

IMPACT OF ELECTORAL LAWS AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION ON SUSTENANCE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: Nigeria got independence in 1960 from the British colonial masters. Since then, democracy experiences have been very bitter and unsavory. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised, members of Houses of Representative and Senate. The sample size was sixty (60), selected through a simple random sampling technique. Both quantitative and qualitative research instruments were used to generate data. The quantitative research instrument was used, titled, "Rating Scale on impact of Electoral Laws and Citizenship Education on Sustenance of Democracy in the 21st Century in Nigeria", fashioned on four likert rating scale; Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD), while Focus Group Discussion (FGDS) was used to generate qualitative data. The research instruments were validated by two experts in Test and Measurement, while its reliability was done through test-retest method and 0.64 coefficient reliability was obtained. Based on the findings of the research, conclusions were made that Citizenship education could informed people and acquainted them better than their civil rights. Also, Electoral laws could promote good election process in democratic practice etc. Based on the findings, recommendations were therefore made that; Citizenship education should be taught either, through the formal or non-formal system of education. Also, Electoral Laws should be made accessible to public either print or electronics media and so on..

Keywords: Impact, Citizenship education, Electoral law, Democracy, Sustenance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Ability to sustain democracy has always been a myriad and in Nigeria.. Since, Nigeria got independence in 1960, from the British Colonial Masters, the experience of democracy has always been a bitter and unsavory.

Over the decades, there has been a recurrent and sustained argument that the Nigerian state, like its counterpart in Africa and other countries of the developing world, underperform ... (Dhikru and Adeoye, 2019)

This simply means that democratic practice since independence has been characterized with many challenges, such as; poor governance, ethnic affiliations, killings, election malpractices, corruption and so on. Bayart (2009), attributes this to weak and failures of Africa historical heritage (political leadership, corruption, conflicts and wars). Starting from the first republic in Nigeria, democratic landscape has been witnessing series of killings and actions from the politicians that negate the principles governing the practice of democracy.

Olu-Adeyemi (2012), noted that since the beginning of the fourth republic on May 29th 1999, Nigeria had continued to struggle with the delivery of democratic governance and democratic dividend – social warfare, justice, equity and equal access to resources and power.

Furthermore, politics and polity are seriously mared with several anti-democratic practices. For democratic governance to be successful and thrive in Nigeria, people must uphold its guiding principles – people’s participation, fair and free election, Independent Electoral Commission etc. The strength of any good democratic process rests on the ability of the people to stick to the rules governing it. According to Maharuna GRandi “politics without ethical principles” is among the social sins of mankind”. Nigeria has the potential (human and material resources) to translate to a great democracy if the politicians (and the people can change their mind-sets and learn how to play ethical politics that adds good value to the system (Olu-Adeyemi, 2012).

There is no gain saying the fact that, Nigerians lack political and citizenship education which have negative consequential effects on politics and polity in the country. Anti-social elements, corruption, election manipulation, inefficiency of electoral body coupled, with recklessness of politicians are often the situation in Nigeria. Rigging becomes a normal and applauded strategy to win election, voters are voting on the basis of monetary negotiations, several activities of the politicians negate democratic process in Nigeria. According to Aluigba (2016),

The conduct of free and fair election is a major yardstick for measuring the quality democracy in a country, credible election provides the platform on which the populace partakes in democracy by electing representatives of their choice as public office holders.

However, the irony is often the case in Nigeria, there has never been a time and period when democracy is not marred by democratic irregularities. The conduct of election in Nigeria since the first republic have been insinuated with spiraling malpractices in the electioneering process. Rigging, violence, threats, manipulation, intimidating are often predominating election periods in Nigeria. Voters are not helping the situation; most voters are found selling their votes. Election process is very filthy, not strengthening nor sustaining democratic process. Most often times, election results do not reflect mandates of the voters. Results have always been subjecting to “doctoring”. Ethnic affiliation predominates and permeates the democratic landscape in Nigeria. Electoral malpractice is antenna to politics and polity in any nation.

Since, independence of the country, Nigeria in 1960 to 1999 there is no civilian governments that have successfully completed the passage from one administration to another, without degenerating into violence. The realization of this, therefore calls for Citizenship Education and electoral laws governing elections in Nigeria. Citizenship education definition and explanation is a victim of pluralism. It is a preparation of people to become responsible in the society (Aghulor, 2010). Participation in democracy and adherence to its principles is one of the objectives of Citizenship Education (Ibezim, 2010). Citizenship education has been considered to be a weapon through which democracy could be sustained. Sustainable democracy in Nigeria has been linked to Citizenship education by some political scientists. Since, it equips people with the knowledge and values of effective participation in politics and polity. Citizenship education could breed responsible voters who knows their rights and value their mandates. By inference, Nigerians need functional Citizenship education so as to have a sustainable democracy.

Moreover, the compendium of laws governing elections in Nigeria was put together to enable citizens and stakeholders in democratic practice to be better informed about the legal regime surrounding election in Nigeria. The compendium is an extract from the portion of constitution which directly affects elections, specifically, 1999 constitution (policy and legal advocacy centre, 2019). The Electoral laws or laws governing elections in Nigeria encompasses, establishment and functions of Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), and allied issues regarding election (INEC regulations and guidelines for the conduct of elections, 2019). State of the commission, national register of voters and voters’ registration, political parties’ procedure for election to area council, determination of election petition arising from election.

In a nutshell, Nigerian electoral laws cover wide areas that are relating to election in Nigeria. From the extant several studies, most studies are self-reported by the researcher(s) without which empirical studies. It was this gap that motivated the research to carry out this study.

Statement of the Problem

Politics and polity since Nigeria's independence since, 1960 has always been militating against by series of factors, such as; violence, rigging, election results, falsification among others. These have serious consequential effects on sustainable democratic practice and process in Nigeria.

Towards curtailing these challenges and reposition, democracy in Nigeria necessitate citizenship education and compendium of electoral laws i.e. laws governing electoral sources of good topics for researchers, most researches have been self-reported without much empirical validation. It was this gap that informed carrying out this study by the researcher.

Research Questions

Two research questions were raised to guide the conduct of the study.

1. Will people be well acquainted with their civil rights through citizenship education in the 21st century in Nigeria?
2. Do Electoral laws have influence on reduction of electoral malpractices in the 21st century in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

- i. Can electoral laws promote sound democratic election processes in the 21st Century in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was on impact assessment of electoral laws and citizenship education on sustenance of democracy in the 21st century in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. examine the influence of Citizenship education on acquaintance of people with democratic principles in the 21st century in Nigeria;
2. ascertain the impact of Electoral laws on reduction of electoral malpractice in the 21st century in Nigeria; and
3. determine the influence of Electoral laws on promotion of sound electioneering processes in the 21st century in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will be significant to stakeholders in democratic practice in the following ways:

Firstly, the result of the research will enable Federal Government of Nigeria to know the input of Electoral Laws to effective democratic or civil rule in Nigeria.

Moreover, the findings of the study will provide justification for teaching and learning of citizenship education, either through the formal or non-formal system of education in Nigeria.

Also, the result of the study will enable the public to appreciate the values added to democratic practice by Electoral Laws in Nigeria.

Finally, the study will add to the existing literature within the confine of the study, thus, becomes a good source of relevance to researchers in future.

2. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research was used for the study. The population of the study comprised members of Houses of Representative and Senate. The sample size for the study was sixty (60). Thirty (30) respondents were selected from each of the house through a simple random sampling technique. Both quantitative and qualitative research instruments were used to generate data for the study. A self-developed research instrument, titled "Ranting Scale on Electoral Laws and Citizenship Education: Trajectories to Sustainable Democracy in the 21st century in Nigeria", fashioned on four likert

rating scale; Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD), was used to generate quantitative data.

Focus group discussion (FGDs) was used to generate qualitative data for the study. The research instruments were validated by two experts in Test and Measurement; while the reliability of the instrument was determined using, test retest method and 0.64 coefficient reliability was obtained.

Data generated through quantitative research instrument was analyzed, using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, simple percentages and mean), while data generated through qualitative research instrument was transcribed and analyzed, quantitatively.

Presentation of Findings and Discussion of Results

Presentation of Findings

Research Question One: Will people be well acquainted with their civil rights through Citizenship education in the 21st century in Nigeria?

Table 1: Showing frequency counts, simple percentages (%) and mean (x) on will people be well acquainted with their civil rights through Citizenship education

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Remark
1.	Citizenship education enables me to know my voting right	2 3.33	4 6.66	8 1.33	46 76.6	3.63	Accepted
2.	Without citizenship education, I would not know my civil rights	43 71.66	5 8.33	6 10	6 10	1.58	Rejected
3.	Through citizenship education, I am better informed about electioneering issues	1 1.66	6 10	9 15	44 73.33	3.6	Accepted
4.	Citizenship education does not offers me any knowledge on electioneering issues	43 71.66	6 10	8 1.33	3 5	1.51	Rejected
5.	Citizenship education makes me to know the usefulness of their voting rights	1 1.66	3 5	12 20	44 73.33	3.65	Accepted
6.	It is not citizenship education that makes me to know the importance of my voting rights to sustainable democratic process	42 70	14 23.33	2 3.33	2 3.33	1.4	Rejected
	Total	132 36.66	38 10.55	45 12.5	145 40.27	2.56	Accepted

Table 1 presents the result on research question one. On item (1), 46 (76.6), 8 (1.33), 4 (6.66) and 2 (3.33) responses were obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (2), 6 (10), 6 (10), 5 (8.33) and 43 (71.66) responses were obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (3), 44 (73.33), 9 (15), 6 (10) and 1 (1.66) responses were obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (4), 3 (5), 8 (1.33), 6 (10) and 43 (71.66) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (5), the following responses were obtained; 44 (73.33), 12 (20), 3 (5) and 1 (1.66) responses were obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. Finally, on item (6), 2 (3.33), 2 (3.33), 14 (23.33) and 42 (70%) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Generally speaking the average of rating scale of four ($x = 2.5$) is lesser than the mean of average rating scale of four ($x = 2.56$). Therefore, indicates that citizenship education could make people to be well acquainted with their civil right in the 21st century in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: Do Electoral laws have influence on reduction on electoral malpractices in the 21st century in Nigeria?

Table 2: Showing frequency counts, simple percentages (%) and mean (x) on do electoral laws have influence on reduction on electoral malpractices in the 21st century in Nigeria

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Remark
7.	Electoral laws make me to know the legal consequence of electoral malpractice	0	1	13	46	3.75	Accepted
8.	Despite electoral laws, I am still ignorance of legal implication of electoral malpractices	42	12	5	1	1.41	Rejected
9.	Electoral laws enhance free and fair election	4	5	3	48	3.58	Accepted
10.	Electoral laws does not defer free and fair election	42	11	4	3	1.46	Rejected
11.	Despite electoral law, I am still selling my votes	40	16	3	1	1.41	Rejected
12.	Electoral law spells out clearly the legal punishments for selling votes	4	8	5	43	3.45	Accepted
	Total	132	53	33	142	2.51	Accepted
		36.66	14.72	9.16	39.44		

Table 2 shows the results on research question two. On item (7), 46 (16.66), 13 (21.66), 1 (1.66) and 0 (0) responses obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (8), responses obtained were; 1 (1.66), 5 (8.33), 12 (20) and 42 (70) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (9), 48 (80), 3 (5), 5 (8.33) and 4 (6.66) responses were obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (10) responses obtained were, 3 (5), 4 (6.66), 11 (18.33) and 70 (40) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (11), responses obtained were; 1 (1.66), 3 (5), 16 (26.66) and 40 (66.66) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively.

Finally, on item (12), 43 (71.66), 5 (8.55), 8 (13.33) and 4 (6.66) responses were obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The result indicates that the average of rating scale of four ($x = 2.5$) is lesser than the average mean of rating scale of four ($x = 2.51$). Thus, implies that electoral laws could reduce electoral irregularities and malpractices in the 21st century in Nigeria.

Research Question Three: Can Electoral laws promote sound electioneering processes in the 21st century in Nigeria?

Table 3: Showing frequency counts, simple percentages (%) and mean (x) on can Electoral laws promote sound electioneering process in the 21st century in Nigeria.

S/N	Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Remark
13.	Electoral laws can enhance instill my confidence on electoral process in Nigeria	5	6	8	41	3.41	Accepted
14.	I do not have confidence on electoral process, despite the compendium of electoral laws in Nigeria	39	12	6	3	1.55	Rejected
15.	Electoral laws enable me to have a sound knowledge of electioneering processes	2	6	14	38	3.46	Accepted
16.	It is not electoral law that make me to have a sound knowledge of electioneering processes	45	2	6	7	1.58	Rejected
17.	Electoral laws regulate activities of regulate activities of political parties in link with democratic principles	2	3	12	43	3.6	Accepted
18.	Electoral laws do not regulate political activities in line with the principles of democracy	35	14	7	4	1.66	Rejected
	Total	128	43	53	136	2.54	Accepted
		35.55	11.94	14.72	37.77		

Table 3 presents the findings on research question three. On item (13), responses obtained were; 41 (68.33), 8 (13.33), 6 (10) and 5 (8.33) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (14), 3 (5), 6 (10), 12 (10) and 39 (65) responses were got for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (15), 38 (63.33), 14 (23.33), 6 (10) and 2 (3.33) responses were obtained for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (16), the following responses were obtained; 7 (11.66), 6 (10), 2 (3.33) and 45 (75) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed.

On item (17), the following responses were also obtained; 43 (71.66), 12 (20), 3 (5) and 2 (3.33) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. On item (18), responses obtained were; 4 (6.66), 7 (11.66), 14 (23.33) and 35 (58.33) for strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. Generally speaking, the average of rating scale of four ($x = 2.5$) is lesser than the mean of average of ($x = 2.54$). The result implies that Electoral laws could promote sound democratic election processes in the 21st century in Nigeria.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The result on research question one is buttressed by the submission of Ibezim (2010) that Citizenship education is a vital part of any democracy and it equips ordinary people with knowledge about democracy and constitution and that it enables one to be well grounded on the workings of democracy and capable of applying democratic principles anywhere they find themselves. During the FGDs, a respondent had thus to say that:

The importance of Citizenship education either through the formal or non-formal system of education can't be denied in democratic processes. It sounds knowledge will equip people with democratic tenets, thus, sustaining the process in our nation, Nigeria.

FGDs – A representative of House of Representative, Irele/Okitipupa Constituency

Furthermore, the result on research question aligns with the opinion of many stakeholders in democracy in Nigeria that Electoral Laws as provided in the 1999 constitution and law or act of the National Assembly, that the compendium of Electoral Law clearly spelt out legal punishment for violators of election rule and regulation, thus, reduce irregularities and malpractices which have characterized with democracy in the country (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2019).

Another respondent's view is in consonance with the above submission. Thus, reiterated that;

the compendium of electoral laws governing election has made provision for some features of democracy, such as; independent electoral tribunal where compendium issues, grievances and irregularities during election can be proved.

FGDs – A representative of National House of Senate – Ogun State North Federal Constituency

The result on research question three is in consonance with the opinion of some represents during the FGDs.

A representative maintained that since Electoral law have been enacted it has provided comprehensive electoral processes in Nigeria ranging from INEC regulations and guidelines for the conduct of election, legal regime surrounding elections in Nigeria.

FGDs – A Representative of Federal House of Representative, Kaduna North Federal Constituency

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were made that; Citizenship education would enlighten people about their civil rights in terms of having knowledge about the importance of voting rights in democratic processes. Also, that Electoral Laws by spelling but legal punishment for violators of democratic principles and sound democratic election in the 21st century in Nigeria.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions made on the study recommendations were made as follows:

1. Citizenship education should be made as a compulsory subject in school.
2. Through the non-formal method, enlightenment should be made on citizenship education to educate the public. This can be done through the both print and electronic media.
3. The compendium of Electoral Laws should be made accessible to the public
4. Electoral laws in Nigeria should also spelt out the legal punishment for erring politicians in Nigeria and so on

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