The Impact of BVAS in Mitigating Election Fraud in the 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State

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Abstract
Nigeria's general elections have been characterized with a variety of difficulties, such as fear, anxiety, uncertainty, intimidation, shifting of the outcome, excessive use of funds, misconduct, irregularities, logistical issues, political thuggery, violence and so on. With traditional paper-based voting systems, individuals can potentially cast multiple votes by impersonating others or using fake identities. The study investigates the impact of BVAS in mitigating election fraud in the 2023 general election in Fufure Local Government Area, Adamawa state. Using both primary and secondary data. The data were analyzed using content analysis. Against this backdrop Elite theory was adopted as a framework of analysis. The findings of the study show that most of the respondents, or 53% of the sample, strongly agreed, that the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System was distributed to all the polling units in the 2023 general elections in the study area. In the light of the fact that the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System has helped minimize election fraud, such as duplicate registrations and multiple votes, it is concluded that the implementation of this system for elections is very noteworthy. Therefore, it is recommended that Accreditation should be done simultaneously with voting. The reason for having accreditation and then voting is to prevent voters who wish to vote at more than one polling unit on Election Day from doing so.

Keywords: Accreditation, BVAS, Elite theory, Election fraud, Election.

Introduction

Democracy today, is unarguably the most preferred form of government in the world (Elaigwu, 2014; Adeniran, 2016; Anaza Akwen, Jooji and Moothy, 2018). Hence, it is germane that a functioning democracy requires an informed and active public that understands how to voice its interests, act collectively, and hold government officials accountable through credible electoral process (National Democratic Institute, 2011). This can be achieved through democratic participation, debate, and, most importantly through voting at elections. Elections involve a set of activities leading to the selection of one or more persons out of many to serve in positions of authority in a society (Bright, 2017). Elections are a critical component of any democratic society. As such, Nigeria's return to democratic rule and engagement with the democratic process led to the conduct of its general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023.

One of the greatest challenges facing Nigeria's political system today is election irregularities. Election is the critical component of any democratic society. For its exists to provide the electorates with opportunity and the right to choose their representatives and maintain contact with them. Therefore, for an electoral system to be democratic, it must provide equal opportunity and freedom for the electorates to make real and meaningful choice devoid of intimidation. This situation has forced electorates to see election in Nigeria as a mirage or a mere selection in the sense that electorates are left out of the entire system, owing to the fact that elections are conducted with or without the full participation of the electorate who are supposed to choose those who rule over them (Muhammad, Kudu and Hassan, 2015). As such, the historical path of elections in Nigeria is characterized by series of electoral irregularities and misconduct. Elections in Nigeria have not been free and fair and this called for technological solution (Eguavon, 2009). Technological approaches towards alleviating electoral fraud such as the use of electronic voting machines, mounting of webcams at polling units and the use of biometric tools will go a long way to reduce malpractices during electoral processes. The first Nigerian move in search of a technological solution was the introduction of the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the 2011 general elections and the second Nigerian move in search of a technological solution was the introduction of the smart card reader by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the 2019 general elections (Golden, Kramon & Ofosu, 2014).

It is in the light of the above, that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced the Biomodal Voters accreditation systems (BVAS) in the electoral processes to reduce the high level of electoral fraud. The BVAS is an electronic device which is used to detect the authenticity of one's permanent voters card (Bright, 2017). This development was premised on the hypothesis that trustworthy voters register and reliable tools for identification of genuine voters are some of the preconditions for free and credible elections. The BVAS then became a vital element in the general elections (Akwen, Jooji and Moorthy, 2018). The ability of the BVAS to perform the above functions as well as keeping a tally of the total number of voters accredited at the polling unit and forwarding the information to a central database server over a Global System for Mobile (GSM) network makes the BVAS most welcome at this point in time in the nation's electoral history (Engineering Network Team, 2015). BVAS also helps in maintaining credible electoral system (Beetseh and Akpoo, 2015). It is against this background that this study attempts to examine the impact of BVAS in mitigating electoral fraud in the 2023 general election in fufure L.G Adamawa State.

Statement of the Research Problem

Considering elections as one of the devices through which diverse interests can be expressed equally and comprehensively, credible elections are among the chief ingredients of a good democratic system. Functional Democracy is unattainable without free, fair and credible elections (Aliyu and Ambali, 2012). However reliable electoral management body is very crucial to any electoral success. In spite of the fact that election in Nigeria is the only avenue for people to change bad governance during the poll, but the politicians have also device a means of defrauding the people during election As such, the general elections in the country has been a business of politics with myriads of challenges which usually heralded with fears, anxieties, uncertainties, intimidations, changing of result, excessive use of money, bribery, corruption, rigging, misconducts, irregularities, logistic problems, political thuggery and violence and above all the party in control of a state apparatus has been known to have cleared the polls with a landslide victory leaving the opposition party with a zero sum game (a process whereby the winner takes all and the loser has nothing), (Sule, Azizuddin, Sani, & Mat, 2018; Abdulyakeen, 2024). As a result of the aforementioned problems, specifically malpractices experienced during election has been a major source of concern that led to the search for credible elections in Nigeria. Elections in the past were done through the use of manual accreditation and this creates room for massive manipulation of election results by the ruling party. The resultant effect of this menace is poor governance as contestants who claim to emerge winners feel they bought votes with their money. As such, no meaningful development is recorded. It is against this background

that the Independent Electoral Commission under the leadership of Prof. Muhammad Yakubu introduced the use of electronic device called Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) which was first used in the 2023 general elections, which seems to have provided some credibility in the electoral process. It is in the light of the above that this study intent to examine the impact of Bvas in Mitigating election fraud in the 2023 general electoral fufure L.G Adamawa.

The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System in the 2023 general elections in Fufure also brought about a reduction in the post elections violence and conflicts. There was no basis for conflicts and violence, because most of the contestants, who lost in the elections, saw the elections as being transparent and credible due to the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System. Therefore, the usual excessively pointless attacking and degrading between the election winners and losers in past elections was significantly reduced. Thus, in view of the reduction in the level of electoral frauds or electoral malpractices consequent upon the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, tensions were reduced among the political gladiators, and as such, electoral conflicts and violence were reduced in the 2023 general election compared to the previous elections in Nigeria characterized by postelection violence resulting to wanton destruction of lives and valuable property. Several scholars like Mohammed, Kudu, & Hassan (2015); Adeniran (2016), have done studies on Bvas and others like Ifegwu, Okeagu, Godslight and Daniel (2019); Anaza Akwen, Jooji and Moothy (2018); Kabir, Abdulkadir and Baba (2017); Bright (2017); Ekuman (2015); but none has specifically aim to ascertain the effect of impact of Bvas in the 2023 general Elections in Fufure L.G.A. Therefore, this attempt bridges the gap in literature. The broad objective of the study is to examine the impact of Bvas in the 2023 general Elections in Nigeria. To achieve this, specifically, this study is designed to ascertain the following objectives:

i. To examine the Impact of BVAS in Mitigating Election Fraud in 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa state.
ii. To investigate how BVAS improved transparency and integrity of electoral process during 2023 General Election in Fufure LG.A of Adamawa State?
iii. To examine Attitudes and behaviors of voters, candidates, and election officials towards BVAS, and how have they perceived its impact on the electoral process.
iv. To analyze unintended consequences from BVAS with respect to the electoral process during 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State?

The Concept of Election

According to Sule, (2019), an election is considered as the backbone of a democratic rule and it is the system or an institution that sustains democracy and provides a healthy competition for power and control of the government. Accordingly, Uluwasuji and Okajere, (2021) see elections as the principal mechanism by which citizens hold government accountable both retrospectively for their policies and more generally for how they govern. On the other hand, Olaniyi, (2017) sees election as the process of electing public functionaries into the different strata of the decision-making process. It is the most crucial stage of the 'electoral processes' because any mistake on the part of any of the electoral stakeholders can mar all other efforts. Yakubu (2010:33) explains elections as 'the processes through which leaders are appointed to and/or selected for an office'. He cautions that using the words 'appointed' and 'selected' should not connote that the free expression of the will of the people is compromised by the original and literal meanings of the words. What is more important is the process that produces public office holders. An election is viewed as a legitimizing institution functioning to give elected leaders to govern. Democracy necessitates participation, equality in voting, citizen understanding and control over the political agenda. This system is based on elected representation, fair and frequent elections, freedom of expression, associational autonomy and inclusive citizenship (Dahl, 2000).

The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System

The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System is a portable electronic device issued by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), configured to read the permanent voter's cards, verify the voters and transmit information to a central database for the purpose of election result

collations. The device uses a cryptographic technology that has ultra-low power consumption, with a single core frequency of 1.2GHz and an Android 4.2.2. Operating system (INEC, 2015).

The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System is designed to read the chip programmed in the PVCs to verify their authenticity as well as the intending voters by matching the biometrics obtained from the voters on the spot with the ones stored on the PVCs (Dahiru, Abdulkadir, Baba, 2015). The voter's card reader also has the ability to keep a tally of the total number of voters accredited at the polling unit and forward it to a central database server over a global system for mobile (GSM) network. It keeps the statistics of the voters' gender for easy collation (Akwen, Jooji and Moorthy, 2018). The PVC is placed into a port in the voter's card reader, which then displays the voter's details. When the voter places his/her thumb on the device, and within 10-20 seconds, his/ her identity is confirmed through the face authentication system except when there are some technical glitches. On completion of the accreditation process, "a close-v" key is used to complete or end the process, while the total number of accredited voters can be previewed using the "query" key. The "communication" key is used to forward results to INEC's central database (Akwen, Jooji and Moorthy, 2018).

Electoral Malpractices in Nigeria

Electoral malpractice is the use of unjust means to win election. It is otherwise called electoral fraud or better still electoral rigging. Electoral malpractice may include results falsification and declaration of a losing contestant as a winner (Osita, 2015). For instance, before independence, two elections were held in 1956 and 1959. Although these elections were organized and administered under the guidance of the colonial regime, they were not free from electoral malpractices. Some of the irregularities that characterized these pre-independence elections included gerrymandering and the use of thugs by political parties to intimate candidates from other political parties, as well as voters (Chikendu, 2003; Abdulyakeen, 2024). The above development is an indication that electoral malpractice in Nigeria has a history that predates Nigeria's independence. Fraudulent electoral practices in Nigeria may occur in one or all of these three major ways: maneuvering the plan of INEC to the benefit of a particular political party or some contestants; campaign rules that leads to discrimination among competitors and lack of both local and foreign observers' access to electoral processes (Akwen, Jooji and Moorthy, 2018). Kurfi itemizes some types of misconducts that take place during elections in Nigeria to include: Gerrymandering; Electoral register manipulation; Misallocation of voter to voting districts; Manipulation of the nomination process and the ballot on polling day (Kurfi, 1989).

The Role of the (BVAS) in Mitigating Election Fraud in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

The use of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System in the 2023 general election is highly commendable because it helped reduce election fraud like multiple registrations and multiple voting. With the BVAS, the true identities of card holders were matched with the details contained in their permanent voter's cards (PVCs), during accreditation and the process helped in reducing fraudulent accreditation that marred electoral processes in the past," (Ekuwem, 2015; Abdulyakeen, 2024). On the whole, the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System in the 2023 general election led to the increase in Nigeria's democratic capacity and the strengthening of democratic institutions. The Nigerian electorates are better informed and enlightened on the imperatives of free, fair and credible election's which underpin a sustainable democracy. The batteries of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System used in the 2023 general elections lasted longer than the ones used in the 2019 general elections. The use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System enhanced credibility of the 2023 general elections as riggings were reduced. However, election riggings were only possible in some polling stations across the Federation where the SCR machines were abandoned by INEC officials as a result of either inducements or intimidations (Abdulyakeen, 2024). Peters (2015) believed that the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System procedure has the capacity to prevent or minimize rigging in the sense that there would not be multiple voting. Electoral conflicts and violence was very minimal as the election was seen to be transparent and credible due to the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System. The usually excessive and pointless attack and degrading between the

election winners and losers in past electoral contests was significantly reduced. In view of the minimal level of electoral fraud associated with its use, tensions were reduced among the political gladiators, and as such, electoral conflict and violence diminished in the 2023 general elections outcome compared to elections prior to its introduction in Nigeria (Ekuwem, 2015).

The use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System increased and reinforced public confidence and trust in the electoral process. Because public confidence in each step of an election process is critical to the integrity of an election, citizens not only have a right to participate in elections, they have a right to know for themselves whether the electoral process is valid. Sadly, electoral fraud did not abate after independence. Indeed, since the inception of the Fourth Republic, a series of elections has been conducted with large-scale electoral fraud and malpractice. For instances according to Ijim et al. (2011), the 2003 general elections effectively put Nigeria on the map of countries that do not understand or respect democracy. Ijim et al. argued that the monumental and state-sponsored structural rigging showed a country with no regard for people's votes. The 2007 general election made Nigerians to lose confidence in the electoral process. Indeed, the flaws that characterized the conduct of the 2007 elections severely dented Nigeria's image and electoral integrity (Orji & Uzodi 2012). The election fell short of basic international standards, to the extent that it was considered the worst in the history of electoral democracy in Nigeria. The 2011 general election, although described by international observers as free and fair, lacked credibility in its conduct especially in the rural areas of Nigeria (Ijim et al. 2011). The smart card reader checked the undemocratic attitude of politicians in polling-booth electoral malpractice. The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (2015) described the device as a game changer in the 2015 and the 2019 general elections. According to the Situation Room, the politicians and candidates were unfamiliar with and even afraid of the card readers, as they had not learnt how to manipulate them. This fact in itself limited their ability to rig the elections (Alebiosu, 2016).

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (2015) described the 2015 elections as one of the most successful general elections in contemporary Nigerian history, and as such the elections renewed citizens' confidence in the electoral process. Indeed, most Nigerians after the elections believed that their votes would count and their will could be respected in future elections; this perception has reinforced the legitimacy of Nigeria's democratic process. The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System drastically reduced electoral fraud. Successive elections in Nigeria since the colonial period lacked the essential ingredients of democratic electoral process: transparency, fairness and freeness. The deployment of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System in the 2023 general elections had some gains in the electoral democracy in Nigeria. Firstly, the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System brought about increased confidence by the citizenry and trust in the electoral process. The confidence of electorate was boosted because of the integrity that the 2023 general election appeared to stand for. The electorates were beginning to believe that their votes could count and as such would be respected in future elections. This consequently reinforced legitimacy of Nigerians in the electoral process.

Challenges of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System in the 2023 General Elections

In spite of assurances given by INEC to address the issues raised by the pilot run using Bvas in twelve states of the federation, the 2023 general elections witnessed an inability of the device to deliver effectively in a large number of polling units. This happened especially in the Presidential and National Assembly elections. Several states experienced difficulties and delays with the use of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System for accreditation and voting. There were reports from Ogun, Imo, Nasarawa, Kebbi, Abia, Lagos and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) etc on difficulties with the use of the devices on Election Day (Ogoyi and Ibukeni, 2019). There were instances where INEC officials resorted to manual Accreditation in Imo and Sokoto States. It will be recalled that Bvas was introduced as an anti-fraud electoral device to enhance the integrity of the process, discourage ghost voter's and prevent multiple voting as only accreditation and verify PVC holders can vote (Muhammad, Kudu and Hassan, 2019). Again, some of the ad-hoc staff could not operate the device despite the intensive training they received from INEC. It is disheartening that a graduate trained on the use of a Bimodal Voter Accreditation

System was unable to use the device which is critical to the electoral process (Kabiru, Abdulkadir and Baba, 2017). When the BVAS did function, a few of the devices were confronted with the challenge of PVC authentication and biometric data verification of the voters in the polling units. The authentication and verification of faces and voters respectively were components of the accreditation process for the election. A number of PVCs issued to voters by INEC could not be authenticated, thereby disenfranchising some eligible voters in the elections. Where voters' cards were authenticated, often their holders' biometric data could not be verified after several; and where it was verified, the devices worked slowly (Odiakose 2015).

Another challenge of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System was the poor awareness of the device and it operations. The electorates, especially those of them in the rural areas were not well informed about the device, some others were not even aware of the existence of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System. A large number of Nigerians did not even have the opportunity of seeing the BVAS and interacting with it until the Election Day. This category of electorates saw the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System as a voting machine. This lack and/or inadequate information dissemination, enlightenment campaigns, and poor sensitization of the electorates, especially those of them in the rural communities, resulted to some kind of poor voter relation and uncooperative attitudes of the voters towards the INEC officials at polling stations (Alebiosu, 2016).

Accordingly, upon the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System in the 2023 general elections was the inadequate training giving to INEC ad hoc Staff by the management of INEC. Most of the ad hoc staff particularly the Presiding Officers and their assistants in the polling stations were not adequately trained on the proper use and handling of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System. These ad hoc staff were not effectively and efficiently trained on the practical use on the field of the device. The cause of the poor training was inadequate trainers and inadequate Bimodal Voter Accreditation System made available for the purpose of practical training by INEC. Thus, some of these INEC ad hoc officials were unable to use the device on the day of elections. As a result of this inability on the part of some of these Corps members, SCR machines were not used in many polling stations across the country and consequently delays were experienced. All these shortcomings led to the poor handling /operation of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System during the 2023 general elections to the extent that some of the devices were unable to detect thumbprint of the electorate during the elections (Adeniran, 2016). Also a number of malfunctioned largely due to challenges ranging from blank screen, non-activation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device. The failure of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System to function maximally and optimally was attributed to the inability of INEC engineers to decode the inbuilt security installation in the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System. Some of the INEC officials blamed this malfunctioning on the shift in the election dates without the Smart Card Reader machines being reprogrammed (Okoro, 2015).

Another challenge was that of Permanent Voters Card (PVC) authentication and biometric data verification of the voters at the polling unit by the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System. It should be noted that authentication and verification of the voters was a part and parcel of accreditation process for election. Some of the PVCs issued to voters by INEC could not be authenticated by the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System thereby disenfranchising some of the eligible voters in the 2023 general election. In some cases, where the PVCs were authenticated, the voters' biometric data could not be verified after several attempts; and where the voters got lucky to be verified, it was usually very slow especially in the area of finger prints. For instance, Odiakosa (2015) reported that in Borno State, 10 percent of the eligible voters cards were authenticated and biometric data verified by the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System at most of the polling units. However, the inability of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System to capture the face of some voters was attributed to the greasy, oily, or dirty fingers of the voters (Adeniran, 2016). In most cases, the voters had to scrub their hands on the ground just to ensure that the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System recognizes their face (Okoro, 2015).

Empirical Review

Biometric Voter Authentication (BVA) systems have gained significant attention as a potential solution for mitigating electoral fraud in various countries' general elections, including the 2023 general election under consideration. The use of biometric technology aims to enhance the accuracy and security of voter identification and authentication processes. Several studies have examined the impact of BVAs on electoral fraud prevention and mitigation. These studies employ different methodologies to evaluate the effectiveness of BVA systems in reducing fraudulent activities during elections. (Smith et al. 2023). One study by Johnson et al (2021) analyzed the implementation of BVAs in a specific country's general election and found that the introduction of biometric authentication significantly reduced instances of multiple voting and impersonation. The study utilized a large sample size and compared election data before and after the implementation of BVAs to draw its conclusions. Another research article by Williams et al (2023) investigated the impact of BVAs on electoral fraud in a different country. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of election data with qualitative interviews and surveys. The findings suggested that the use of BVAs contributed to a decrease in electoral fraud, particularly in cases of voter impersonation.

Amir (2021) provides an in-depth analysis of the role of BVAs in ensuring electoral integrity. The book explores various case studies from different countries and discusses the challenges and benefits associated with implementing BVA systems. It offers insights into the potential impact of BVAs on mitigating electoral fraud in the 2023 general election. Furthermore, (Raheem et al. 2022) presents a comparative analysis of different BVA technologies used in elections worldwide. The article evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of various biometric modalities, such as fingerprint recognition, iris scanning, and facial recognition, in preventing electoral fraud. It provides recommendations for selecting the most suitable BVA system based on specific contextual factors. John (2023) offers an overview of recent developments and advancements in BVA technology for electoral purposes. The resource provides information on the latest research studies, pilot projects, and case studies related to BVAs' impact on mitigating electoral fraud. It serves as a valuable source for understanding the current state-of-the-art in BVA systems.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Elite Theory as its theoretical framework of analysis.

Elite Theory

Elite theory as developed by Mosca (1939), Michels (1962) and Pareto (1968) is ideal for the explanation of the influence of money politics in election on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

This theory was offered by Vilfredo Pareto in 1935 the supposition of the theory is that power is rotated among the elites, this means the elites are substituted by another group of elites, meaning that the masses are unavoidably ruled by the few elites at the expense of the masses (the electorates). It is understood that this idea was developed by Pareto and Mosca in 1935 the law of elite rotation, in line with the above assumption and to support the argument elite theory sees elites as players governing the state and national resources, and occupying key positions related to power networks.

The main assumptions of Elite theory are as follows:

i. First, the theory assumes that in a democracy, top leaders of political parties constitute the governing elite. Their power is based partly on force and partly on consent but the element of force in the mixture is more significant
ii. In order to survive, the governing elite applies bribery, deceit and cunningness to secure the consent of the subject classes;
iii. In addition, the politicians use their money as an instrument to ensure their continued control of the political activities of the country.

Essentially, Elite theory vividly captures the state of Nigeria's democratic political society. It is argued that the Nigerian elites appeared to have succeeded in rendering the majority incapable of controlling them through the perfected process of managing electoral frauds and heinous manipulation of state institutions. Broadly, elite theory as expounded by its advocates and in the context of this study, largely reflect the political elite, who are a few individuals of a society who control the affairs and large chunk of societal resources. They consolidate their stronghold on power using resources available at their disposal to manipulate and influence the outcomes of the electoral process to reflect their morbid ambitions. Nigeria's experience with electoral system can properly be situated within the argument advanced by elite theorists; fraudulent elections in Nigeria are obviously in line with the selfish interest of the country's politicians who use money to rig elections, take over and control the nation's resources in order to fulfill and protect their interest at the expense of the larger public

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design chosen for this study is a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. This approach enables a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted issues at hand.

Source of Data

Primary Source of data

Primary data for the study was questionnaire and structured formal interviewing of respondents to supplement the secondary data.

Questionnaire will be used for data collection in this study. The copies of the questionnaire will be administered to 123 samples aged 18 and above in the study area. The questionnaire shall be administered personally by the researchers to the respondents. The objectives of the research work will be clearly explained to the respondents before administration of the questionnaire. A closed-end questionnaire will be structured to obtain information concerning the impact of insecurity on economic development in the study area.

Interviews: Structured interviews is adopted. The interviewee's in the KII will be directly interviewed by the researchers in English language or Hausa language, while their responses and body gestures of the interviewees were simultaneously written down by note-taking with the help of a note-taker and an electronic recorder. The IDI will be conducted in Hausa language, translated into English Language and transcribed in a verbatim manner together with interviews that were directly conducted in English Language.

Secondary Source of Data

Secondary sources of data will be collected through desk research from journal articles, conference paper, textbook, keynote addresses, security assessment reports, daily newspapers and internet sourced materials that are relevant to the study.

The Study Area

Fufure is a town and Local Government Area in Adamawa State, North-East Nigeria. It is the spiritual home of the Hausa Fulani people. Total land mass of 27 km^2. It lies between latitude 9.840N to 10.840N and longitude 2.450E to 4.00E of the Greenwich meridian. Geographically, Adamawa is bounded in the west by Gombe, in the east Borno, and Plateau in the north while in the south with Taraba up to Benue it shares boarder with Benue (Bello, Abbas and Ekpu, 2014).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used in this study. This includes purposive sampling, and simple random sampling technique. Firstly, purposive sampling technique was used to select the study sites in the state (Fufure LGA). These LGA were purposively selected based on the prevalence of multiple voting, electoral malpractices commercial and manipulative

predispositions. In the final stage Yamane (1967) statistical formula was used to determine the sample size for the study as given as follows:

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

n = Sample size

N = Total Population =165,547

e = Limit of tolerance error = $(0.09)^2$

$$n = \frac{165,547}{1+165,547\ (0.09)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{165,547}{1+165,547\ (0.0081)}$$

$$n = \frac{165,547}{1+ 1,340.9307}$$

$$n = \frac{165,547}{1,341.9307}$$

$n = 123.364791$

$n = 123$

Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument of data collection used for the study is structured questionnaire. The mode of administration was direct contact, by visiting each of the polling unit, involved during election. The questionnaire will be made up of fourteen questions, which comprised open ended and close ended questions types bordering on the problem areas of the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The data elicited in the course of the study was analyzed using simple percentages. The method is also based on primary sources in which open and close ended questionnaires will be administered to respondents. The descriptive statistical tools included percentage and frequency tabulations will be used.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A comprehensive questionnaire was prepared and administered to 123 respondents. It was found that 9 copies were lost while 3 copies damaged due to multiple responses. It means that the remaining 111 copies were used as valid for obtaining analyzable data for this study. More so, the data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical technique through the use of simple percentage together with the use of simple tables. Below are the analyses of data collected.

Questionnaire Distribution

Table 1: Respondents' Distribution of Returned-Not Returned questionnaires

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaire Distributed	123	100
Questionnaires returned	111	90
Questionnaires lost	9	7
Questionnaire damaged	3	3

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in the table above show that, out of 123 copies of the questionnaires distributed which represent the whole population in the study area, 111 copies constituting 90% were returned, while 9 copies constituting 7% were lost, and finally, 3 questionnaires was damaged due to the multiple responses which has accounted for 3%.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents based on gender

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Male	71	64
Female	40	36
Total	111	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-24years	20	18
25-34years	62	56
35-44years	16	14
45 Years and above	13	12
Total	111	100
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	9	8
Secondary	18	16
Tertiary	70	63
Others	14	13
Total	111	100
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Business	13	12
Civil Servant	18	16
Farmer	32	29
Student	34	31
Unemployed	8	7
Others	6	5
Total	111	100
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Singled	66	60
Married	30	27
Divorced	8	7
Widowed	7	6
Total	111	100

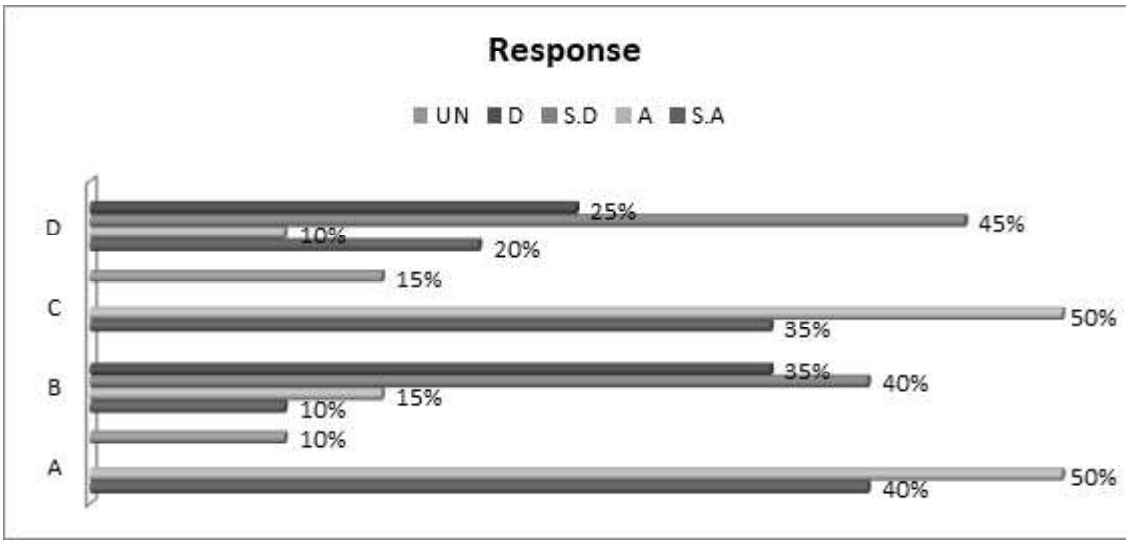
Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The data presented in the above table shown that, out of 111 respondents, 64% were males, while 36% were females. This means that the majority of the respondents in the sample area were males. This difference is because the male respondents were easily accessible than their female counterparts in the study area. Also, 18% were from the age of 18-24years, whereas 56% were from the ages of 25-34years, while 14% were from the ages of 35-44years, and finally, 12% of the respondents were from the 45 years of ages and above. This clearly revealed that the majority of our respondents were youth ranging from the ages of 25-34 years. 9 which represented 8% have primary school certificate, 18, which constituted 16% of the respondent's attained Secondary school, 70 of the respondent constituting 63% attended tertiary institution while 14 representing 13% of the respondents attained other schools such as informal, Arabic schools and so on. Therefore, the majority of our respondents obtained tertiary institution. There is no doubt from the above table that the majority of the respondents were students

which accounted for 31%. This is so because even the majority of the respondents were youth and there are easy assessable compared to other categories of peoples with regard to their occupation. Businessmen constitute 12%, while civil servant has 16%. Whereas Farmers has accounted for 31%, while unemployed has 7%, then the lowest occupation is others such as Mechanics, Technicians and black-smithers which has 5%. Based on data presented in the above table 6, it indicated that, out of the 111 respondents, 66 constituting 60% were single; 30 representing 27% were married; while 8 representing 7%, and 7 constituting 6% were divorced, and widowed respectively. This clearly revealed that the majority of our respondents were singled. This is because it is not possible to access most of the houses for interview due to cultural and religious factors.

The Impact of Bvas In Mitigating Election Fraud In The 2023 General Election In Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State of Nigeria

i. **Figure 4.1:** How was the Impact of BVAS in Mitigating Election Fraud in 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa state



Source: Survey, 2023

Key 1: S.A= strongly agree, **A**= Agree, **S.D**= strongly disagree, **D**= Disagree UN = **undecided**

Key 2:

A: The introduction of BVAS lead to changes in the types of incentives used to buy votes (e.g. Food stuffs, Cloths, and online bank transfer instead of cash).

B: The BVAS helped reduce election fraud like multiple registrations, multiple voting

C: Despite the introduction of BVAS, candidates and their supporters continue to engage in vote buying.

D: Bimodal Voters Accreditation System increase the authenticity of votes cast among the electorates

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Figure 4.1 reveals the distribution of respondents based on how the introduction of BVAS has affected the prevalence and effectiveness of vote buying during 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State.

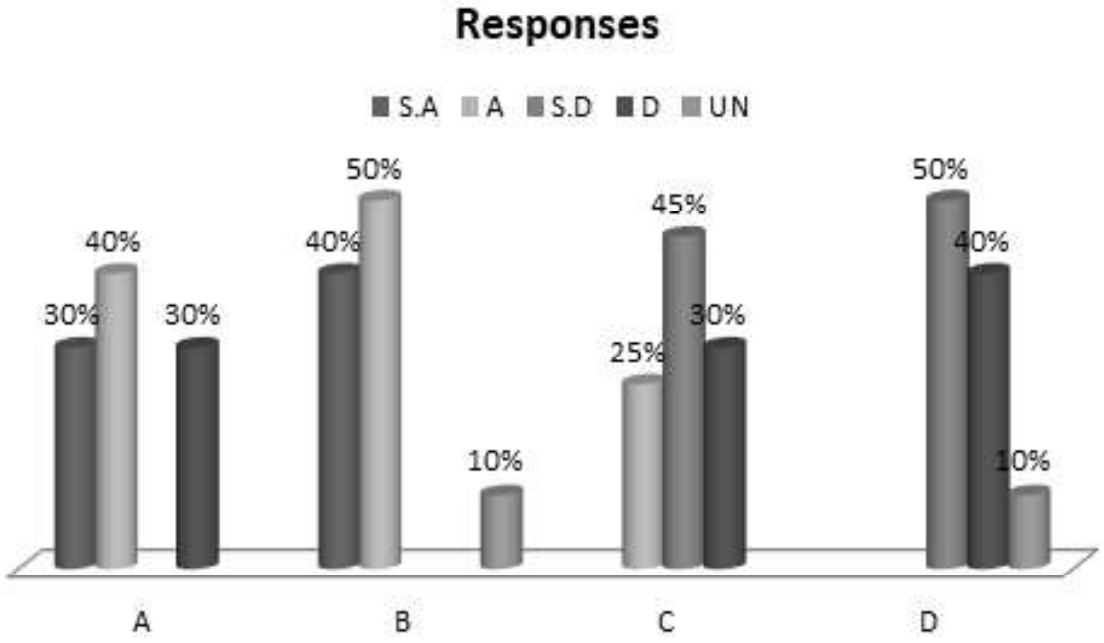
A: The majority of the respondents (50%) agreed that the introduction of the BVAS lead to changes in the types of incentives used to buy votes (especially food stuffs and Cloths); 40% of the respondents also strongly agreed with the above statement; while 10% of the respondents were undecided.

B: The majority of the respondents (40%) strongly disagreed that BVAS makes it difficult and less susceptible to being used for vote buying; 30% of the respondents also disagreed with the above statement; while 15% of the respondents strongly agreed with the above statement; 10% also agreed.

C: Majority of the respondents (50%) agreed that despite the introduction of BVAS, candidates and their supporters continue to engage in vote buying; 35% of the respondents in the study area also strongly agreed with the above statement; while 15% of the respondents were undecided.

D: Majority of the respondents (45%) strongly agreed Bimodal Voters Accreditation System increase the authenticity of votes cast among the electorates for tensions were reduced among the political gladiators, and as such, electoral conflict and violence was grossly diminished in the 2023 general elections outcome compare to past elections prior to its introduction in Nigeria; 25% of the respondents also agreed with the above statement; while 20% of the respondents strongly disagreed; 10% also disagreed.

Figure 4.2: In what ways has BVAS improved the transparency and integrity of the electoral process during 2023 General Election in Fufure LG.A of Adamawa State?



Source: Survey, 2023

Key 1: S.A= strongly agree, **A**= Agree, **S.D**= strongly disagree, **D**= Disagree UN = **undecided**

Key 2:

A: The introduction of BVAS lead to changes in the behavior of election officials e.g. increased against vote buying.

B: There was the emergence of new or different forms of electoral malpractice emerging after the introduction of the BVAS.

C: The BVAS has led to changes in voter's perception and increased trust in the electoral process.

D: The BVAS has prevented vote buying thereby leading to citizens' trust in the electoral process.

Figure 4.2 showed the distribution of respondents based on ways that the BVAS improves the transparency and integrity of the electoral process during 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State.

A: The majority of the respondents (40%) agreed that the BVAS lead to changes in the behavior of election officials e.g. increased vigilance against vote buying; 30% of the respondents in the study area also strongly agreed with the above statement; while 30% of the respondents disagreed.

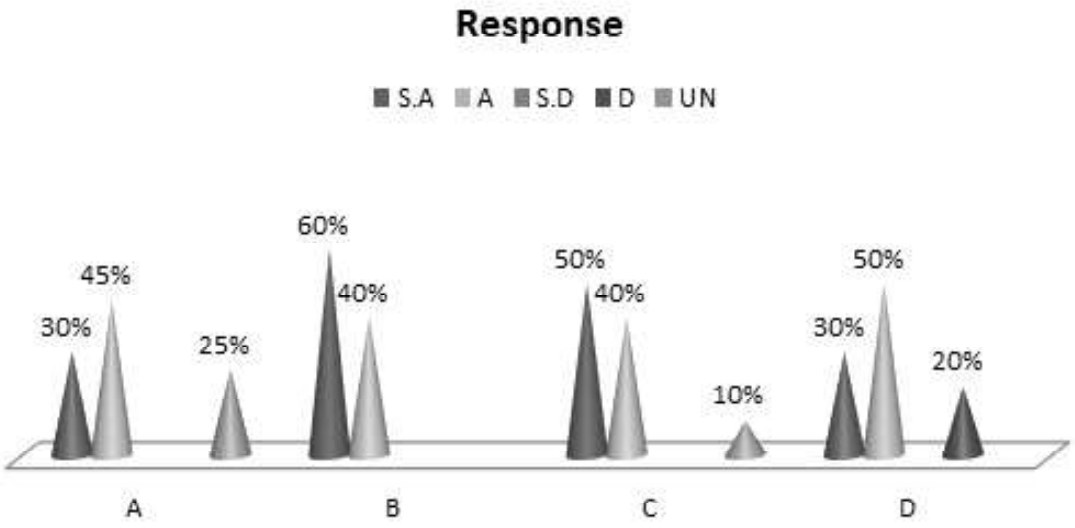
B: Majority of the respondents (50%) agreed that there was the emergence of new or different forms of electoral malpractice emerging after the introduction of the BVAS;

40% of the respondents also strongly agreed with the above statement; while 10% of the respondents were undecided.

C: The majority of the respondents (45%) strongly agree that the BVAS has led to changes in voter's perception and increased trust in the electoral process; 30% of the respondents also agreed with the above statement; while 25% of the respondents disagree.

D: Majority of the respondents (50%) strongly agree that BVAS improves the transparency and integrity of the electoral process thereby leading to citizens' trust in the electoral process; 40% of the respondents also disagreed with the above statement; while 10% of the respondents were undecided.

Figure 4.3: Attitudes and behaviors of voters, candidates, and election officials towards BVAS, and how have they perceived the impact on the electoral process.



Source: Survey, 2023

Key 1: S.A= strongly agree, **A**= Agree, **S.D**= strongly disagree, **D**= Disagree UN = **undecided**

Key 2:

A: The impacts of the BVAS vary depending on the specific electoral contest (e.g. local versus national elections).

B: The impact of the BVAS different in areas with high levels of poverty or among economically vulnerable people.

C: There was prevalence of vote buying in Fufure L.G.A before and after the introduction of BVAS.

D: The Nigerian government is doing enough to prevent election fraud and other forms of electoral corruption.

Figure 4.3 revealed the distribution of respondents based on the attitudes and behaviors of voters, candidates, and election officials towards the BVAS, and how have they perceived the impact of BVAS on the electoral process.

A: The majority of the respondents (45%) agreed that the impacts of the BVAS vary depending on the specific electoral contest (e.g. local versus national elections); 30% of the respondents also strongly agreed with the above statement; while 25% of the respondents were undecided.

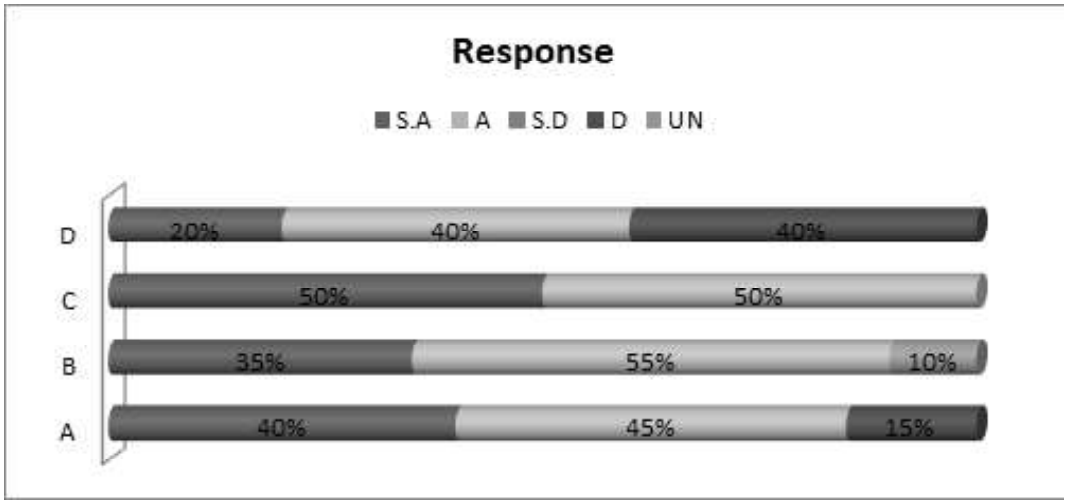
B: Majority of the respondents (60%) strongly agreed that the impact of the BVAS different in areas with high levels of poverty or among economically vulnerable people; 40% of the respondents also agreed with the above statement.

C: The majority of the respondents (50%) strongly agreed that there was prevalence of vote buying in Fufure L.G.A before and after the introduction of BVAS; 40% of the

respondents also agreed with the above statement; while 10% of the respondents were undecided.

D: Majority of the respondents (50%) agreed that the Nigerian government is doing enough to prevent vote-buying and other forms of electoral corruption; 30% of the respondents also agreed with the above statement; while 20% of the respondents disagreed.

Figure 4.4: What unintended consequences or negative effects, if any, have arisen from the BVAS with respect to the electoral process during 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State?



Source: Survey, 2023

Key 1: S.A= strongly agree, **A**= Agree, **S.D**= strongly disagree, **D**= Disagree UN = **undecided**
Key 2:

A: The BVAS caused confusion, complications for voters, candidates, or election officials and negatively affected their ability to participate in the electoral process.

B: The unintended consequences or negative effects of the BVAS outweigh the benefits for the electoral process in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State.

C: There have been noticeable changes in the behavior of voters or candidates that could be attributed to the BVAS

D: There have been instances of mistrust or suspicion among voters or candidates related to the use of BVAS.

Figure 4.3 revealed the distribution of respondents based on unintended consequences or negative effects, if any; that have arisen from BVAS with respect to the electoral process during 2023 General Election in Fufure L.G.A. of Adamawa State

A: The majority of the respondents (45%) agreed that the BVAS caused confusion, complications for voters, candidates, or election officials and negatively affected their ability to participate in the electoral process; 40% of the respondents also strongly agreed with the above statement; while 15% of the respondents disagreed.

B: Majority of the respondents (55%) disagree that the unintended consequences or negative effects of the BVAS outweigh the benefits for the electoral process in Fufure L.G.A of Adamawa State ; 35% of the respondents also strongly disagree with the above statement; while 10% of the respondents were undecided.

C: Half of the respondents (50%) strongly agreed that there have been noticeable changes in the behavior of voters or candidates that could be attributed to the BVAS; another half of the respondents (50%) also agreed with the above statement.

D: 40% of the respondents in the study area agreed that there have been instances of mistrust or suspicion among voters or candidates related to the use BVAS; another 40% of the respondents disagreed with the above statement; while 20% of the respondents strongly

disagreed. The use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System increased and reinforced public confidence and trust in the electoral process. Because public confidence in each step of an election process is critical to the integrity of an election. Citizens not only have a right to participate in elections, they have a right to know for themselves whether the electoral process is valid

Conclusion

The use of the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System for elections is highly commendable because it has helped reduced election fraud like multiple registrations and multiple voting. With the card readers, the true identities of card holders were matched with the details contained in their permanent voter's cards (PVCs), during accreditation and the process helped in reducing fraudulent accreditation that marred electoral processes in the past. Despite the challenges that confronted the operation of some of the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System during the 2023 general election, a significant impact of the device usage was observed after the elections. First, the use of the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System led to the increase and reinforcement of public confidence and trust in the electoral process. This public confidence is dependent on the integrity of an election which the 2023 general election appears to possess in Fufure local government area of Adamawa state and Nigeria at large.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

i. Accreditation should be done simultaneously with voting. The reason for having accreditation and then voting is to prevent voters who wish to vote at more than one polling unit on Election Day from doing so.

ii. Voter awareness and public campaign should be further intensified to eschew the evil of money politics, vote buying, bribery and corruption and the electoral reforms should be undertaken immediately to cater for monitoring of campaign finances and other related issues.

iii. All Nigerians should accept the use Bimodal Voters Accreditation System in the conduct of elections at all levels.

iv. Both INEC and Ad-hoc staff should be properly trained on the use of Bimodal Voters Accreditation System to eliminate the challenges experienced in the 2023 general elections.

v. Electorates should be given proper orientation on the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System

vi. INEC should embark on full implementation of e-voting and other technology-based approach to elections administrations.

vii. INEC should insist on the use trained personnel in Bimodal Voters Accreditation System. There should be no substitution of electoral personnel by politicians during elections.

viii. INEC should maintain the usage of the BVAS in all subsequent elections. Despite the hiccups associated with the use of the machines, it is very important that their usage be maintained in all subsequent elections.

ix. Proper electricity to power smart card battery be put in place in all polling units across the country.

x. Bimodal Voters Accreditation System should be automated to allow voter to vote anywhere they are once they are accredited

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