BVAS and the Credibility of 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract

Electoral fraud has been discovered to be a serious menace and set back to the electoral procedure in Nigeria and particularly in Kogi State. Fraud in election is a serious offence punishable by law. It decreases voters' confidence in election management bodies and thereby leads to political anarchy or electoral crisis. The focus of this article is to examine the use of BVAS and the credibility of election in 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Elections. The specific objectives are to; examine the effect of BVAS in curbing electoral malpractice in 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election, to explore the prospects of BVAS in improving the transparency and credibility of the 2023 Senatorial Election in Kogi State and to identify the challenges associated with the implementation of BVAS in the electoral process in Kogi State. The study adopted Institutional Theory by (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Survey research design was adopted in this study. The population of the study was one local government each from the three Senatorial District of Kogi State which includes; Okehi, Ankpa and Lokoja and sample size of 400 was determined using Taro Yarmane techniques. The study found that the use of BVAS significantly reduces incidents of electoral malpractices in Kogi State 2023 Senatorial Election, the study also found that the use of BVAS has improve the transparency and credibility of the 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election in Kogi State and that Technical challenges, insufficient training of election officials, and inadequate public sensitization are the major challenges associated with the implementation of BVAS in the 2023 Kogi State senatorial election in Kogi State. The study recommended that Bolster enforcement mechanisms to penalize individuals found guilty of electoral malpractice should be enforced, a system of independent auditing for BVAS data to ensure its accuracy and integrity should be introduced and Allocate resources for the development of robust technological infrastructure, particularly in remote or underserved areas.
Keywords: Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), Elections, Credibility, Political Development, Senatorial

Introduction

Globally, electoral fraud has been a major hindrance to the political development and achievement of most countries in the world. Countries across the world have experience one form of electoral malpractice or the other. Electoral irregularities imply an unlawful interference with the process of election which interfere the mandates of the masses. It occurs in different forms and patterns such as manipulation of election results, over voting, underage voting, snatching of ballot box, use of thuggery to intimidate voters and incumbency power to deprived and threat potential opposition parties. Free, fair and credible elections are the core features of every democratic set up whether developed or developing countries. Credible election offers important means of equipping people to hold their leaders responsible and accountable. In Nigeria, election process has not been without litigation as a result of electoral malpractice. This otherwise deprived the achievement and attainment

of sustainability of democratic consolidation to strive. Previous administrations have introduced one electoral reform and the other to proffer solution to these challenges but to no avail as a result of lack of government commitment to implement adequate policy to curb these challenges. However, in 2011, the first Nigerian move in search of a technological solution was the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the 2011 general elections (Golden, Kramon & Ofosu, 2014).

Ologunde, Oladokun, and Akinlabi (2016) assessed the impact of BVAS on the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The study concluded that the use of BVAS helped to reduce incidents of multiple voting, impersonation, and other forms of electoral malpractice. This Technological approach has helped to alleviate the cases of electoral fraud such as the use of card reader, mounting of webcams at polling units and the use of biometric tools, go a long way to reduce malpractices, multiple voting, impersonation, and other forms of electoral malpractice in the 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election during the 2023 Senatorial Election in Kogi State. Kogi State like every other state in Nigeria has been the worst hit of electoral fraud which often resulted to political violence and tension in the State. Borrowing the leave from the word of (Seifu, 2012), this growing culture of violence and impunity has become a common features and characteristics of the democratic process in Kogi State thereby resulting to undemocratic features of government. Thugs are hired to disrupt elections in Kogi State with the intention to commit fraud. However, BVAS marked a significant step forward in fortifying the credibility of election outcomes in Kogi State. Early indicators suggest that BVAS, with its dual approach of biometric authentication and manual verification, has instilled a renewed sense of confidence in the electoral process. For example, the adoption of BVAS in Kogi Central Senatorial Districts helped the current senator Natasha Akpoti Uduaghan to recover her mandates at the court of appeal. The research also found that BVAS effectiveness in accurately verifying voters' identities, thereby mitigating potentially fraudulent activities. This not only enhances the accuracy of voter accreditation but also bolsters the overall integrity of the electoral process. Furthermore, BVAS also maintains a manual verification option, allowing for flexibility in case technical issues arise or in areas where biometric data may not be as reliable. This dual approach ensures that the accreditation process remains robust and accessible to all eligible voters. This technological system also provides real-time data updates to electoral authorities, allowing them to monitor the accreditation process in different polling units and respond promptly to any irregularities. This transparency helps in building trust and confidence in the electoral process.

Despite these accolades and achievements, the adoption of BVAS however have not been without challenges. There has been reports of technical glitches with the BVAS system, which caused delays and frustration for some voters. Despite these challenges, the use of BVAS was generally seen as a positive step towards curbing electoral malpractice in Kogi State, and significant measures to enhance credibility of Election in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Electoral irregularities such as vote buying, rigging, ballot box snatching, underage voting and impersonation has been a significant challenge in the democratic process of Nigeria including Kogi State. Electoral malpractice has been found to deteriorate the democratic procedure and decrease voters' confidence in election management bodies worldwide (Daxecker, Di Salvatore, & Ruggeri, 2019). Manually process of voter accreditation in Kogi State has brought about social unrest such as electoral fraud and violence resulting to irregularities and manipulation of election result (Addo, 2017). Biometric Voter Authentication System (BVAS) was meant to address these challenges and

improve the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. However, the successful implementation of BVAS has been hindered by technical challenges, insufficient training of election officials, and inadequate public sensitization. According to International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) on the use of biometric technology in elections identified some of the challenges associated with the implementation of BVAS, including technical problems with the equipment, insufficient training of election officials, and inadequate public awareness and sensitization (IDEA, 2015).

A study carried out in 2016 revealed that at the very least 60% of the participants interviewed concurred that the introduction of BVAS by the INEC in 2023 State House of Assembly Election improved the credibility of the polls (Ayodele, 2016). Furthermore, the adoption of voter accreditation technology during the 2023 State Assembly election in Kogi State likewise decreased electoral frauds such as stuffing of the ballot box with ballot papers and multiple voting. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the credibility of election in 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

i. What is the effect of the implementation of BVAS in curbing electoral malpractice in 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election?
ii. What are the challenges associated with the implementation of BVAS in the 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine BVAS and the Credibility of 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election. The specific objective area;

i. To ascertain the effectiveness of the implementation of BVAS in curbing electoral malpractice in 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election.
ii. To identify the challenges militating against the effectiveness of BVAS in Kogi State.

Significance of the Study

Empirically, the study will contribute to the existing empirical literature on the use of BVAS in curbing electoral malpractice in Kogi State, Nigeria. It will provide insights into the effectiveness of BVAS in improving the transparency and credibility of the electoral process, and also identify the challenges associated with its implementation. The study will generate empirical evidence that could be used by policymakers, election management bodies, and other stakeholders in designing and implementing effective electoral reforms.

Theoretically, the study will contribute to the theoretical understanding of the use of technology in electoral processes. It will provide insights into the role of BVAS in reducing incidents of electoral malpractice and improving the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. The study will

also explore the prospects and challenges of BVAS in the Nigerian context and generate new knowledge that could be used in future research on electoral technology.

Practically, the study will have practical significance for election management bodies, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in the electoral process in Kogi State, Nigeria. The findings of the study will provide insights into the effectiveness of BVAS in curbing electoral malpractice and identify the challenges associated with its implementation. This information can be used to improve the design and implementation of future electoral reforms and improve the transparency and credibility of the electoral process in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study could also contribute to building public trust in the electoral process and promote the democratic governance of Nigeria.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

BVAS: Biometric Voter and Accreditation System, which is an electronic system that uses biometric data (such as fingerprints or facial recognition) to verify and authenticate the identity of voters before they can cast their votes.

Credibility: Refers to the perceived reliability and legitimacy of the electoral process, including the degree to which the election results reflect the will of the people and are free from manipulation or interference.

Election Management Body: The organization responsible for overseeing the conduct of elections, including the registration of voters, the preparation of ballots, the administration of polling stations, and the counting and tabulation of votes.

Electoral Malpractice: Any fraudulent or illegal activities that occur during the electoral process, including voter intimidation, vote buying, ballot stuffing, rigging, and other forms of electoral misconduct.

INEC: Independent National Electoral Commission. It is responsible for conducting election activities in Nigeria.

Transparency: Refers to the openness and accountability of the electoral process, including the accessibility of information about electoral procedures, results, and decision-making processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptualization of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)
BVAS, which stands for Biometric Voter Accreditation System, is a technology used to verify the identity of voters using their biometric information such as fingerprints, facial recognition, or iris scans. BVAS is used to prevent electoral fraud by ensuring that only eligible voters are allowed to vote. In the study of Odinakalu (2021), BVAS technology combines voter enrollment, voter accreditation, and result interface capabilities in one device, Odinakalu maintains that that the BVAS technology, "theoretically should eliminate the gaps that enable analogue manipulation of numbers in election. The voter accreditation capability combines fingerprint, Iris and facial recognition supposedly to eliminate guesswork in voter identification and accreditation." Furthermore, BVAS is used to transmit a snapshot of the result sheet at polling units to INEC portal in real time for the

public to see, as they logged in to the portal, (Oyemike 2023). In preparing for the 2023 general elections the demand for the application of BVAS from the civil societies, stakeholders and the Nigerian voters heightened, (Okonji 2023).

According to Bayode (2017), who concentrated on using voter accreditation technology to avoid electoral fraud, examined the digital identity in protecting the electronic voter accreditation system in regards to fraud prevention, concluding that the technology provided possibly the very best solution in shaping up the electoral arena in Nigeria. In summary, BVAS technology is considered to be a solution to the following election malpractices:

• Manipulation of number of accredited voters at the voting unit

• Manipulation of votes at the polling unit

• Collation of misinterpreted or false results

• Mutilation of results

• Computational error

• Manipulation or manufacturing of results sheets

• Doctoring of result sheets

• Obtaining statement and result involuntarily

• Making unauthorized and declaration while collation is still in progress

• Inadequate keeping of proper records

Concept of Election

Elections all over the world is the only legitimate and democratic way of occupying the elected offices. It has been regarded as the most important and reliable strength of democracy. This perhaps may be due to the fact that election is the foundation of every democratic pursuit, which is expected to confer legitimacy on elected representative and provides opportunities for citizens to determine who and which political party can govern on their behalf. Nigerian is one among the nations of the world that values election, as a constitutional democracy, the country placed a very high premium on the conduct of her elections.

Election as a concept has been well presented by several authorities including Yiaga Africa (2022) and Oyeni (2018). On the subject, Yiaga Africa (2022) described it as the process where people select their preferred candidates to represent their interest in government and it constitutes the bedrock upon which the entire democratic system is built. In the same vein, Ayeni (2018) sees it as the process of voting that allows the people in a given country to vote for leaders to represent their interests for a period of time and in line with the law. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1999) in Section 14 (2a) of her constitution affirmed that sovereignty belongs to the people, implying that the people of Nigeria are given the power and authority to make demand of the government through electoral processes.

This implies that election is an important instrument or tool for achieving sustainable democracy. It was on this note that several global declarations on election were made, namely: the 1984 Human Right Declarations and the Geneva Human Right declaration (2021) that **"The will of the people shall be basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by equal suffrage and shall be held by secret votes or by equivalent free voting procedures".**

Democratic Development
The term "Democratic Development" is a democratic having a sustained improvement in the electoral process, government functions, political participation, and accountability as well as in civil liberties of the citizens of a country (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021). According to Moses & Ugu (2019), the various conceptions of development include economic growth, increased welfare and human development, modernization, elimination of dependency, dialectical transformation and capacity building. To the United Nations (2021), development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from.

In its strong sense, democratic development may imply improvement in the totality of the individual in his/her economic, political, psychological, social and cultural relations among others. Reasoning along similar line, Okeke and Idike (2016), posits that democratic development implies the elimination of inter-ethnic bitterness and antagonisms in the inter-group and interpersonal relationships in nation-state.

Credibility and Integrity of Election
Integrity of Election is a process whereby all the essential and necessary process, step taken before, during and after elections are seen to be fair, transparent and trustworthy (Amuwo, 2019). It is a situation where all electoral processes are devoid irregularities or any form of partisan political manipulations that could create doubt and suspicion in the minds of the people about the credibility outcome or result of an election. In another related view, Electoral integrity is the key components of democratic governance. When people have expressed their popular will (through election of candidates of their choice) and such "will" is upheld by the electoral body without upturning or manipulating against the will of the people, then it is electoral integrity.

The credibility or otherwise of an election is therefore dependent on the integrity of the electoral process. It is observed that the reliability and truthfulness of the Nigerian voting structures particularly Kogi state has been severally undermined in both procedural management and administration which the conduct of free, fair and credible elections to the background. Some identified factors include; the non-availability or lack of reliable births and deaths data base on non-adherence to a culture of integrity, poor technological and technical stance and the existence of fundamental weakness in the Nigerian constitutional and electoral set up.

Osibanjo (2010) affirming the aforementioned view that if any of the political institutions is bad, it will rub and romancing on others, explaining that until all institutions were credible and reliable, no free and fair election should be expected. It is essential to notes, that election predates government formation. Thus, if the process of election is not proper or faulty, election conducted through such process will be faulty and the government elected from such election will be faulty. The cabal in government in Kogi State whose activities constitute great hindrance to electioneering and good governance.

Concept of Electoral Malpractice
Electoral malpractice refers to the unethical conduct of electoral process by the official, or by the professional bodies of the Independent National Electoral Commission. Ebirim (2013), affirmed that electoral malpractice is a process by which the rule and regulations that govern the conduct of

election are manipulated to favour specific interests. This can be done through numerous tactics and strategies including outright rigging and falsification of electoral result. Beyond this and however, it is worthy to note that, electoral malpractice can happen before, after and during election. Furthermore, Bamisaye & Awofeso (2011) defines electoral malpractices as the reflect determination of politicians, political actors and political parties to capture power by all means and at all cost. For him, political actors are involved in all manner of electoral fraud such as snatching of ballot box, rigging of elections and the intimidation of voters in order to overturn the electoral process.

Election rigging in the study of Nwabueze (2005 cited in Ibrahim, 2009) is the electoral manipulations which are palpable illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent or sinister motive to influence an election in favour of a candidate (s) by way such as illegal voting, bribery, treating and undue influence, intimidation and other form of force exerted on the electorates, falsification of results, fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as the winner (without altering the recorded results).

Electoral malpractice is an obstacle or hindrance to the sustenance and achievement of a stable constitutional democracy in Nigeria. The thugs and hooligans that are hired for electoral malpractice can divert their weapons to other instigate other crimes such as arm robbery, which has resulted in kidnapping, terrorism and banditry and thereby disrupting the peace and tranquility of the country.

Levels of Malpractice in Electoral Process in Nigeria
The various levels of malpractice in the electoral process in Nigeria includes:

i. **Electoral Malpractice at the Party Level**: It is paramount to acknowledge that political democracy starts at the party level. It is strongly conceived that political parties are a key feature of any modern democracy. They are the roadmap through which citizens come together freely to campaign for public office and win seats in a legislative and executive body, to express their aspiration and needs, and define their intention for their society. At this stage, the various processes of electoral integrity and credibility begin. The possession of a free, fair and credible election depends on the extent of existence of internal democracy at the party level. Political godfatherism has obstructed and deteriorate internal democracy. At the party level, political godfathers use their ill-gotten wealth to tempt, threaten and manipulate members of the party executives and compel or impose unpopular candidates. For example, the proposal by the then President Goodluck Jonathan move to allow party caucuses to produce delegates at conventions according to Akeredolu (2010) is evidence that internal democracy at the party level have been sink, and that is the beginning of election rigging and corruption at the party level.

ii. **Electoral Malpractice at the Governmental Level:** If your hands are not clean, you lose moral authority and the right and conscience to do justice. Public office is a confident, trust and perfidy of that trust in any way or manner makes the public office-holder a traitor to the course and interest of the people. According to Obasanjo, (2014) the phobia of most people who care dearly for Nigeria, however, is that we are going fast down the precipice. Corruption at this level is the most harmful and destructive factor in the electoral process in Nigeria. Official corruption is a serious offence in Nigeria under the criminal code of conduct. As Jega (2007), reaffirmed that, the more public and elected officials displace or demonstrate irresponsibility, seem unaccountable and insensitive to popular demands and aspirations, and the more poorly they conduct

themselves in governance and state-craft, the greater the threats to democratic strengthening and sustainability.

iii. **Malpractice at the Electorate Level:** According to Obasanjo (1999), corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most activities. Elections at the electorate level are more dangerous and harmful in the democratic process of any society. The assumption about electoral process and integrity in Nigeria is that election period is always seen by the electorates as the time and opportunity for the masses to "obtain their booties" from the politicians. As a result, election period becomes a time when many of the Nigerian masses, especially the youth will begin to scramble for money from members of the political class. Because of this singular attitude that the masses must get their own "share" of the national cake from the politicians, the mindset of average Nigerian is not geared towards political ideology of development but rather on what gain or share he/she would get from the political class to deliver his polling units, constituency, ward, or local government unit. Thus, encouraging massive political dispute, rigging, snatching of ballot boxes, underage voting and multiple voting etc. are perpetuated by the electorates to satisfy the interest one political party/politician or the other thereby "selling and betraying" the constituency, ward or community.

Effect of BVAS in curbing Electoral Malpractice is 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election

BVAS, which stands for Biometric Voter Accreditation System, is a technology used to verify the identity of voters using their biometric information such as fingerprints, facial recognition, or iris scans. The system is used to prevent electoral malpractice by ensuring that only eligible voters are allowed to vote. In the 2023 Senatorial Election in Kogi State, BVAS was deployed to curb electoral malpractice. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) used the BVAS to authenticate voters before they were allowed to cast their votes. The system was used in conjunction with the Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) to ensure that only eligible voters were allowed to vote. According to reports, the use of BVAS helped to reduce incidents of multiple voting, impersonation, and other forms of electoral malpractice in the Kogi State Senatorial Election. The system also helped to improve the transparency and credibility of the election.

However, there were also reports of technical glitches with the BVAS system, which caused delays and frustration for some voters. Despite these challenges, the use of BVAS was generally seen as a positive step towards curbing electoral malpractice in Kogi State, and it is likely that the system will be used in future elections in Nigeria. technology on electoral integrity found that biometric voter verification systems, including BVAS, can improve the accuracy and efficiency of voter verification and reduce the risk of impersonation and multiple voting (IFES, 2016). Another study by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) on the use of biometric technology in elections identified some of the challenges associated with the implementation of BVAS, including technical problems with the equipment, insufficient training of election officials, and inadequate public awareness and sensitization (IDEA, 2015). Overall, while BVAS and other biometric technologies have been shown to be effective in reducing incidents of electoral fraud and improving the credibility of elections, their success depends on effective implementation and addressing the challenges associated with their use.

Challenges Associated with the Implementation of BVAS in Kogi State

In the quest to implement the use of BVAS to improve the credibility of 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election several challenges were faced and these are as follows:

Technological Infrastructure: One challenge is the inadequate technological infrastructure required for the successful implementation of BVAS, such as power supply and internet connectivity (Amosu et al., 2020). This can be particularly relevant to Kogi State, as it may face similar infrastructure limitations in certain areas, potentially impacting the effectiveness and reliability of BVAS implementation.

Voter Education: Insufficient voter education about BVAS can pose a challenge. Voters need to be familiarized with the system to ensure its proper use during elections (Adekunle et al., 2018). In Kogi State, a comprehensive voter education program may be necessary to ensure that voters understand how to interact with the BVAS and the importance of its use in curbing electoral malpractice.

Resistance to Change: Resistance from stakeholders, including political actors, electoral officials, and the public, can hinder the successful implementation of BVAS (Adegoke, 2019). Overcoming resistance and gaining acceptance for the system's implementation may require effective engagement and awareness campaigns tailored to Kogi State's specific context.

Data Security and Privacy Concerns: Safeguarding voter data and addressing privacy concerns are critical in BVAS implementation (Onuoha, 2017). Kogi State would need to prioritize data protection measures to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of voter information collected through BVAS.

Cost Implications: Implementing BVAS requires financial resources for procurement, maintenance, and training. Limited funding can pose challenges for successful implementation (Adedayo & Olaniyan, 2018). Kogi State would need to consider the financial implications and explore potential funding sources to support the implementation and sustainability of BVAS.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory was propounded by DiMaggio & Powell, (1983) it emphasizes the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping individual and organizational behavior. In the context of electoral malpractice, this theory suggests that the rules, norms, and practices embedded in electoral institutions influence actors' behavior (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). According to DiMaggio and Powell, institutions provide a framework that shapes the strategies and actions of political actors, including the inclination to engage in malpractice or adhere to electoral rules. Institutional Theory is a sociological and organizational theory that focuses on understanding how institutions, including formal rules, norms, and values, shape and influence individual and organizational behavior. It seeks to explain why certain practices, structures, and routines become established as norms within a society or an organization. Institutional theory examines how institutions create stability, reduce uncertainty, and influence the behavior of actors by providing a set of socially accepted guidelines and practices.

The adoption of BVAS in electoral processes in Kogi State can lead to institutional isomorphism as it aligns the state with prevailing norms of transparency, fairness, and accountability in elections. As other states or countries adopt similar technologies to reduce malpractice, Kogi State may face pressures to conform and remain competitive in terms of democratic standards. The use of BVAS reflects a shift in the institutional logic of the electoral process in Kogi State. By integrating biometric authentication, the state demonstrates a commitment to improving electoral integrity and reducing malpractice. The dominant institutional logic of transparent and credible elections becomes more deeply ingrained, influencing both election organizers and voters. Actors involved in the electoral

process, including electoral commissions, political parties, civil society organizations, and voters, play a critical role in the adoption and implementation of BVAS. Institutional agency comes into play as these actors decide whether to embrace the new technology or resist its implementation due to various factors, such as cost concerns or potential disruptions to existing practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
Survey research design was adopted in this study. This research strategy was considered necessary because of its ability to view comprehensively and in detail the major questions that will be raise in the study. This research collected data and described it in a systematic manner. Ololube (2009) defined this approach as research designed to gather systematic descriptions of existing phenomena in order to describe or explain what is going on.

Sampling Techniques
This study employed the use of simple random sampling technique. This sampling technique was considered suitable because of the emphases on the knowledge of the insecurity on the rural development.

Population of the Study
The population of this research study constitutes selected Local Government areas across the three senatorial districts in Kogi State. One Local Government area from each senatorial district in Kogi State. they are: Lokoja Local Government from Kogi West Senatorial District, Okehi Local Government from Kogi Central Senatorial District and Dekina Local Government from Kogi East Senatorial District.

Sample size
The 400-sample size of the selected local government in the three senatorial zones in Kogi State was determined using Taro Yameni (1964) sampling technique formula:

Sources and Method of Data Collection
The quality of a research may be influenced by the types and sources of evidence used. Various sources and types of evidence abound and could be used for the work. The study used both primary and secondary data. In addition to Descriptive statistics response to the questionnaire items were weighed across the five-step scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The implementation of Biometric Voter Accreditation Systems (BVAS) in the 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election demonstrated positive effects in curbing electoral malpractice, enhancing transparency, and bolstering credibility. However, challenges related to BVAS implementation also emerged, highlighting the need for continued refinement in electoral processes. The deployment of Biometric Voter Accreditation Systems (BVAS) had a notable impact. It effectively curbed electoral malpractice by implementing stringent identity verification measures. Additionally, BVAS significantly improved the election's transparency and credibility, providing a clear and verifiable

record of voter participation. However, challenges emerged, primarily related to technological infrastructure and operational glitches. These insights pave the way for future improvements in BVAS implementation, promising enhanced integrity in electoral processes for Kogi State.

Conclusion

With the implementation of Biometric Voter Accreditation Systems (BVAS) significantly impacting various facets of the election. This conclusion further expounds on the multifaceted effects of BVAS, emphasizing its role in curbing electoral malpractice, enhancing transparency, and fortifying the overall credibility of the electoral process. The introduction of BVAS marked a decisive step towards mitigating electoral malpractice. By necessitating biometric verification for every voter, the system created an environment where traditional forms of fraud, such as multiple voting and impersonation, were substantially deterred. This stringent identity Accreditation process instilled a sense of trust and confidence among voters, knowing that their votes were protected by a technologically advanced safeguard. Moreover, the reduction in malpractice contributed to a fairer and more representative electoral outcome, ultimately strengthening the democratic fabric of Kogi State.

BVAS played a transformative role in enhancing the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. The system generated a comprehensive and verifiable record of voter participation, providing an invaluable resource for post-election analysis. This newfound transparency not only bolstered voter confidence but also served as a powerful tool in combatting allegations of electoral irregularities. The results of the 2023 Kogi State Senatorial Election were underpinned by a robust Accreditation process, which lent them an undeniable legitimacy. This, in turn, led to greater acceptance and trust in the electoral process and its outcomes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were raised to guide the study:

i.   This study recommended that government should bolster enforcement mechanisms to penalize individuals found guilty of electoral malpractice. This could include stricter penalties for offenses like multiple voting or impersonation, and the establishment of specialized task forces dedicated to investigating and prosecuting such cases.
ii. The study also recommended that there should be Implementation of Independent Auditing of BVAS Data to ensure its accuracy and integrity. This could involve third-party organizations or electoral commissions from other regions to verify that the technology was used appropriately and that results were not tampered wit
iii. The study also recommended that government should allocate resources for the development of robust technological infrastructure, particularly in remote or underserved areas. This should include ensuring reliable power sources and network connectivity to support seamless BVAS operation.

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