

EVALUATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS OF THE 2015 GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Democracy has gained universal acceptance and periodic election is one of basic feature of democracy. Since the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1999, several elections have been conducted at both national, state local government levels. However, the 2015 general elections served as turning points to the entire electoral process in Nigeria due to the higher acceptance of their outcomes and peaceful transition recorded. The paper evaluates electoral process of the 2015 gubernatorial election in Lagos State. The study adopted the historical method by using relevant journal articles, newspapers, magazines and reports of electoral bodies and agencies obtained from the internet. The study was anchored on the Procedural Theory of Democracy. The Content analysis method was used to gather from the data obtained, issues related to the electoral process. The units of analysis include intra-party politics/candidates selection, campaigns, voting process and voters' behaviour, declaration of results and matters arising as well as performance of INEC. Findings show that there was little intra-party democracy in the selection of flag bearers among the two leading parties. Furthermore, the paper found that candidates engage in different kinds of political campaigns such as media tours, rallies, and social media posts. The study recommends that political parties should conduct proper primary elections and that INEC should improve its performances in future elections by recruiting and training qualified personnel for proper electoral conduct in order to advance democracy for development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, electoral process, gubernatorial election, political system, voting, Lagos State, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Democracy is a highly favoured form of government globally. Ogundiya (2010) argues that democracy overtime has been acknowledged as the only proper and genuine way, by which people can be ruled. Also, the United Nations have continued to call on authoritarian regimes in Africa and other parts the world to embrace democracy. The need for political stability and virile democratic process is the yearning of many Nigerians since independence. The international community is also concerned with the electoral process in Nigeria seeing the country's strategic position in international politics as well as its role as the "big brother" to other African countries. It is believed that Nigeria should serve as an example or role model to other African countries by having a virile democratic culture, which promotes free and fair elections as well as peaceful transition from one civilian administration to another. However, since independence in 1960, the country's political life has been saturated

with political fraud, bad governance; ethnicity, religiosity, military interference, violence and host of other problems that have continue to affect the country's reputation around the world. George-Genyi (2016) asserts that, Nigeria has been fighting to mount a sustainable and long-lasting democracy; the country's administrative landscape is branded by consistent inability to carry out sincere elections in which its people adequately choose their leaders.

According to Falade (2014), the level and system of electoral involvement of voters determine the success of the electoral system of a country. Citizens must be involved in the electoral process by joining political parties, engaging in electoral movement, voting during election and other political events. He further argues that, in Nigeria, the case is different because of the unconstitutional tendencies such a selectoral fraud, political uncertainties, ballot 'box snatching' and violence which for now

defines the electoral process discourages people from participating actively in the nation's democratic governmental affairs.

Elections are an important aspect of democracy in the world over. In this regard, Adebisi (2016) explains that elections play key roles in the larger project of democracy. Awopeju (2011) aptly captures it when he posits that without elections, there is no democracy; because it is through elections that people are entitled to vote for their representatives to give their approval to political officeholders to govern. From 1960 to date, several elections have been conducted. The 2015 general elections represented the fifth since Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999. The 2015 general elections allured foreign spectators from different sphere, as eyewitnesses both foreign and local observers pronounced the poll as an achievement (Adebisi, 2016).

It is imperative to note that the 2015 general elections in Nigeria depict a key turning point in Nigeria's administrative history due to many reasons. First, in spite of widely held concerns about the possibility of a destabilizing outcome, the elections were conducted on 28 March and 11 April 2015 without serious clashes, that often characterized electoral processes and the aftermath of elections in the country (Nkwachukwu, 2015). This was made possible through the determination of the electoral body – INEC to conduct the 2015 general elections better than the previous one. Therefore, strong institutions and agencies of government are a catalyst to political stability and a country's goal for democratic success.

According to Chukwudi, Gberebie, Abasilim and Imhonopi (2019:182), the realization of "political stability is when political institutions and systems are firm and steady in their ways of operations having the existence of authority without threat to carry their assigned duties." Nkwachukwu (2015) pointed out that the elections marked the principal time in the political history of Nigeria that an incumbent President was defeated and conceded defeat. Second, opposition party took over most seats in both the lower and higher

chamber of the Nigerian National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives).

According to Olowojolu and Ake (2015), out of 109 senatorial seats, the main conflicting party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) won 64, beating the then governing party Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) with 45 seats. At the level of House of Representative, All Progressive Congress won 225 seats, whereas Peoples Democratic Party won 125 seats and additional parties like the Labour Party (LP), Accord Party (AP) and the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) shared the outstanding 10 seats. Furthermore, at States level, opposition party (APC) won the gubernatorial election in most States especially in the West and the North. Specifically, (APC) won in 19 states, while PDP won in 10 states. The APC (then in opposition) also took control of most State House of Assemblies in the country including Lagos State (Olowojolu & Ake, 2015).

Since pre-independence, Lagos State has become platform for political engagement in the country. As the busiest city in Nigeria and one of the most populated and commercialized areas, Lagos has become the heartbeat of Nigeria's politics. Politicians within the state and federal level have always shown interest in Lagos. Thus, the political process in Lagos State is often tensed and marred by controversy.

Therefore, the paper seeks to make an evaluation of the 2015 gubernatorial electoral process in Lagos State to unravel the successes and challenges that were experienced during the period of the elections, which can also stimulate similar studies in various states of the federation. In addition, the paper is structured into six sections. Section one is the introduction, relevant literature were reviewed in section two, section three is the theoretical framework, section four consist of the methodology, section five is the discussion of findings, while section six is the conclusion and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Electoral Process

Electoral matters are interesting topics of academic discourses and debates. Scholars have continued to lend their voices as regard the manner of electoral process in

Nigeria especially during 2015 overall elections. The 2015 presidential election in Nigeria had come and gone but the indelible footprint it left in our memories will linger for some time to come. Iredia (2007) points out that electoral process encompasses all statutory processes, actions and engagements included in the administration of votes that usually end in the election of aspirants for a number of administrative offices. It is in this light that Nwabueze (1993) argues that:

Electoral process includes the suffrage, the registration of votes, the right to contest elections, delimitation of constituencies, electoral competition between rival political parties, the body charged with the conduct and supervision of election, the method of selection of candidates, the actual conduct of election, method of voting, the determination of results, trials and determination of election disputes, electoral malpractices and their consequences (cited in Adagba, 2007: 44).

Ibrahim and Mato (2015) explain that against the norm of severe election malpractice that characterized Nigerian politics since independence, the 2015 general elections remained an exception in Nigeria and even in Africa. In addition, citizens' participation and behaviour are central to political life of any country. That is why; George-Genyi (2016) opines that, active electoral involvement and voting activities of people in Nigeria go a long way in determining the effectiveness of the political process of the country. Furthermore, for the civil strength to be upheld in Nigeria, the voting procedure must be friendly, and permit for manifestation of the political autonomy of the general public, also giving awareness to the social and economic security of the people (George-Genyi, 2016).

As noted by Luqman (2009), countless deal of the issues confronting voting and electoral process in Nigeria's independence history can be connected to behavioural dispositions of the political class; a large percentage of the blame need also be placed on the door-post of organizations that is responsible for the conducts of the

elections. He explained that, experiences have shown that rather than being independent of the executive, electoral institutions in Nigeria's political antecedence are often in romance with the incumbent government at the federal level. Hence, elections have not been credible and accepted by the generality of the citizens in Nigeria (Luqman, 2009).

Among the several factors responsible for the faulty elections in Nigeria is ineffectiveness of electoral umpire (INEC) which serves as a mediator in the electoral process (Abati, 2006). Furthermore, Adelekan (2016) argues that the activities of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria are mixture of blessings and sadness. According to Adelekan (2016), this does not mean that INEC was inconsequential, but it meant to be on the path to perfection if what was experienced in past elections was improved upon. It is right to conclude that the importance of the electoral process for sustainable democratic governance in the contemporary world cannot be over emphasised. This is because research has shown that "elections across the globe perform the key function of choosing representatives or leaders based on the choice of the electorates and therefore, an important element of democratic governance" (Ajagba, Gberevbie & Agbu, 2020:57).

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the procedural theory of democracy as its theoretical framework of analysis. Procedural theory of democracy embodies the fundamental of the liberal type of standard regime. Advocates of procedural theory (Powell, 1992; Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2005) take notice of the effectiveness and adherence to laid down procedures, processes, guidelines and techniques (elections), human rights – factors that are required for a democratic setting and its operation. The opinions expressed by Dahl and Stinebrickner (2005), on electoral issues share certain theoretical juxtaposition with those of Powell (1992). They suggest in their effort at a modification of the democratic theory that the best suitable term to define democracy is "Polyarchy."

Dahl and Stinebrickner (2005) point out that democracy is about civil and not military rule. They argue that even though the military is lesser to civilian command in a democracy, citizens on their part needs to be subjected to rule by means of the establishment of sound electoral processes and periodic elections. The strength of the theory to this study is in the area of the superiority of the people’s will in a democracy over authoritarian governmental system. The limitation of the theory is in terms of whether democracy is capable of bringing about participatory governance in a country or not.

This is based on the fact that elections can only produce acceptable outcomes that see democracy as a governmental system for the promotion of development due to its ability to elect competent people into public offices. When competent people are elected to govern in a democracy, transparency and accountability are promoted due to the ability of the government to put in place good policies for development to thrive in such a society (Gberevbie, Ayo, Iyoha, Duruji & Abasilim, 2018). However, where the preparation of government, political parties, INEC, interest group and the security agencies are not planned for, and rules adhered to by all in the political process, democratic governance becomes a mirage. Procedures such as selection of candidates within political parties, violence-free campaigns and the declaration of actual results of elections must be adhered to by all political actors for the democratic process to achieve its desired outcomes. It is on this premise that this study evaluates Lagos State gubernatorial election of 2015.

4. Research Method

The study adopted the historical method through relevant secondary data obtained from journals, books, government records and INEC documents to evaluate the 2015 gubernatorial election in Lagos State, Nigeria. The secondary data covers a wide range of documents and information on the subject matter. Content analysis of a number of existing papers, published and unpublished, news of election eyewitnesses, INEC and media reports were used to arrive at the conclusion about the outcome of the 2015 Lagos State gubernatorial election.

5. Discussion of Findings

The discussion on the findings is carried out based on themes that form the concept of electoral process as adopted in this study. These include intra-party politics, candidates’ selection, campaigns, voting, and declaration of results, matters arising after the election and INEC scorecard.

5.1 Intra party Politics and Selection of Candidates

Political parties play significant roles of providing platforms for individuals to contest for political positions. It is believe that parties should have ideologies, which individuals would identify with in making choices regarding where to pitch their political tents as well as sway citizens to vote for them. During the last gubernatorial election in Nigeria, as usual, Lagos State had one of the most strongly contested elections due to its position as the nation’s commercial hub and the stature of the participants involved. Initially there were 15 governorship aspirants for Lagos State, but only 5 are left as the other 10 pull out for (APC) candidate, **Akinwunmi Ambode**. The five candidates who contested the elections on April 11, 2015are as indicated in table 1 below:

Table 1: Names of Governorship Candidates that Contested the 2015 Gubernatorial Election in Lagos State

S/N	Name of Candidate	Party
1	Akinwunmi Ambode	All Progressives Congress (APC)
2	Jimi Agbaje	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
3	Olurotimi Olulana	Labour Party (LP)
4	Ayodele Akele	National Conscience Party (NCP)
5	Ademola Razaq	Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD)

Accessed from: <http://www.pulse.ng>

The aspirants who stepped down are **Obadia Akinola** of Independent Democrats (ID), **Babatunde Sarumi** of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Ishola Aregbesola of Action Alliance (AA) and Adeshina Buruji of the Accord Party (AP). Others are **Abiodun Oyegunle** of the African People's Alliance (APA), **Adeshina Olayokun** of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Victor Adeniji of KOWA Party, Sylvester Eze of the Citizens Popular Party (CPP), **Sesan Olatunde** of the New Nigeria's People Party (NNPP) and **Pauline Ojochide** of the Progressives People's Alliance (PPA).

It is imperative to note that the major contestant in the governorship elections were Akinwunmi Ambode of APC and Jimi Agbaje of PDP. Ambode in particular is said to be the anointed candidate of Bola Tinubu has been the political powerhouse of Lagos State especially within APC. Though many party faithfuls faulted the imposition of Ambode as the gubernatorial candidate in Lagos State, Bola Tinubu was not deterred. Idowu (2014) posits that many individuals described the emergence of Ambode as a selection rather than election, regardless of the travesty of trying to make it look like a fair primary election.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Lagos have been opposition party since 1999 to date. Unlike APC, the choice of candidate for the 2015 gubernatorial election was not a difficult one and those not attract much debate like that of APC. The reason is that Jimi Agbaje (PDP candidate) was not new to the politics of Lagos though he has to struggle it out with **Musliu Obanikoro**. Jimi Agbaje was the flag bearer of Peoples' Democratic Alliance (DPA) in the 2007, and candidate with PDP in 2011 election where he gave a good showing. One key factor that shaped the emergence of gubernatorial candidates in the two political parties (APC and PDP) in Lagos state during the 2015 election was the clamour for Christian governor in Lagos. Both parties were not ignorant of this fact.

5.2 Campaign Activities: Monetization of the Electoral Process

Elections into any political office are always branded with numerous actions, there are several political tactics that competitors

employ in order to make them known as well as sway people to vote for them. Ojekwe (2015) and Opeibi (2006) assert that for any self-governing method to succeed, it is necessary that parties and aspirants make available the voting public with ample facts on party procedures and political plans to aid electorates pick their nominees based on adequate facts. To accomplish this, political parties engage in campaigns. Campaign encompasses lobbying, seeking endorsement, posters distribution, rallies among others.

Political campaign also known as political marketing or advertising is common feature of Nigerian politics especially in Lagos. During the 2015 gubernatorial elections in Lagos, political parties and aspirants solicit for votes through massive rallies, political posters, music and jingles as well as documentary among others. Ojekwe (2015:3) states that "the just concluded 2015 gubernatorial election in Lagos state saw parties and aspirants engulfing many media platforms with advertisement promotions all struggling to win electorates votes." Both traditional media and new media were well employed.

In some cases, celebrities and leaders were employed to endorse candidates. APC candidate Ambode has the best of endorsement. Amalu (2015) writes:

Talking of endorsements, the APC candidate surely has his bag full, with very significant endorsers. The first and perhaps one of the most treasured endorsements came from the traditional ruler of Lagos. Interestingly, before Akinwunmi Ambode became a household name and a gubernatorial frontrunner, in record time, Oba Rilwanu Lukman Akiolu, openly endorsed Ambode as the anointed candidate, to take over the governorship of Lagos State.

Similarly, it has been observed that, musicians like **Olamide**, **Dammy Krane**, **Iceprince**, **Yemi Alade** and **Obafemi Martins** have showered their support for Ambode through their social media accounts and various rallies (Bada, 2015). Other candidates especially that of PDP were not left behind their campaign efforts, they also

flooded television houses, radio stations, newspapers, posters, and social media.

5.3 Voter Turnout and Voting Behaviour

The amount of voters who turned out to elect their rulers is vital in knowing the public’s political involvement (Agaigbe, 2016). Stressing on the significance of voters in a Republic Kuenzi and Lambright (2007), contend that since democracy in its utmost important sense is “rule by the people,” the number electorates making choices through voting is of importance. Roberts (2009) explains voter turnout as the overall total of individuals that vote in an election, at times given as a percentage. The figures from INEC on the just concluded 2015 general elections puts voters turnout at 43.65 percent of the 67,422,005 registered voters. This situation is not healthy for any democratic system because democracy by meaning and action is people’s centered. People’s participation serves as the catalyst for democratic process; its growth and sustainability.

As of 2015, Lagos State has population of 9, 013,534 out of which 5,822,207 were registered for elections but as of the time of gubernatorial elections only 3,799,274 voters’ were collected from INEC to participate in the election, 1,678,754 were

accredited and only 1, 495,975 casted their votes which represent 28.8 percent turn (Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, 2015). It was believe that the gubernatorial election in Lagos was largely peaceful void of ballot box snatching, fighting among other as it was in time past. The major drawback is the little voters’ turnout with minor problems in few places (Ndujihe, 2015).

5.4 Outcome of the Election

The end product of political campaigns is the result of election. At the end of the day, the electorates want to have candidates of their choice as political leaders. The Lagos gubernatorial election of 2015 lived up to the billing in terms of the acceptability of the candidate that was declared as winner by INEC. At the end of the voting, Prof Isaac Adewole, INEC, returning officer for Lagos State governorship election, pronounced Akinwunmi Ambode of APC as winner having generated 812,394votes against his closest rival Jimi Agbaje of PDP who received 659,738votes. Out of the 20 Local Government Councils in Lagos State, APC won in 15 local councils while PDP won in five. Ambode won Agbaje with a margin of 152,656 (Vanguard, 2015). Table 2 below shows the results of the gubernatorial election in Lagos State as released by INEC:

Table 2: Results of the Lagos State Gubernatorial Election of 2015

S/N	Name of Local Government Areas in Lagos State	Result	
		APC	PDP
1.	IbejuLekki	14,696	11,292
2.	Lagos Island	34,232	16,111
3.	Badagry	27,086	22,664
4.	AjeromiIfelodun	42,954	52,596
5.	Eti-Osa	28,082	24,486
6.	Lagos Mainland	31,886	26,889
7.	Ikeja	33,178	26,419
8.	AmuwoOdofin	26,349	35,168
9.	Oshodi-Isolo	42,835	43,904
10.	Ifako-Ijaiye	46,485	36,898
11.	Epe	31,498	13,425
12.	Ikorodu	52,061	35,259
13.	Apapa	22,169	19,486
14.	Surulere	51,404	54,202
15.	Shomolu	43,642	37,078
16.	Mushin	60,220	38,620
17.	Agege	46,909	32,885
18.	Ojo	31,910	34,693
19.	Kosofe	53,890	34,693
20.	Alimosho	90, 558	67,480
TOTAL		812,394	659,738

Source: www.inecnigeria.com

The table 2 above is the outcome of election that supports the result of pre-election survey conducted for ANAP Foundation in collaboration with NOI Polls Limited which shows a close contest in the Lagos State Governorship seat between the two topmost contenders; candidate of the APC Akinwunmi Ambode and candidate of the PDP Jimi Agbaje, with minimal five percent point gap between the two. According to the pool respondents, Ambode led the list of contestants with 26 percent, while Jimi Agbaje had 21 percent.

5.5 Matters Arising from the Election

Aftermath of elections in Nigeria often comes with allegations and claims of election fraud and filing of cases at the election tribunals. The Lagos gubernatorial of 2015 was not an exemption. After the election, the governorship candidate of the (PDP), **Jimi Agbaje** filed a petition at the state election tribunal challenging the victory of **All Progressives Congress (APC)** candidate, **Akinwunmi Ambode**. Both Agbaje and PDP served as the petitioner while the respondents were the **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)**, Ambode, the APC and the **INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC)** for Lagos State, **Akin Orebiyi**.

The petitioner opposed Ambode's victory on three grounds which include INEC's non-compliance with **Section 7** of its own **2015 Election Guidelines** which provides for the use of card readers in all polling units. The second is APC's non-compliance with **Section 85** of the **Electoral Act 2010** (as amended) which stipulates that a party must give INEC 21 days' notice of the treaty where it intends to choose its governorship candidate. Agbaje was also asserting that the APC aspirant stated in his JAMB form (REG No: 646789) that he's from Ilaje Local Government Area in Ondo State while in his governorship form, he claims, under oath, to be from Epe in Lagos State. Furthermore, Agbaje also sought for the annulment of the results of all polling units where card readers were not used (Sotubo, 2015).

On the other hand, **Akinwunmi Ambode** through his counsel **Wole Olanipekun** told the Governorship Election Petition Tribunal to discredit the petition of the People's

Democratic Party's (PDP) gubernatorial aspirant **Jimi Agbaje**.

The tribunal on her part struck out Jimi Agbaje and PDP's petition on the ground that the "the petition were not delivered under the Electoral Act and therefore the petition was useless and that the inadequate use of the card reader is not a reason to oppose an election" (2015 General Election in Nigeria, The Compendium of Petitions).

5.6 INEC Score Card

INEC is the statutory body that conducts elections in Nigeria. Since 1999, the performance of INEC in elections across the nations was not impressive. Issues like delay in delivery election materials and personnel as well as conniving with politicians and parties to rig elections have often been leveled against INEC. The 2015 general elections in Nigeria came with innovations like use of Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and voters biometric among, others. While INEC was generally commended for conducting an election that is consider credible compare to previous ones, the performance of the electoral body in Lagos could be considered as average.

The delivery of the PVC was one of the controversies regarding the performance of INEC in the elections. There were assertions as well as allegations from the dominant two political parties – APC and PDP, that INEC was technically bias in the distribution of PVCs. It was stated that the delivery and collection of Permanent Voters Cards were twisted in support of the APC (Odebode, Aleehenu, *et al.* cited in Omotola and Nyuykange (2015). This goes to support the view that "the challenge among government officials in Nigeria bothers on behaviour that is unethical, which is a common occurrence" (Gberevbie, Joshua, Excellence-Oluye and Oyeyemi, 2017:6). Unethical behaviour among public officials has permeated all aspect of the country's social, economic and political life. This has generated protest within Lagos State as reported by Ugbodaga and Ebhomele (2014:1) that:

Protesters stormed the Lagos office of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, on Monday to complain about the shoddy distribution of the permanent voter's cards, PVC, in the

state. The protesters stormed INEC's office in Yaba, Lagos, southwest Nigeria, at about 9:50am on Monday with placards protesting the attempt to disenfranchise Lagosians by allegedly hoarding the PVCs.

Aside the issue associated with failure of PVCs and biometric machines, cases of election rigging with the support of INEC was not much recorded in Lagos gubernatorial election. However, there were places where materials and personnel did not get to the pooling unit on time. This situation was seen by many election observers as responsible for voters' apathy recorded in the election. On a general note, the performance of INEC in the Lagos gubernatorial elections was the best compare to previous elections since the beginning of Fourth Republic.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

International observers and international bodies might not be able to observe all parts of Nigeria to drawn conclusion regarding the success or otherwise of election in Nigeria. The 2015 gubernatorial election in Lagos has come and gone. The election is seen as a success and a sign that democracy is growing in the country as a whole.

However, the election has some issues that need to be addressed to prevent similar problems in future elections in Lagos State.

To overcome the problems of poor performance by INEC in future elections, the issue of voters' apathy as experienced in past elections can be mitigated through robust voters' education and the willingness of INEC and its officials to be more transparent in their dealings about electoral matters in the country. Also, the imposition of candidates on political parties prior to elections is a serious problem and challenge to democratic principles at the party level.

Therefore, political parties in Lagos State and indeed the entire country should put in place proper mechanisms to practice grassroots democracy by encouraging party members to elect directly who to represent their views at the general elections. In addition, INEC should work hard to compliment the success of 2015 general elections. This requires early preparation in the area of personnel training, acquisition of the required equipment and adherence to prescribed rules and regulations guiding the conduct of elections in a transparent manner.

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