the population was delineated by the six geopolitical zones that make up Nigeria. Through the use of simple random technique, six states, one state from each zone, were selected for the study. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the central seat of government, was also added for the study.

Seven hundred (700) delegates, made up of 100 delegates each per State and the FCT, participated in the quantitative aspect of study that involves the

distribution of self-administered questionnaires. However, six hundred and fifty-eight questionnaires were filled and returned.

Figure 1 - Map of Nigeria showing the six geo-political zones



As shown in Figure 1, Nigeria is structured into six (6) geopolitical zones that include North-West Zone, North-East Zone, North-Central Zone, South-West Zone, South-South Zone and South-East Zone. Each of the 36 States in Nigeria produces three (senators) while the Federal Capital Territory produces one (1) senator. Thus, there are one hundred and nine (109) senators in Nigeria. However, in the Federal House of Representatives, there are three hundred and sixty members (360). This brings the total number of members of the National Assembly to four hundred and sixty-nine (469). Besides, there are seven hundred and seventy-four (774) local governments in Nigeria.

The six States that were randomly selected for this study are Adamawa, Edo, Enugu, Kaduna, Kogi and Ondo, plus the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Table 1- Geopolitical Zones and the Randomly Selected State from Each Zone

GEOPOLITICAL ZONES	STATES ACCORDING TO POLITICAL ZONES	RANDOMLY SELECTED STATES
North-Central	Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau	Kogi
North-East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe	Adamawa
North-West	Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kaduna, Sokoto	Kaduna
South-East	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo	Enugu
South-South	Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers	Edo
South-West	Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Oyo	Ondo

Source: Researcher's compilation

Table 2 - Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	472	72
Female	186	28
Total	658	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 3 - Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
Below 30	87	13
30-39	195	30
40-49	208	32
50-59	112	17
60 and Above	53	8
Total	655	100
No Response	3	
TOTAL	658	

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 4 - Distribution of Respondents by Religion

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Christianity	392	61
Islam	233	36
Others	18	3
Total	643	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 4: shows that 61% of the respondents were Christians, 36% were Muslims, making the two religions constituting 96% of the all respondents. Again, the point is that the two religions which teach against any form of cheating or malpractices produce members as politicians. More importantly, the information from responses of research participants and literature suggest that religion plays little or no role in restraining Nigerian politicians from engaging in undemocratic political behaviour. If anything, religion serves as a tool of demagoguery to deceive gullible voters.

Table 5 - Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Single	148	23
Married	436	68
Separated/ Divorced/ Widowed	57	9

Total	641	100
--------------	-----	-----

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 5 shows that 68% of the respondents were married, 23% were single, and 9% were either separated, divorced or widowed. Thus, the marital statuses of the respondents were majorly married and single. From the marriage statuses of the respondents, it can be deduced that the Nigerian political environment attaches significance to marriage, perhaps as a demonstration of responsibility on the part of political participants.

Table 6 - Distribution of Respondents by Educational Background

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Primary/ Secondary	184	30
Tertiary	438	70
Total	622	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 6 reveals the educational level of the respondents. 70% of the respondents possess tertiary educational qualification and 30% have either primary or secondary educational qualification. What is instructive here is that most of the respondents are highly educated. But how does the level of education of the respondents help the sanctity of democratic practice in Nigeria? This question will be addressed by relevant data in the relevant sections of this study. This is even more interesting because there are no regulations on educational level as requirements for participating in primary elections, as the case is with general elections.

Table 7 - Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Unemployed/ Retired	107	16
Self Employed	354	55
Government Services	165	26
Private Services	17	3
Total	643	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 7 shows that 55% of the respondents were self-employed; 16% were either unemployed or retired; 26% were in government organizations and 3% were engaged by private organizations.

Table 8 - Distribution of Respondents by Political Party

	Frequency	Percent (%)
PDP	320	49
APC	338	51
Total	658	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

As shown in Table 8, the party memberships of the respondents are 49% for the Peoples Democratic Party and 51% for the All Progressives Congress (APC). This represents a fair share of the representation of the two main political parties used for this study.

Table 9, labeled “Coefficients” below, tells the extent to which each of the independent variables included in the model contributed to the prediction of the dependent variable (election Outcomes/Victory). This can be deduced from the column labelled Beta under Standardised Coefficients. Because the goal is to compare the contribution of each independent variable, the beta values will be used. ‘Standardized’ means that these values for each of the different variables have been converted to the same scale so that they can be compared.

In this case the largest beta coefficient is .174, which is for Votes influenced by a combination of Inducement and threats. This means that this variable makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable, when the variance explained by all other variables in the model is controlled for. The Beta value for voting process influenced by intimidation/ fraud was the next strongest (.130). Conversely, Votes influenced by ethnic sentiments and religious sentiments had the least Beta values (0.65 and 0.67 respectively), indicating that they made least of contributions.

Table 9 - Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error
1 (Constant)	.732	.166		4.395	.000
Votes influenced by money	.085	.053	.074	1.602	.110
Votes influenced by	.097	.053	.082	1.841	.066

leaders/ mentors					
Votes influenced by a combination of Inducement and threats	.178	.050	.174	3.582	.000
Voting process influenced by intimidation/ fraud	.133	.048	.130	2.775	.006
Votes influenced by religious sentiments	.068	.045	.067	1.526	.128
Votes influenced by ethnic sentiments	.077	.055	.065	1.415	.158
Use of security agencies to intimidate delegates	.107	.044	.098	2.452	.014

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The most significant finding of this study is that elections in Nigeria do not reflect the norms of democracy but reflect the realities of manipulations of the electoral process and outcome to favour those who subscribe to anti-democratic tendencies such as intimidation, vote buying, violence and the use of security to undermine the will of the people.

The implication of this result shows that election outcomes, particularly for primary elections, are the result of a combination of acts of demagoguery. However, the degree of influence is highest in cases where inducements or bribes were complemented by violence or threats to voters or where violence/threats to voters were complemented by inducements.

Also, the study highlights the fact that religion and ethnicity are not as crucial in determining who wins or loses election in Nigeria. As important as religion and ethnicity are in analyzing every aspect Nigeria, they do not, in the final analysis, determine the votes of candidates.

The result and findings of this study further explains why the “power of incumbency” is strongest in determining who wins elections in Nigeria. Thus, because the candidate(s) in power has (have) access to more resources and the paraphernalia of office, they tend to have more of the means to engaging in intimidation of opponents and voters, use of the security agencies to undermine democratic norms, buy votes, coerce and undermine voters and election officers

to do their biddings, and enforce their will against the will of the majority (people).

Finally, the study shows what accounts for the non-participation of Nigerians of good character who may be willing to engage in governance through electoral contest but shy away from doing so. The high financial cost of participating in democracy in Nigeria coupled with the crude demagoguery manifesting through intimidation, violence, assassinations, bribery, and all sorts of manipulations associated with the Nigerian Democracy have made democracy a risky venture only suitable for Machiavellian politicians who are willing to sacrifice decency and virtue in the search for political power. This is so much the case because political power is the easiest and surest means of becoming wealthy and influential in Nigeria (ANIMASAWUN, 2013; BABANAWA, 2013; OFEMUN, 2010; SULEIMAN, 2010; SIMBINE, 2004).

CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to examine whether the practice of democracy in Nigeria reflected internationally acceptable democratic norms. To achieve this goal, the researchers surveyed delegates for the 2015 governorship and presidential primary elections in Nigeria. The result results showed clear contradictions between democratic principle (ideal norm) and democratic practice (real or manifest norm)!

This study has shown that in Nigeria's democracy, the political elites and electorates pay lip service to the principles and values of democracy and consider the antidemocratic practices such as bribery, violence, intimidation of voters and election fraud as part of democratic politics. Consequently, leaders that emerge from Nigeria's democratic politics are not always the choice of the people, which explains why they are not accountable to the people.

Criminalidade e resultados de eleições na Nigéria

RESUMO

Este estudo explora a prática democrática na Quarta República da Nigéria, tendo em conta globalmente prescritas e aceitáveis normas, princípios e valores da democracia como forma de governo. O estudo foi realizado na Nigéria e adotou uma técnica de amostragem de múltiplos estágios para administrar questionário a 700 pessoas nas seis (6) zonas geopolíticas de 36 Estados da Nigéria. Os resultados e conclusões mostram que a democracia da Nigéria é atormentada com fraudes em massa, incluindo intimidação, privação de concorrentes e eleitores de participar no processo democrático, a corrupção do processo eleitoral, scam, e declaração fraudulenta de vencedores de eleições. As implicações de tal engano democrático na democracia da Nigéria, inclui apatia do eleitor resultante da falta de confiança no processo democrático e resultado, violência e instabilidade política e da não participação de cidadãos qualificados e honesta na política da Nigéria. Consequentemente, os líderes que emergem da política democrática da Nigéria não são sempre a escolha do povo, o que explica por que eles não são responsáveis perante as pessoas, bem como porque há déficit de confiança do público no sistema democrático da Nigéria.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Eleições. Fraude nas eleições. Democracia. Criminalidade. Nigéria.

REFERENCES

ABDUL-JELIL, A.G. 'Godfatherism' and Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Violence and Political **Insecurity in Ibadan**. Peace & Conflict Studies Programme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. 2012.

ACHEBE, C. **There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra**. London: Penguin Books 2012.

AKE, C. **Points of Departure**. In O. F. Onege (Ed.), Nigeria: The way forward. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 1993.

AKE, C. **Democracy and Development in Africa**. Lagos: Spectrum Books Limited. 2001.

AKE, C. **A political economy of Africa**. Ibadan: Longman Group Limited. 2008.

ANIMASAWUN. **Godfatherism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The Pyramid of Violence and Political Insecurity in Ibadan, Oyo-State, Nigeria**. 2013. Available from: <<http://www.ifra-nigeria.org/publications/ifra-e-papers/ifra-e-papers-108/article/animasawun-gbemisola-a-2013>>. Accessed: 13/04/15.

ARIYE, E.C.; OGBOMAH, T.O.; EBIPRE, P.; ERIC, D. How President Obasanjo Undermined Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria. **Current Research Journal of Social Sciences** 4(3): 222-227. 2012. Available from: <<http://maxwellsci.com/print/crjss/v4-222-227.pdf>>. Accessed on: 19/04/15.

BABANAWA, U.S. **Nigerian Democracy Most Expensive In The World**. 2013. Available from: <<http://www.channelstv.com/2013/11/04/nigerian-democracy-most-expensive-in-the-world-babanawa/>>. Accessed: 16/04/2015.

BAKARE, T. **Democratic Governance In Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges**. 2013. Available from: <<http://saharareporters.com/2013/05/06/democratic-governance-nigeria-prospects-and-challenges-pastor-tunde-bakare>>. Accessed on: 07/04/2015.

COX, G.W. **Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems**. 1997. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DOSANTO, C.C. **Corruption of the Election Process Under U.S. Federal Law**. In: Alvarez, R.M., Hall, T.E., and Hyde, S.D. (Eds.) **Election Fraud: Detecting and Deterring Electoral Manipulation**. 2008. Washington: The Brookings Institution Press.

GBEREVBIE, D.E. **Democracy, Democratic Institutions and Good Governance in Nigeria.** Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review, OSSREA, Ethiopia. 2014. Volume 30 Issue 1, 133-152.

HALL, T.E.; WANG, T.A. **International Principles for Election Integrity.** In: Alvarez, R.M., Hall, T.E., and Hyde, S.D. (Eds.) Election Fraud: Detecting and Deterring Electoral Manipulation. 2008. Washington: The Brookings Institution Press.

HELD, D. **Models of democracy.** 2006. (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

KIRKPATRICK, J.J. Dictatorships and double standards: Rationalism and reason in politics. 1982. New York: Simon and Schuster.

KOFAMATA, D.A. **The 8 years of Obasanjo's squandered and missed golden opportunities.** 2007, May 19. Retrieved from:
<<http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/dan-azumi-kofarmata/the-8-years-of-obasanjos-squandered-and-missed-golden-opportunities.html>>.

LEIGHT, J.; PANDE, R.; RALSTON, L. **Value for money in purchasing votes? Vote-buying and voter behavior in the laboratory.** 2016. USAID/DCHA/DRG Working Papers Series. Retrieved from: <<http://www.iie.org/en/Programs/USAID-Democracy-Fellows-and-Grants-Program/G-Free-Fair/APS-Williams#APS-Williams>>.

NWATU, D. N. Political Transition and the electoral process: The Nigerian experience. **International Journal of Studies in the Humanities**, 3(1).2004.

OFEIMUM, O. **Taking Nigeria Seriously.** Lagos: Hornbill House of the Arts. 2010.

SIGNER, M. **Demagogue: The fight to save democracy from its worst enemy.** New York: MacMillan. 2009.

SIMBINE, A.T. **Oyo-State: The Emptiness of National Policy Relevance.** in: Isumonah, V.F (ed.), Participatory Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria, Ibadan: Programme on Ethnic and Federal Studies. 2004.

SULEIMAN, B.M. **The political economy of privatization in Nigeria: A case study of the Nigeria Telecommunications Limited (NITEL).** 2010. (Masters dissertation, University of Hull, 2010).

Recebido: 27 fev. 2016.

Aprovado: 30 abr. 2016.

DOI: 10.3895/rbpd.v5n1.4000

Como citar: SULEIMAN, B. Criminality and election outcomes in Nigeria. **R. bras. Planej. Desenv.**, Curitiba, v. 5, n. 1, p. 67-79, jan./abr. 2016. Disponível em: <<https://periodicos.utfpr.edu.br/rbpd>>. Acesso em: XXX.

Correspondência:

Barnabas Suleiman

Department of Sociology, Center Cir, Ota, Nigéria.

Direito autoral: Este artigo está licenciado sob os termos da Licença Creative Commons-Atribuição 4.0 Internacional.

