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Christopherson, R. W. (2006). *Geosystems: An Introduction to Physical Geography.* New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Getis, A., Getis, J., Bjelland, M. D. & Fellmann, J. D. (2011). *Introduction to Geography.* New York:McGraw-Hill.

Edited Book

McDowell, L. & Sharp, J. P. (Eds.) (1999). *A feminist glossary of human geography*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Book Chapter

Abaje, I. B., Ati, O. F. & Iguisi, E. O. (2012). Changing Climatic Scenarios and Strategies for Drought Adaptation and Mitigation in the Sudano-Sahelian Ecological Zone of Nigeria. In Iliya, M. A., & Dankani, I. M. (Eds). *Climate Change and Sustainable Development in Nigeria* (pp 99 – 121). Ibadan: Crown F. Publishers.

Journal Articles

Dimas, G. & Akuva, I. I. (2020). Leadership styles of Nelson Mandela as a pattern for African leaders. *Covenant University International Journal of Politics and International Affairs*, 8(1), 49-64.

Journal Article Accessed Online

Bayer, J. (2010). Customer segmentation in the telecommunications industry. *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, *17*,247 – 256. doi: 10.1057/dbm.2010.21

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Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia. (2004). *AASB standards for 2005: equivalents to IFRSs as at August 2004*. Sydney, Australia: Pearson Education.

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Impact of BVAS on Electoral Transparency and Voter Confidence in Selected LGAs in 2023 Enugu State House of Assembly Elections

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the efficacy of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in ensuring electoral transparency and building voters' confidence in the Nigerian electoral process. It uses the 2023 State House of Assembly election in Nsukka, Udenu, Nkanu-East, and Udi LGAs of Enugu State as a reference case. BVAS, introduced by Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), is designed to authenticate voters through biometric verification and facilitate real-time transmission of election results. A structured questionnaire and interview were used as data collection instruments. The questionnaire was administered to a representative sample (400) of voters across the selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Enugu State to ascertain their experiences and perceptions of BVAS. Twelve INEC staff members and two voters from the study areas were interviewed. The study utilised technology theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. The results indicate that the majority of respondents perceived BVAS as enhancing the transparency of the electoral process and bolstering their confidence in election outcomes. However, challenges such as technical glitches and inadequate training of electoral officials were identified as impediments to the system's optimal performance. The study recommends, among other things, targeted training programmes for electoral staff and infrastructure improvements to maximise BVAS's efficacy in future elections, thereby strengthening democratic processes in Nigeria. The findings underscore the efficacy of BVAS in enhancing electoral transparency and confidence among voters.

Keywords: BVAS, Democratisation, Election, Electoral Transparency, Voter Confidence

Introduction

The success of any democratic system depends on its ability to conduct free and fair elections, allowing citizens to choose their leaders and affirm government legitimacy. Elections enable voters to assess whether elected officials have met their promises. This process is carried out through an organised electoral system overseen by a designated body. As noted by Adesote and Abimbola

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(2014:1) in Edet (2015), elections are essential to representative democracy globally. Lindberg (2003), cited in Adesote and Abimbola (2014), asserts that modern representative democracy relies on elections to select political leaders, making them central to democratic governance. Violence associated with election rigging has frequently been a prominent aspect of all electoral processes in post-colonial Nigeria. However, since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999, its frequency and magnitude have taken on a catastrophic dimension, especially in the 2007 and 2011 Presidential elections, endangering the nation's democratic process. The conduct of elections in Nigeria has frequently been characterised by limited public participation, reflecting public distrust in the electoral process. The distorted electoral process has often led to outcomes manipulated to favour a select group of powerful individuals, undermining the integrity of the process (Hrw, 2007; Adeolu, 2015; Eziekel, *et al*., 2019; and Ugwuala, *et al*., 2020). These practices severely undermine the integrity of the electoral process and pose significant challenges to Nigeria's political development.

These incidents necessitated a huge electoral reform that saw the introduction of the Smart Card Reader in the 2015 and 2019 general elections. Unfortunately, the outcome of the use of this technology left much to be desired. Fatai (2020) heavily criticised the Smart Card Reader, noting that its malfunctioning and the inability to authenticate permanent voter cards contributed to challenges encountered during the 2019 electoral process, which undermined election integrity. This malfunction of the card reader permitted the use of manual accreditation, which was largely blamed for the impunity recorded in the country during elections. Similarly, Ifeanyi (2021) argued that the card readers malfunctioned in several polling units, causing undue delay in the accreditation process and disenfranchising many Nigerians. The noted abnormalities with the card reader led the Independent National Electoral Commission to propose the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in the 2023 general elections.

However, despite these reforms, the 2023 general election in Nigeria was fraught with significant challenges that raised concerns about the credibility and fairness of the electoral process. Such challenges, including voter suppression, vote buying, technical failures of the BVAS, electoral violence, and allegations of manipulation by political elites, marred the entire electoral process.

The problem lies in the persistent inability of electoral reforms to address the structural and systemic issues that hinder the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria. The gap between the intent of the reforms and their practical implementation has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the reforms themselves and whether they truly address the root causes of electoral malpractice. In addition, the dialectical nature of Nigeria’s politics, characterised by deep-seated ethnic, regional, and religious divisions, further complicates the political landscape and undermines efforts towards achieving credible elections.

Objectives of the Study

The broader objective of this study is to investigate the efficacy of BVAS in ensuring electoral transparency and building voters' confidence in the electoral process in Nigeria, using the 2023 State House of Assembly election in Nsukka, Udenu, Nkanu-East, and Udi Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Enugu State as a reference case. Specifically, the study intends:

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i. To ascertain whether the use of BVAS ensured the transparency of the 2023 State House of Assembly election in Nsukka, Udenu, Nkanu-East, and Udi LGAs of Enugu State.

ii. To ascertain whether the use of BVAS has helped in building voter confidence in the electoral process in Nsukka, Udenu, Nkanu-East, and Udi LGAs of Enugu State.

iii. To identify the successes and challenges associated with the use of BVAS during the 2023 State House of Assembly elections in these LGAs.

Research Questions

i. Did the use of BVAS ensure the transparency of the 2023 State House of Assembly election in Nsukka, Udenu, Nkanu-East, and Udi LGAs of Enugu State?

ii. Has the use of BVAS built voters' confidence in the electoral process in Nsukka, Udenu, Nkanu-East, and Udi LGAs of Enugu State?

iii. What are the successes and challenges associated with the use of BVAS during the 2023 State House of Assembly election in these LGAs?

Research Assumptions

i. BVAS seemed to have increased transparency in the 2023 State House of Assembly election in Enugu State.

ii. The level of voter confidence seemed to have increased with the usage of BVAS during the 2023 State House of Assembly election in Enugu State.

iii. Technical glitches and poor knowledge of BVAS constitute the main challenges of BVAS application, while quick verification and easy voting constitute the successes of the use of BVAS in the areas of study.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Empirical Review

The **Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)** is an electronic device designed to read Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and authenticate voters – using their fingerprints – to prove their eligibility to vote at a particular polling unit. BVAS is a technological device used to identify and accredit voters. Publishing polling unit-level results through the IReV was widely anticipated to be a significant improvement in election transparency compared to the 2019 polls. However, the success of these technologies is dependent on their administration, functionality on a national scale, and public confidence in the systems (IRI/NDI Report, 2023).

Ojukwu, Umeifekwem, and Okeke (2023) noted that the 2023 general elections in Nigeria became a major test of the nation's democratic progress due to INEC's introduction of new technology, including the Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Results Viewing Portal (IReV), to improve the administration of the 2023 polls. Like most elections in Nigeria, the 2023 general election was conducted under a deeply contentious and disputed atmosphere, including widespread insecurity and uncertain government policies introduced ahead of the election. Relying on a qualitative approach using data gathered from secondary sources, as well as historical analysis, the study pointed out that the election fell short of Nigerian citizens' legitimate

and reasonable expectations. Several accredited election observation groups reported that the credibility of the 2023 election was greatly marred by numerous pitfalls in election administration, such as inefficient management of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) distribution, failure of

operational and logistical arrangements, malfunctioning of election technology, vote manipulation, political violence, lack of transparent result collation and declaration processes, and poor crisis communication. The study therefore recommended, among other things, strengthening the independence of the electoral body, putting in place measures to ensure the election is free from fraud and manipulation, and ensuring that the election reflects the will of the people.

Olonite, *et al*., (2023) conducted a study examining the impact of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) on Nigeria's electoral integrity, with a focus on public opinion and voter behaviour. Utilising a survey research design, the study used both primary and secondary data, which were analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings indicated that increased public awareness of BVAS and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) positively influenced voter turnout. Additionally, the introduction of BVAS and IReV was found to have reduced electoral violence, enhanced public trust in the electoral process, increased citizen participation, promoted electoral transparency, and strengthened Nigeria's overall electoral integrity by preventing result manipulation. The study concluded that the adoption of these technologies has led to improvements in the credibility of Nigeria's elections compared to previous years. Among the recommendations provided, the study emphasised the need for strict prosecution of electoral offenders as a means to deter malpractice and further boost voter confidence and participation in future elections.

Ahmed (2024), in a study, examined the impact of the bimodal voters' accreditation system on election integrity in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with a specific focus on the 2023 general election. This study adopted a descriptive research design; primary data were collected through a self-structured questionnaire and interview guide to elicit information from the respondents. The study utilised technology theory as its theoretical framework. Multi-stage sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of ninety (90) respondents for questionnaire administration. The findings of the study revealed that the Bimodal Voters' Accreditation System has eradicated overvoting/double voting, increased public participation in the electoral process, enhanced the public level of trust and confidence in the electoral process, and improved electoral transparency and integrity in the study area. The study concluded that although the bimodal accreditation system has helped improve the electoral system, there is a need to enhance its effectiveness to prevent loopholes. The study recommended, among other things, the need for the autonomy of electoral umpires to prevent political meddling.

Furthermore, in their analysis of the impact of BVAS on electoral integrity and public opinion, Apalowo, *et al*., (2023) opined that the use of BVAS and IReV technologies in Nigerian elections positively influenced public confidence and voting behaviour, but electoral misconduct remains a concern. The study adopted a survey research design, where data were primarily sourced from randomly sampled 400 Abuja Municipal residents using questionnaires. Specifically, the study utilised descriptive statistical tools in presenting and analysing data. These included frequencies, percentages, charts, and word-clouds. It also employed Fisher's Exact Test to assess the effects of

the twin-technology awareness and its adoption on public confidence in the electoral process vis-à-vis their voting behaviour. The empirical findings from the descriptive analysis of the respondents revealed that there is a great level of awareness among the public regarding the use of BVAS and IReV in subsequent elections in the country. The study further found that respondents

were full of praise for the innovation of technology in Nigerian elections. Moreover, Fisher's Exact results showed that public awareness of the use of BVAS and IReV positively influenced the PVC collection rate. However, it revealed that public awareness of the use of BVAS and IReV will positively influence voters' turnout in subsequent General Elections, if and only if electoral misconducts can be downplayed. Thus, the study recommended that INEC should ensure full implementation and deployment of BVAS and IReV technology in the coming (subsequent) elections.

Asoya (2023) examined the role of electoral commissions in fostering the legitimacy of government, with a specific focus on Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. The study employed a descriptive research design, utilising secondary data for analysis and discussion. Findings highlighted key responsibilities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), including ensuring electoral transparency, upholding citizens' voting rights, and recruiting competent electoral officials to facilitate credible elections. However, the study also identified several challenges that plagued the 2023 presidential election, such as political thuggery, voter intimidation, delays in the arrival of election materials, non-compliance with electoral laws (particularly regarding electronic voting and result transmission), and the disenfranchisement of numerous eligible voters. The study concluded that INEC must fully commit to its mandate to enhance electoral credibility. Among its recommendations, the study emphasised granting full autonomy to the electoral commission and fostering stronger collaboration between INEC and relevant stakeholders to improve future elections.

Nnajieto and Iwejuo (2024), in a study, investigated the perceived effects of BVAS on the orientation of undergraduate students in Imo State. Adopting a public opinion survey design, the study utilised a stratified sampling technique to distribute questionnaires among the respondents. The collected data, representing public opinion polls, were analysed to discern prevailing sentiments. Results indicated significant disillusionment among undergraduates, with many expressing a loss of confidence and interest in Nigeria's electoral system. The study revealed that the majority of students believe that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has failed the citizens, particularly in light of the high expectations set by the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which promised transparency but ultimately did not fulfil its potential. This disillusionment has led to a widespread desire among young Nigerians to emigrate in search of better governance. The study recommended that the electoral body should prioritise restoring the integrity of democratic institutions by ensuring the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

In recent times, the adoption of technology to enhance democratic growth and sustainability has gained prominence across African nations. Several countries, including Zambia, Ghana, Gambia, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire, have integrated electronic voting (e-voting) into their electoral processes

to address various systemic challenges. Idowu (2021) highlighted the increasing use of technological innovations in election administration across Africa, emphasising its role in strengthening democratic institutions. This study is therefore anchored on the Technological Approach, which is rooted in the works of political communication theorists such as Karl Deutsch. The integration of technological infrastructure in democratic processes provides citizens with

unrestricted access to information, enhances participation in public affairs, and dismantles barriers to political and civic engagement that were once insurmountable. In Nigeria, the implementation of technologies, such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for voter accreditation, vote counting, and biometric validation of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), has aimed to restore confidence in the electoral process among Nigerian voters and international observers. Observers have noted that the deployment of BVAS has contributed to reducing election manipulations. However, reports have also highlighted technical challenges associated with BVAS, including device failures and operational issues, which have negatively impacted the perceived credibility and transparency of elections. Overall, while the adoption of technologies like BVAS holds the potential to reduce electoral fraud and promote transparency, addressing technical and operational challenges is essential to fully realise these benefits.

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted to ensure an effective study. Primary and secondary data were utilised for the study. Primary data were obtained using a self-structured questionnaire and interview guide, while secondary data were obtained from journals, published articles, textbooks, and published theses. Multi-stage sampling techniques were utilised for the study. In the first stage, a stratified sampling technique was employed to select the local governments in the state based on the three senatorial districts: Enugu East, Enugu West, and Enugu North. Udenu Local Government was selected as the fourth area due to its record of a violence-free election. In the second stage, a random sampling technique was applied to select one local government area from each of the three senatorial districts, resulting in the selection of three LGAs – Enugu East, Udi, and Nsukka – along with Udenu. In the third stage, a random sampling technique was applied to select three wards from each local government area, with a proportionate sample size used to determine the distribution of questionnaires across the LGAs. A random sampling method was used to select respondents at the ward level who voted in the election. Additionally, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select three (3) INEC staff members and two (2) electorates from each local government, totalling 20 individuals who were interviewed. These selected INEC staff members also completed the questionnaire, contributing to the overall study population.

The study's population is 1,103,500 (National Population Commission of Nigeria (web) and the National Bureau of Statistics (web) in 2024). This figure represents the combined population of the four local government areas under study: Nkanu East (220,400), Udi (182,500), Nsukka (444,100), and Udenu (256,500). The sample size for the study is 400 respondents. It is important to note that only eligible voters who participated in the election were given the questionnaire to complete.

The sample size of this study is generated using the Yaro Yamane Formula.

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

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Where;
n = is required sample size
N=is the population of the study area
e = error margin (0.05 is used)

$$n = \frac{1103500}{1 + 1103500\ (0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{1103500}{1 + 1103500\ (0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{1103500}{1 + 2758.75}$$

$$\frac{1103500}{2759.75}$$

=399.85

~ **400**

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data Presentation

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	250	78
Female	70	22
Total	320	100
Age		
18-25	20	6
26-35	150	47
36-45	135	42
46-above	15	5
Total	320	100
Educational Qualification		
No formal education	25	8
Primary education	70	22
Secondary education	95	30
Tertiary education	130	40
Total	320	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 2: Awareness and Understanding of BVAs

Variables	**Yes**	**No**
Aware of BVAs	261 (82%)	59 (18%)
Did you participate in 2023 Enugu State House of Assembly Election?	292 (91%)	28 (9%)
Was BVAs used in your	287 (90%)	33(10%)

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polling unit?		
Did you encounter any issue with the BVAs during accreditation?	193 (60%)	127 (40%)
What kind of issues?	A-No Issues-50 (16%) B. –Minor Issues-250 (78%) C. Major Issues-20 (6%)	
How would you describe the efficiency of the BVAs during accreditation?	A-very efficient—78 (24%) B-efficient--- 120 (38%) C-inefficient – 84 (26%) D-very inefficient—38 (12%)	
How long did the BVAs accreditation process take for you?	Less than one minute—201 (63%) 1-5 minutes—81(25%) More than 5 minutes ---38 (12%)	

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 3: Perception of Electoral Transparency and Confidence

S/n	Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1	Eradicate overvoting/multiple voting	196 (61%)	73 (23%)	25 (8%)	26 (8%)	
2	Increased electoral transparency and integrity	167 (52%)	89 (28%)	27 (8%)	37 (12%)	
3	Increased confidence in the electoral process	176 (55%)	80 (25%)	38 (12%)	26 (8%)	
4	Increased public participation in the electoral process	172 (54%)	78 (24%)	34 (11%)	36 (11%)	
5	Prevented manipulation of election results	130 (41%)	78 (24%)	68 (21%)	44 (14%)	
6	Enhanced free, fair and credible polls	136 (43%)	76 (24%)	78 (24%)	30 (9%)	
7	Improved verification and easy voting	159 (50%)	87 (27%)	38 (12%)	36 (11%)	
8	Reduced electoral	173 (54%)	75 (23%)	50 (16%)	22 (7%)	

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	violence and intimidation					

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4: Perception of Challenges associated with the use of BVAS by the Respondents

Variable	Device malfunction/low battery	Connectivity and network issues	Voter Accreditation Difficulties	Security concerns	Administrative issues/logistics problems	Transmission of results issues	Allegation of system manipulation
Mention issues you noticed with the BVAS during the election	51(16%)	45(14%)	33(10%)	37(12%)	53(16%)	71(22%)	30((%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 5: Overall Perception of the Respondents on BVAS and Electoral Transparency

Variable	**Much more Transparent**	**More transparent**	**Less transparent**	**Much less transparent**	
Rate the overall transparency of the 2023 Enugu State House of Assembly Election	173 (54%)	75 (23%)	50 (16%)	22 (7%)	

Table 6: Possible Participation and Improvement in Election

Variable	**Very likely**	**Likely**	**Unlikely**	**Very unlikely**
How likely are you to participate in future elections considering your experience with BVAS?	170 (53%	80 (25%)	36 (11%)	34 (11)

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Do you have any suggestion to enhance the effectiveness of BVAs in future elections?	**Continuous system training and upgrade**	**Early uploading of results IReV**	**Enough sensitization of the masses**	**Efficient training of INEC staff and supporting staff**	**Stakeholders collaboration**	**Effective law guiding the use of BVAS**	**Early arrival of electoral material and staff**
	40 (13%)	60 (19%)	58(18%)	81(25%)	22(7%)	28(9%)	31(9%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic features of the respondents. Results from the table show that 250 (78%) of the respondents are male, while 70 (22%) are female. It also revealed that 20 (6%) of the respondents are within the age bracket of 18-25 years, 150 (47%) fall within the age bracket of 26-35 years, 135 (42%) are within the age range of 36-45 years, while 15 (5%) are 46 years and above. It is also noted that 25 respondents, representing 8%, have no formal education, while 70 (22%) have primary education. It also revealed that 95 (30%) of the respondents have secondary education, while 130 (40%) represent those with tertiary education.

Table 2 presents respondents' awareness and understanding of BVAS. The data reveals that 261 respondents (82%) are aware of BVAS, while 59 respondents (18%) are unfamiliar with the technology. Additionally, 292 respondents (91%) participated in the 2023 Enugu State House of Assembly Election, whereas 28 respondents (9%) did not. Furthermore, 287 respondents (90%) confirmed that BVAS was used in the election under investigation, while 33 respondents (10%) stated that it was not utilised. The table also shows that 193 respondents (60%) encountered issues during the BVAS accreditation process, whereas 127 respondents (40%) reported a smooth accreditation experience. Regarding the nature of the issues encountered, 250 respondents (78%) identified minor issues, 50 respondents (16%) noted no issues, and 20 respondents (6%) reported major challenges with BVAS.

On the efficiency of the BVAS during the accreditation process, 78 (24%) of the respondents opined that BVAS was very efficient, 120 (38%) rated it as efficient, 84 (26%) expressed inefficiency of the BVAS, while 38 (12%) opined that BVAS was very inefficient. In all, 62% of the respondents acknowledged the efficiency of the BVAS in the 2023 Enugu State House of Assembly Election. To corroborate the efficiency of the BVAS with how long it took the respondents for accreditation to happen, 201 (63%) of the respondents noted that it took less than one minute to be accredited, 81 (25%) noted it took between 1-5 minutes, while 38 (12%) noted more than 5 minutes before they were accredited.

Table 3 presents the perceptions of respondents on electoral transparency and voter confidence regarding the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) during the 2023 State House

of Assembly election in the study areas. To achieve the study's objective, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with specific variables related to electoral transparency and integrity. Respondents were first asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the assertion that BVAS has eliminated overvoting and double voting. In response, 196 respondents (61%) strongly agreed, while 73 respondents (23%) agreed, indicating significant support for the claim. Conversely, 26 respondents (8%) strongly disagreed, and 25 respondents (8%) disagreed. The data reveals that a total of 84% of respondents agreed with the statement, suggesting that BVAS has effectively eradicated overvoting and multiple voting, thereby enhancing election integrity in the study areas. This corroborated Ahmed's (2024) findings, which noted that the introduction of BVAS in electoral processes eradicated overvoting/double voting.

In response to the second assertion, respondents agreed that BVAS has significantly enhanced transparency and integrity in elections. The data shows that 167 respondents (52%) strongly agreed, while 89 respondents (28%) agreed with the statement. Conversely, 37 respondents (12%) strongly disagreed, and 27 respondents (8%) disagreed. The data analysis indicates that 80% of respondents believe BVAS has improved electoral transparency and integrity in the study areas. This aligns with the study carried out by Ahmed (2024) on the impact of the bimodal voters' accreditation system on election integrity in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with a specific focus on the 2023 general election. It noted that BVAS enhanced the public's level of trust and confidence in the electoral process, which improved transparency and integrity in the study areas. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the assertion that BVAS has increased public confidence in the electoral process. The results show that 176 respondents (55%) strongly agreed, while 80 respondents (25%) agreed. On the other hand, 26 respondents (8%) strongly disagreed, and 38 respondents (12%) also disagreed. The data indicates that 80% of respondents believe BVAS has enhanced trust and confidence in the election process within the study area. Olonite, *et al*., (2023) and Apalowo, *et al*., (2023) had, in their studies on BVAS's influence on electoral integrity and public opinion, opined that BVAS and IReV had positively influenced public confidence and voting behaviour but noted that electoral misconduct remained a concern. However, their studies equally noted that because of a great level of awareness among the public, influenced voters' turnout, which in turn enhanced public trust and confidence.

Regarding the fourth assertion, 172 respondents (54%) strongly agreed, while 78 respondents (24%) agreed that BVAS has increased public participation in the electoral process within the study areas. Conversely, 36 respondents (11%) strongly disagreed, and 34 respondents (11%) disagreed with the statement. The data analysis shows that 78% of respondents believed BVAS has enhanced public participation in elections and contributed to improving election integrity in the study areas (Olonite, *et al*., 2023; Ahmed, 2024; and Apalowo, *et al*., 2023). In response to the fifth assertion on BVAS preventing manipulation of election results, 130 (41%) respondents strongly agreed with the assertion, supported by 78 (24%) who agreed. On the contrary, 44 (14%) strongly disagreed, while 68 (21%) disagreed that BVAS has prevented manipulation of results during the election. With 65% of the respondents in agreement, BVAS has increased a level of trust, having reduced the manipulation of election results in the study areas (Ahmed, 2024; Olonite, *et al*., 2023). The study examined whether BVAS has contributed to free, fair, and credible elections in the Enugu State House of Assembly election. The findings show that 136 respondents (43%) strongly agreed with this assertion, supported by 76 respondents (24%) who also agreed. In

contrast, 30 respondents (9%) strongly disagreed, while 78 respondents (24%) disagreed. With 67% of respondents in agreement, the study concludes that BVAS has indeed played a role in facilitating free, fair, and credible elections. Apalowo, *et al*., (2023) noted that BVAS and IReV increasingly contributed to free, fair, and credible elections, promoted electoral integrity, and strengthened overall electoral integrity by preventing result manipulation. This gave credence to electoral integrity.

BVAS has improved quick verification and easy voting in the study areas. Reacting to this assertion, 159 (50%) respondents strongly agreed and were supported by 87 (27%) who agreed with the assertion. However, it was against the opinion of 36 (11%) respondents who strongly disagreed and 38 (12%) who disagreed with the assertion. With 77% of the respondents in agreement, BVAS has improved the easy verification of voters and early voting during the said election. The above assertion is in agreement with Asoya's (2023) perception of the influence of BVAS in ensuring quick verification of voters and easy voting in the 2023 general elections. Regarding the final assertion on the reduction of electoral violence and intimidation, 173 respondents (54%) strongly agreed, with 75 respondents (23%) also agreeing. However, 22 respondents (7%) strongly disagreed, and 50 respondents (16%) disagreed, stating that BVAS has not reduced electoral violence and intimidation. With 77% of respondents in agreement, the study concludes that BVAS has helped reduce electoral violence and intimidation in the study areas during the Enugu State House of Assembly election. (Ahmed, 2024; Olonite, *et al*., 2023; and Apalowo, *et al*., 2023). The respondents were also asked about their views on the overall transparency of the election and their potential participation in future elections. When asked to rate the transparency of the election in the study areas, 77% of respondents indicated that the election was much more transparent, while 23% felt there was much less transparency. Despite the challenges mentioned by respondents regarding the election, 88% expressed a strong likelihood of participating in future elections, while 12% disagreed.

Extracts from the Interview Analysis

An interview session was conducted with selected staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and two voters were randomly chosen from each local government to complement the data gathered through questionnaires in the study areas. Interestingly, twelve interviewees (INEC staff) stated that the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) has increased public participation and a level of confidence in the electoral process because BVAS does not encourage result manipulation. Additionally, they acknowledged that BVAS has helped eliminate overvoting in the study areas, reinforcing the findings from the questionnaire. However, eight of the INEC staff interviewees noted that while BVAS has improved certain aspects of the electoral process, it has not totally prevented the manipulation of election results or reduced electoral violence in the study areas, as they noted that there were pockets of violence in some wards they covered during the election. Several interviewees observed that elections in Nigeria have been plagued by various electoral challenges, such as manipulation of the machine, discrepancies between BVAS and manually collated results, intentional delays in uploading results to IReV and rigging to favour a particular individual or party, hence making it difficult to achieve truly credible polls. They pointed out that these issues often lead to losing candidates to contest election results in court, effectively placing the responsibility of determining winners on the judiciary rather than the electorate. This, in turn, diminishes public confidence in

both the electoral body and the overall electoral process.

To address these concerns, the interviewees emphasised the need for INEC to be granted full independence in conducting elections, as they believe this is the only way to restore voter confidence and enhance the credibility of the polls. They suggested that the appointment of the head of the electoral commission should be done by the National Assembly. According to them, the numbers and members of the National Assembly cut across various political parties. Additionally, they stressed that the responsibility of ensuring free and fair elections should not rest solely on INEC. Instead, all relevant stakeholders – including civil society organisations, security agencies, and the judiciary – should actively participate in strengthening and sustaining the electoral process in the country. Finally, the interviewees acknowledged that while BVAS has the potential to enhance the electoral system, it is crucial to implement robust security measures to prevent unauthorised access to the INEC server. They also emphasised the importance of INEC adhering to its commitment to promptly uploading election results to the IReV. This, they noted, would help maintain transparency and prevent allegations of bias in favour of any political party or candidate.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Ensuring free, fair, and credible elections is key to increasing public participation, strengthening voter confidence, and upholding the integrity of the electoral system. As highlighted in the study, the introduction of BVAS has contributed to improving the electoral process in the country. Despite the challenges associated with technology, all stakeholders need to collaborate in building an electoral system that guarantees transparent and credible elections – one that the nation can take pride in. The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) represents a significant advancement in enhancing the credibility of Nigeria's electoral process. To further improve its effectiveness in future elections, several recommendations can be considered, as noted from the findings of the study:

1. **Comprehensive Training for Electoral Officials:** Ensuring that all electoral staff, including ad hoc staff, are thoroughly trained in operating BVAS devices is crucial. Proper training will minimise technical errors and enhance the efficiency of the accreditation process. This training should be periodic and must meet global best practices.

2. **Public Awareness and Voter Education:** Educating the electorate about the BVAS system and its benefits can increase public confidence and encourage voter participation. Awareness campaigns should focus on demonstrating the system's role in ensuring free and fair elections.

3. **Robust Technical Support and Infrastructure:** Establishing a reliable technical support system to promptly address device malfunctions or operational issues during elections is essential. This includes deploying skilled technicians across polling units and maintaining backup devices to prevent disruptions. Regular testing and timely updates of the BVAS technology are necessary to address vulnerabilities and adapt to evolving challenges. Continuous improvement will help maintain the system's reliability and security.

4. **Autonomy of INEC:** To uphold transparency and electoral integrity in the country's election process, granting full autonomy to the electoral body is essential. This will enable them to carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively, free from political interference.

5. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Fostering collaboration among stakeholders – including political parties, civil society organisations, and international partners – can facilitate knowledge sharing and resource mobilisation. Such partnerships can contribute to the successful implementation and improvement of BVAS.

6. **Legal and Institutional Frameworks:** Strengthening the legal and institutional structures governing the use of BVAS can provide clear guidelines and accountability mechanisms. This includes enacting laws that support the integration of technology in elections and outlining procedures for addressing disputes related to its use.

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