DIGITAL INITIATIVE AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA (A CASE STUDY OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EGOR LGA EDO STATE)

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BEING A RESEARCH PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.

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MARCH, 2024

CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty my creator, my strong pillar, the source of my inspiration, knowledge and understanding. He has been the source of my strength throughout this program (BSc. Public Administration) and on His wings only have I soared.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the impact of digital initiatives on election administration during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State, Nigeria. Utilizing a multifaceted approach encompassing surveys, interviews, observational studies, and document analyses, the research aimed to unravel the complexities surrounding technology integration in electoral processes. Key findings unveiled both promising advancements and persistent challenges in the adoption of digital initiatives. The effectiveness of biometric voter registration and electronic voting machines showcased potential benefits in enhancing efficiency and transparency. However, these initiatives encountered hurdles such as technical glitches, infrastructure limitations, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Stakeholder perspectives reflected a blend of optimism and concerns, emphasizing the need for addressing challenges to foster public trust in digital systems. This empirical study contributes significant insights into the Nigerian electoral landscape, guiding evidence-based policymaking and electoral reforms. The recommendations underscore the urgency of infrastructure enhancement, cybersecurity measures, comprehensive training programs, and robust public awareness campaigns to harness technology's potential while addressing inherent challenges in future electoral processes. The study serves as a pivotal guide for stakeholders, policymakers, and electoral bodies in fostering more resilient and technologically-driven electoral systems in Edo State, Nigeria.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TITLE PAGE i

CERTIFICATION ii

DEDICATION iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv

ABSTRACT v

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

LIST OF TABLES ix

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Background to the Study .....

1

1.2 Problem Statement .....

3

1.3 Research Questions .....

5

1.4 Research Objectives .....
5

1.5 Scope of the Study..... 6

1.6 Significance of the Study .....
6

1.7 Definition of Terms .....
7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 10

2.1 History of Elections in Nigeria..... 10

2.2 Conceptual Framework: Digital Initiatives in Elections .....
13
2.3 Analyzing Nigeria's Democratic Journey Through Its Electoral Challenges .....
19

2.4 Impact of Digital Tools in Nigeria’s Electoral Processes .....
29

2.4.1 INEC Engagement with Technology .....
29

2.4.2 Stakeholder Engagement with Technology..... 29

2.5 Historical Perspective of Elections in Nigeria .....
30

2.6 Technologies in Election Administration .....
35

2.7 Challenges in Election Administration .....
37

2.8 Theoretical Framework .....
39

CHAPTER THREE:
METHODOLOGY 41

3.1 Introduction .....
41

3.2 Survey Design .....
41

3.3 The Population of Study .....
42

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques .....
42

3.5 Research Instrument .....

43

3.6 Validation and Reliability of Research Instrument .....

43

3.7 Method of Data Collection .....

44

3.8 Data Analysis Techniques .....

44

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA 45

4.1 Introduction .....

45

4.2 Analysis of Respondents' Personal Information 45
4.3 Data Analysis and Presentations (Section B: Field Questions)..... 48

4.4 Discussion of Findings .....

56

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 59

5.1 Summary .....

59

5.2 Conclusion .....
60

5.3 Recommendations .....
61

REFERENCES 63

LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 1: Electoral Statistical Information **.....22**

Table 1: 2023 Presidential Election Results (as announced by INEC)**.....27**

Table 1: Result of 2023 National Assembly **.....27**

Table 1: Result of 2023 House of Reps **.....28**

Table 4.1: Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents **.....46**

Table 4.2: Frequency Table showing the distribution of age of the respondents **.....47**

Table 4.3: Frequency Table showing the distribution of the educational qualification of the respondents **.....
48**

Table 4.4: Table showing the effectiveness of digital initiatives implemented during the 2023

General Elections in Edo State. **.....**
50

Table 4.5: Table to Identify and categorize the challenges faced by election administrators during

the 2023 General Elections in Edo
State. **.....52**

Table 4.6: Table to identify the modalities the modalities in relation to staff training on

digitalization during the 2023 general elections in Edo State**..... 55**

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria's electoral journey is a complex narrative that spans its historical and democratic evolution, deeply intertwined with the nation's socio-political landscape (Adejumobi, 2002). The pre-independence era saw the emergence of traditional systems of governance, where decisionmaking processes within diverse communities were guided by democratic principles of consensus and leadership selection (Omotola, 2018). However, the transition to independence marked a pivotal moment in Nigeria's history, as the nation sought to establish a structured electoral process reflective of its newfound sovereignty (Anugwom, 2020).

In the early years of independence, Nigeria faced numerous challenges in its democratic aspirations. The first federal parliamentary elections held in 1964 were marred by allegations of electoral fraud and irregularities, setting a precedent for subsequent electoral challenges (Osaghae, 1998). Moreover, the period following independence was characterized by political instability, with military coups and transitions between civilian and military rule disrupting the democratic process (Suberu, 2004).

Despite efforts to establish democratic governance, Nigeria's electoral history continued to be fraught with challenges. The return to civilian rule under President Shehu Shagari heralded the Second Republic but was short-lived due to the collapse of democratic institutions amid allegations of electoral malpractice (Adejumobi, 2002). The Fourth Republic, which began in

1999 with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo, brought renewed optimism for democratic consolidation (Momoh, 2004). Efforts were made to reform the electoral process and strengthen democratic institutions, including the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1998 (Gani, 2010).

However, Nigerian elections during the Fourth Republic continued to face significant challenges, including voter intimidation, ballot rigging, and political violence (Awolowo, 2016). The elections held in 2003, 2007, and 2011 were marred by allegations of electoral fraud and irregularities, undermining public confidence in the electoral process (Suberu, 2013).

Despite these challenges, the 2015 elections represented a turning point in Nigeria's electoral history, with the peaceful transfer of power from one civilian government to another (Osaghae, 2016). The elections were widely regarded as credible and transparent, signaling progress towards democratic consolidation and adherence to electoral norms and principles (Agbaje, 2017).

Throughout Nigeria's electoral journey, technological advancements have played a significant role in shaping the electoral process (Adebayo, 2010). Initiatives such as biometric voter registration, electronic voting machines, and result collation systems have been implemented to modernize the electoral system and address challenges related to fraud and transparency (Isumonah, 2016). These technological interventions aim to instill confidence in the electoral process by providing accurate and credible results while minimizing electoral malpractice (Agbaje, 2017).

Furthermore, the role of technology in Nigerian elections has influenced voter participation and awareness (Oyewumi, 2012). Civil society organizations and the media have leveraged

technology to educate voters, monitor elections, and disseminate information, fostering increased citizen engagement and scrutiny of the electoral process (Adebayo, 2010).

The main aim of this research is to analyze the impact of digital initiatives on the administration of elections in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the challenges encountered during the 2023 general elections in Edo State.

1.2 Problem Statement

In an ideal scenario, elections in Nigeria, particularly in Edo State, should be conducted seamlessly, ensuring free, fair, and credible polls that reflect the will of the electorate and uphold democratic principles. However, the present situation reveals a stark contrast, marked by persistent challenges that hinder the integrity and effectiveness of the electoral process.

The integration of digital initiatives in the electoral process, aimed at enhancing efficiency and transparency, faces significant obstacles. Inadequate technological infrastructure, including unreliable power supply and limited internet connectivity, impedes the effective implementation of digital solutions, affecting voter registration, authentication, and result collation processes (Isumonah, 2016). Consequently, these challenges have a direct impact on the ability of electoral bodies to conduct smooth and credible elections, exacerbating existing concerns about the fairness and transparency of the process.

Moreover, the 2023 elections in Edo State were marred by recurrent instances of electoral irregularities, security concerns, and flaws in the legal and regulatory framework governing elections (Anifowose, 2018; Onapajo, 2019). Voter intimidation, ballot-box snatching, and acts of violence disrupted the electoral process, undermining its credibility and posing security risks

(Awolowo, 2016). These issues not only erode public trust in the electoral system but also threaten the stability and legitimacy of democratic governance in the region.

Ambiguities within election laws, coupled with delays in legal redress for disputes, foster uncertainty and distrust among stakeholders (Omotola, 2018). The lack of clarity and consistency in the legal framework governing elections in Edo State contributes to an environment ripe for manipulation and abuse, further undermining the integrity of the electoral process. As a result, there is a pressing need for comprehensive reforms to address these systemic flaws and enhance transparency, accountability, and public confidence in the electoral process.

Addressing these challenges requires strategic interventions and comprehensive analysis (Akpan & Canavan, 2015). How can technological infrastructure be improved to support the seamless integration of digital initiatives in the electoral process? What measures can be taken to enhance security and mitigate electoral irregularities? How can existing legal and regulatory frameworks be reformed to ensure transparency, accountability, and timely resolution of disputes? These are critical questions that must be addressed through collaborative efforts involving electoral bodies, government institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners.

In light of these pressing issues, urgent attention is needed to tackle systemic flaws and enhance the administration of elections in Nigeria, particularly in Edo State. Failure to address these challenges risks further erosion of public trust in the electoral process and could undermine the democratic aspirations of the Nigerian people. Therefore, concerted efforts must be made to implement reforms that promote transparency, accountability, and the integrity of elections, safeguarding the democratic principles upon which Nigeria's governance is built.

1.3 Research Questions

To comprehensively evaluate the impact of digital initiatives and the challenges encountered during the administration of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State, the following research questions will guide the study:

1. How effective were the digital initiatives implemented during the 2023 general elections in Edo State?
2. What were the primary challenges encountered by election administrators in Edo State during the 2023 General Elections?
3. What are the modalities in relation to staff training on digitalization during the 2023 general elections in Edo State?

1.4 Research Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to comprehensively evaluate the impact of digital initiatives and address the challenges encountered during the administration of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives guide this research:

1. To assess the effectiveness of digital initiatives implemented during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State.
2. To identify and categorize the challenges faced by election administrators during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State.
3. To identify the modalities the modalities in relation to staff training on digitalization during the 2023 general elections in Edo State.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is focused on examining the electoral context of Edo State, Nigeria, with specific attention given to the 2023 General Elections. The research aims to analyze the implementation and impact of digital initiatives as well as the challenges encountered within this electoral setting, particularly in Egor LGA of Edo State.

The primary focus of the research is on evaluating the effectiveness of digital initiatives, such as biometric voter registration, electronic voting systems, and result collation technologies, deployed during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State. Additionally, the study aims to comprehensively examine the challenges encountered in the adoption and implementation of these digital solutions.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research study holds significant importance as it critically examines the 2023 General Elections in Edo State, specifically focusing on the impact of digital initiatives and the challenges encountered in the electoral process. Several key aspects highlight the significance of this study

Firstly, the study contributes to electoral reforms by providing empirical evidence and insights into the efficacy of digital initiatives in the electoral process. By assessing the effectiveness and challenges of these initiatives, the research aims to offer valuable recommendations for electoral reforms in Edo State and Nigeria at large.

Secondly, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of digital interventions and identifying key challenges encountered during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State will facilitate improvements in election administration. Addressing these challenges will aid in fortifying the integrity, transparency, and efficiency of future electoral processes.

Moreover, by elucidating the impact of challenges on the conduct and credibility of the electoral process, this research endeavors to promote transparent democratic practices. Insights garnered from this study can foster greater public trust, encourage political participation, and enhance the legitimacy of democratic governance in Nigeria.

Additionally, the research aims to provide pragmatic recommendations based on evidence and analysis. These recommendations will encompass technological enhancements, legal reforms, policy changes, capacity building initiatives, and stakeholder engagements. Implementing these recommendations can positively influence electoral reforms and practices.

Lastly, this study contributes to the academic discourse by providing empirical data, analyses, and findings that can serve as a reference for scholars, policymakers, electoral commissions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders involved in electoral processes and governance.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1. Digital Initiatives

Digital initiatives refer to technological interventions and innovations implemented within the electoral process aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity. These may

include biometric verification, electronic voting systems, voter registration databases, and other digital tools utilized in election administration.

2. Infrastructure Limitations

Infrastructure limitations encompass the inadequacies in physical and technological resources necessary for the effective implementation of digital initiatives in electoral processes. This may involve challenges related to power supply, internet connectivity, hardware availability, and technological access across urban and rural areas.

3. Voter Perception

Voter perception signifies the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions held by voters concerning the adoption and utilization of digital technologies in the electoral process. It involves the level of trust, acceptance, and confidence voters have in the efficacy and fairness of digital initiatives in elections.

4. Electoral Irregularities

Electoral irregularities encompass any deviations or anomalies in the electoral process that compromise its fairness, integrity, or legitimacy. These may include instances of voter fraud, manipulation of results, technical malfunctions in digital systems, or any actions that undermine the credibility of the electoral process.

5. Elections

Elections are formal processes in which citizens of a country or jurisdiction participate to choose representatives or make decisions on public issues. Through voting, individuals express their preferences for candidates, political parties, or specific policies. Elections are fundamental to democratic governance, providing citizens with the opportunity to exercise their right to participate in the selection of leaders and the shaping of government policies.

6. Transparency and Accountability

Transparency refers to the openness and accessibility of electoral procedures, ensuring that processes, decisions, and actions are easily understandable and visible to stakeholders. Accountability signifies the responsibility and answerability of electoral authorities for their actions and decisions, contributing to the credibility of the electoral process.

7. Electoral Reforms

Electoral reforms denote deliberate changes, modifications, or improvements made to the electoral system with the aim of enhancing its fairness, effectiveness, and inclusivity. These reforms can include legislative changes, technological advancements, and administrative modifications aimed at improving the electoral process.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of Elections in Nigeria

The history of elections in Nigeria is a tapestry woven with threads of democratic aspirations, military interventions, and struggles for political stability. From its independence in 1960 to the present day, Nigeria's electoral landscape has been shaped by a series of elections marked by varying degrees of credibility, transparency, and challenges (Adejumobi, 2002).

Following Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule on October 1, 1960, the country embarked on its democratic journey with the hope of building a stable and representative government. The early years of independence saw the holding of the first federal parliamentary elections in 1964. However, these elections were tainted by allegations of electoral fraud and irregularities, setting a precedent for subsequent electoral challenges (Osaghae, 1998).

The period following independence was characterized by political instability, punctuated by military coups and transitions between civilian and military rule (Diamond, 1988). Military interventions disrupted the democratic process, leading to the suspension of democratic institutions and the manipulation of electoral outcomes to suit the interests of ruling military regimes (Suberu, 2001).

Despite transitions to civilian rule in 1979 and subsequent attempts to establish democratic governance, Nigeria's electoral history continued to be marred by irregularities and challenges. The return to civilian rule under President Shehu Shagari heralded the Second Republic but was short-lived due to the collapse of democratic institutions amid allegations of electoral malpractice (Adejumobi, 2002).

The Fourth Republic, which began in 1999 with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo, brought renewed optimism for democratic consolidation (Momoh, 2004). Efforts were made to reform the electoral process and strengthen democratic institutions, including the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1998 (Gani, 2010).

However, Nigerian elections during the Fourth Republic continued to face significant challenges, including voter intimidation, ballot rigging, and political violence (Awolowo, 2016). The elections held in 2003, 2007, and 2011 were marred by allegations of electoral fraud and irregularities, undermining public confidence in the electoral process (Suberu, 2013).

Despite these challenges, the 2015 elections represented a turning point in Nigeria's electoral history, with the peaceful transfer of power from one civilian government to another (Osaghae, 2016). The elections were widely regarded as credible and transparent, signaling progress towards democratic consolidation and adherence to electoral norms and principles (Agbaje, 2017).

The 2015 elections, held under the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) headed by Attahiru Jega, were a significant milestone in Nigeria's democratic journey. The adoption of biometric voter registration and the use of electronic card readers aimed to enhance the credibility and transparency of the electoral process. Despite initial skepticism and

concerns about logistical challenges, the elections were largely peaceful, with widespread participation and minimal incidents of violence (Anifowose, 2018).

The victory of Muhammadu Buhari, the opposition candidate, over the incumbent president marked the first time in Nigeria's history that an opposition party successfully unseated a sitting president through the ballot box. This peaceful transfer of power underscored the resilience of Nigeria's democratic institutions and the determination of its citizens to uphold the principles of democratic governance (Isumonah, 2016).

However, the 2019 elections presented new challenges and controversies, raising questions about the sustainability of Nigeria's democratic gains. Allegations of electoral irregularities, voter suppression, and political violence cast a shadow over the credibility of the electoral process (Onapajo, 2020). The conduct of some electoral officials and security personnel came under scrutiny, with accusations of bias and complicity in electoral malpractices (Anugwom, 2020).

Despite these challenges, Nigeria's electoral history demonstrates a gradual evolution towards greater democratic accountability and transparency. The resilience of civil society organizations, the media, and the judiciary in holding electoral authorities accountable has been instrumental in safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process (Adebanwi, 2019).

Looking ahead, Nigeria faces ongoing challenges in consolidating its democratic gains and addressing systemic issues that undermine the credibility of elections. Strengthening electoral institutions, enhancing voter education and participation, and promoting transparency and accountability in the electoral process are essential steps towards building a more inclusive and representative democracy (Omotola, 2018).

Nigeria's electoral history is a testament to the country's enduring struggle for democratic governance amidst political upheavals and social transformations. While significant progress has been made in recent years, the journey towards fully inclusive and transparent elections remains ongoing. By addressing the underlying challenges and upholding the principles of democratic governance, Nigeria can pave the way for a more stable and prosperous future for its citizens

(Ibeanu, 2017).

2.2 Conceptual Framework: Digital Initiatives in Elections

The conceptual framework surrounding digital initiatives in electoral processes encompasses a diverse range of technological advancements aimed at revolutionizing traditional methods and enhancing the efficiency and credibility of election administration. These initiatives include:

Biometric Verification Systems

Biometric verification systems have emerged as pivotal tools within electoral processes, utilizing distinct physiological characteristics like fingerprints, facial features, or iris scans to verify and authenticate voters during registration and at polling stations. This technology aims to prevent instances of voter impersonation and significantly enhances the precision and reliability of the electoral roll. By employing these unique biometric markers, electoral authorities can effectively eliminate duplications, unauthorized registrations, and impersonation attempts, thereby fortifying the integrity of the electoral system and fostering trust among citizens in the accuracy of voter identification methods (Belhadj, 2017).

Electronic Voting Systems

Electronic voting systems, a contemporary advancement in the electoral process, represent a departure from conventional paper-based voting methods. These systems introduce digital

interfaces that enable voters to cast their ballots electronically, thereby transforming the way elections are conducted. They encompass a spectrum of technologies ranging from directrecording electronic (DRE) machines to internet-based voting platforms, each designed to cater to different electoral environments and needs.

Direct-recording electronic (DRE) machines are one form of electronic voting system that presents voters with a digital interface for casting their votes. These machines typically incorporate touchscreens or buttons that allow voters to make their selections directly on the device. DREs often provide accessibility features like audio ballots for visually impaired voters and multilingual options, enhancing inclusivity in the voting process.

Internet-based voting platforms, on the other hand, leverage the power of the internet to facilitate voting. They enable voters to cast their ballots remotely via secure online portals. This approach offers convenience and accessibility, especially for voters who may not be able to physically visit polling stations due to geographic or logistical constraints. However, internet-based voting systems require robust security measures to safeguard against cyber threats and ensure the integrity of the electoral process.

The implementation of electronic voting systems holds the promise of expediting the voting process and potentially delivering more accurate and timely results. These systems eliminate the need for traditional paper ballots, reducing the time required for ballot counting and tallying. Furthermore, they have the capacity to streamline the overall electoral process, providing faster and more efficient mechanisms for recording and processing votes.

Electronic voting systems offer increased accessibility and potential for faster and more accurate vote tallying (Shchoholev, 2023). These systems replace traditional paper-based ballots with digital interfaces, enabling voters to cast their votes electronically. Ranging from directrecording electronic (DRE) machines to internet-based voting platforms, they revolutionize the electoral process by providing various options for casting and tabulating votes.

Result Collation and Transmission Technologies

Digital platforms and systems designed for result collation and transmission represent a paradigm shift in electoral procedures by enabling swift, real-time data collection, consolidation, and prompt dissemination of election results. These cutting-edge technologies facilitate an accelerated tabulation process, eliminating the delays inherent in manual calculations. Moreover, they significantly contribute to bolstering transparency in the electoral process by offering immediate and unfiltered access to election outcomes. By providing stakeholders, including citizens, electoral officials, and observer groups, with instantaneous access to the collected data, these systems enhance scrutiny and confidence in the accuracy and integrity of the results. This transparency fosters greater accountability and trust in the electoral process, as the immediate availability of results mitigates suspicions of manipulation or tampering, ensuring a more credible and inclusive democratic exercise (Kolade et al., 2023).

Impact of Technology in Elections

The integration of digital initiatives in electoral processes has yielded several significant impacts:

1. **Enhanced Transparency:** Real-time reporting and availability of election data contribute to increased transparency, allowing stakeholders and the public to monitor the process closely.

2. **Improved Efficiency:** Digital interventions streamline administrative procedures, potentially reducing the time taken for result tabulation and announcement.

3. **Credibility and Trust:** By minimizing human errors and vulnerabilities associated with manual processes, technology aims to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of election outcomes.

4. **Challenges and Risks:** However, the adoption of technology in elections presents challenges, including concerns regarding cybersecurity, reliability of technology, and equitable access to these systems among diverse demographics.

Global Examples of Successful Implementation

Studies conducted by George, Agada, and Katampe (2017) have extensively examined the correlation between globalization and the maintenance of democratic stability in various African nations. Their research, featured in the FuLafia Journal of Contemporary Political Studies, posits that the advent of globalization has exerted a significant influence on the democratic processes within the continent, shedding light on the intricate dynamics between global interconnectedness and political stability.

Global case studies of countries successfully implementing digital initiatives in their electoral systems, such as Estonia's e-voting system or India's biometric identification in elections, offer valuable insights.

1. **Estonia's e-Voting System**

Overview:

Estonia is renowned for its advanced e-governance infrastructure, particularly its e-voting system, which has been in operation since 2005. The country introduced internet voting as an option for its citizens in national elections, setting a global precedent for online voting systems.

Key Features:

1. **Secure Identification:** Estonian citizens possess digital IDs, allowing secure authentication for accessing government services, including voting.
2. **Accessibility:** E-voting provides convenience, allowing voters to cast their ballots remotely using a secure online platform during designated voting periods.
3. **Transparency and Verification:** The system allows voters to verify their votes after casting, ensuring the accuracy of the recorded selections.
4. **Strong Cybersecurity Measures:** Robust cybersecurity protocols and encryption techniques are in place to safeguard the integrity of the system.

Success Factors:

1. **High Voter Participation:** E-voting has significantly increased voter turnout, especially among younger demographics and citizens living abroad.
2. **Efficiency and Accuracy:** The system ensures swift tabulation of votes and has shown reliability in maintaining accuracy.

3. **Trust and Confidence:** Despite initial skepticism, Estonian citizens have grown to trust the system due to its transparency and security measures.

2. **India's Aadhaar-Based**

Identification System in Elections

Overview:

India's Aadhaar system, a biometric identification initiative, has been integrated into various aspects of governance, including elections. Aadhaar facilitates voter verification and authentication, aiming to streamline electoral processes and reduce voter fraud.

Key Features:

1. **Biometric Authentication:** Aadhaar provides a robust biometric authentication system based on iris scans and fingerprints, enhancing the accuracy of voter verification.

2. **Prevention of Duplicate Voting:** Aadhaar integration helps eliminate duplicate voter registrations and impersonation, ensuring the integrity of the electoral roll.
3. **Efficiency and Cost Savings:** Streamlining the verification process reduces administrative burden and potential costs associated with maintaining voter databases.

Success Factors:

1. **Enhanced Accuracy:** Aadhaar-based authentication has significantly reduced the instances of voter fraud and duplication.

2. **Efficient Electoral Processes** Integration of Aadhaar has expedited voter verification, resulting in smoother and faster electoral processes.

3. **Improved Inclusivity:** The system has helped include marginalized populations by ensuring their inclusion in the electoral process.

Both Estonia's e-voting system and India's Aadhaar-based identification system exemplify successful global implementations of digital initiatives in electoral processes. These examples highlight the benefits of enhanced security, efficiency, inclusivity, and increased voter participation achieved through the adoption of technology in elections. They serve as valuable models for countries considering or improving their own digital electoral systems, providing insights into best practices, challenges, and successes.

The conceptual framework of digital initiatives in elections encompasses a broad spectrum of technological advancements aimed at transforming and modernizing electoral processes. This section lays the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis of the application, challenges, and outcomes of these initiatives within the context of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State, Nigeria.

2.3 Analyzing Nigeria's Democratic Journey Through Its Electoral Challenges

Elections in Nigeria have consistently attracted significant attention from Nigerian academics. This is primarily because, despite the understanding that only credible elections can strengthen and maintain the nation's democracy, Nigeria has faced a mounting sense of frustration and concern. Throughout the years, the country has struggled to organize peaceful, transparent, and

fair elections that yield widely acknowledged and respected results across its regions (Igbuzor, 2010; Osumah and Aghemelo, 2010; Ekweremadu, 2011; Ojukwu, Mbah, and Maduekwe).

Democratic governance represents a mutual agreement between those in power and the populace, established through transparent elections in which qualified citizens possess the constitutional right to choose their leaders. Within democratic societies, citizens can influence governance by selecting or rejecting political candidates, thereby shaping the direction of governance (Ifukor, 2010, p.404). Clapham (1993, p.32) asserts that democracy necessitates consensus-building among all stakeholders, managing political competition without resorting to widespread violence, except in rare and containable circumstances.

Accountability of leaders to the governed, following broadly accepted procedures enforceable against dissenting rulers, is a fundamental aspect of this system. However, post-independence elections in Nigeria have been riddled with fraud and the distortion of the people's will. This issue may be rooted in what scholars often refer to as the "politics of primitive wealth accumulation" in Africa.

Luqman (2009, p.59) notes Nigeria's history of elections in its democratization process as a mixed one. Since independence, electoral conduct has often been futile due to fraudulent practices, corruption, and violence. Consequently, democratization efforts have collapsed due to flawed elections and electoral processes. Politics' transformation into a money-making venture has turned Nigerian elections into a warlike process (Odoziobodo, 2015).

Luqman (2005, p.59) further attributes the problems in Nigeria's democratic history to both the attitudes of the political elite and the shortcomings of the institutions responsible for conducting

elections. Past electoral commissions in Nigeria, instead of being independent and non-partisan, were often aligned with the ruling executive. Their lack of transparency, impartiality, accountability, and responsiveness contributed significantly to electoral failures.

A critical review of Nigeria's election management bodies from 1959 to the present reveals alarming partiality and incompetence in fulfilling their duties. According to Luqman (2009, p.60), their inability to manage elections effectively has severely impacted Nigeria's quest for a credible democratic system, leading to military interventions in the nation's political landscape (Odoziobodo, 2015).

By the time of the 2023 general election, Nigeria had conducted ten general elections since independence in 1960. Military-led transitions occurred in 1979, 1993, and 1999, while civilian governments organized the other elections. However, credibility issues plagued the civilian-led elections of 1964, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019. The electorate often perceived these elections as neither free nor fair, criticizing the electoral commissions—FEDECO, NEC, NECON, and INEC—for partisanship and catering to the ruling government's interests (Oronsaye, 2008, p.80).

Multiple domestic and international election-monitoring groups deemed the 2023 elections the worst in Nigeria's history. These groups, including the EU EOM, Yiaga Africa, IRI, NDI, IEOM,

Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, CDD West Africa, and IFRA-Nigeria, criticized INEC's poor preparation and execution, resulting in disputed election results across various political offices in 2023.

INEC implemented novel technologies for the 2023 polls, like the Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Results Viewing Portal (IReV). BVAS

authenticated voters using biometrics during accreditation and electronically sent polling unitlevel result images to the IReV online platform by the end of Election Day. The public release of these results via IReV was expected to significantly enhance election transparency compared to the 2019 polls. While this innovation aimed for a credible election, questions arose regarding the impartiality, objectivity, and innovation of those managing these systems.

In light of this context, this paper examined the relationship between democracy and the 2023 general elections, specifically evaluating the effectiveness of BVAS and IReV in conducting the election and advancing democracy in Nigeria.

The 2023 general election marked Nigeria's seventh consecutive election since the restoration of its democracy in 1999. Notably, this election spanned 24 uninterrupted years—the lengthiest period of democratic governance in Nigeria's history. It was the inaugural nationwide election conducted under the new Electoral Act signed by President Buhari in February 2022. Continuing Nigeria's trend of leveraging advanced technology, INEC employed two innovations: BVAS for voter verification and authentication and the INEC Results Viewing Portal, a public platform for voter tabulation that was deployed nationwide.

The buildup to Nigeria's 2023 general election was marked by uncertainty, stemming from the electorate's long-held belief that their votes held little significance. This sentiment was rooted in decades of military rule following independence in 1960. Nigeria, Africa's largest country by GDP and population, has experienced a series of general elections, some marred by irregularities and others deemed deeply flawed, such as the contentious 2007 election that brought President Yar'Adua into power.

The 2023 election was fiercely contested, following President Buhari's 2015 election victory, which promised to address security challenges, notably the Boko Haram insurgency, and prioritize combating corruption and bolstering the economy. However, after eight years, progress in these areas has been debated. While strides have been made in countering insurgencies, claims of victory have faced skepticism. Similarly, anti-corruption efforts have been perceived as biased, and economic growth has been limited, leading to significant hardship for a substantial portion of the population, as highlighted in a recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics indicating widespread poverty.

Table 2.1: Electoral Statistical Information

Election Date	Figures
Presidential and National Assembly elections Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections states Local Government Areas (LGAs) Total no. of Registered voters	February 25, 2023 March 18, 2023 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory 774 LGAs 93,469,008
Males Females	49,054,162 (52.5 percent) 44,414,846 (47.5 percent)
Persons with disabilities Youth (aged 18–34) years	85,362 (data from the 2021–22 registration exercise) 37,060,399 (39.65 percent)
Registration areas/wards Polling unit	8,809 176,846
No of Electoral Constituencies for the Available seats	

Presidential constituency (36 States and the FCT) Governorship seats Senatorial district seats House of Representatives seats State Houses of Assembly seats Total	1 28 States 109 360 993 1,491
Men Women Youth	91.7 percent 8.3 percent 28.6 percent
Campaign expenditure limit based on the type of position competed for	
Presidential candidates Governorship candidates Senate candidates House of Representatives candidates Houses of Assembly candidates	5 billion naira ($10,848,800 USD equivalent) 1 billion naira ($2,169,760 USD equivalent) 100 million naira ($216,976 USD equivalent) 70 million naira ($151,883 USD equivalent) 30 million naira ($65,092 USD equivalent

Source: INEC, 2023 (Computation into percentage was made by the Researchers).

INEC's steadfastness in utilizing BVAS and IReV for the Elections

BVAS

The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) is an electronic tool specifically designed to read Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and authenticate voters by utilizing their fingerprints. Its primary purpose is to verify voters' eligibility to cast their votes at specific polling units. BVAS operates as a technological device for verifying and accrediting voters through their fingerprints and facial recognition before allowing them to vote. Its use involves scanning the barcode/QR code on the PVC/Voter's register, entering the last six digits of the Voter Identity Number, or inputting the voter's last name by the Assistant Presiding Officer (APO 1) for verification and authentication. Additionally, BVAS replaces the Z-pad for the real-time uploading of polling unit results to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) on election day. BVAS also functions as the INEC Voter Enrolment Device (IVED) during voter registration, rendering the use of incident forms unnecessary during accreditation on election day.

INEC implemented new technologies, such as BVAS and IReV, aiming to enhance the management of the 2023 elections. BVAS was deployed to biometrically verify voters during the accreditation process and electronically transmit polling unit-level result images to the IReV online portal at the close of Election Day. The publication of these results via IReV was anticipated to significantly enhance transparency in elections compared to the 2019 polls. However, the success of these technologies hinges on their proper administration, nationwide functionality, and the public's trust in these systems (IRI/NDI report, 2023).

Although INEC successfully conducted trials of both systems during three off-cycle elections, it did not conduct a comprehensive nationwide stress test ahead of the February elections.

In January 2023, following the procurement of BVAS machines for the 2023 elections, the BVAS hardware and software underwent field testing at INEC state offices. Citizen observers from Yiaga-Africa could observe the field tests in some locations, but the exercise was reportedly not intended to be open to the public (IRI/NDI report, 2023). On a positive note, INEC carried out a public mock accreditation exercise on February 4, during which results and accreditation data were transmitted to IReV using the BVAS machines. However, this exercise involved only 436, or less than one-third of one percent, of the polling units nationwide, with minimal public participation.

IReV

The INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) is a platform created by the Independent National

Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria to provide real-time transmission of election results from polling units to the central collation centre. IReV enables the people to view election results real time from various polling units across the country (Businessday, Wednesday, July 19, 2023). The IReV is an online portal where polling unit level results are uploaded directly from the

polling unit, transmitted and published for the public. At the front end of the online portal, members of the public can create personal accounts with which they can gain access to all uploaded results stored as PDF files. The portal provides pictures of the election results from each polling unit, including the number of votes cast for each candidate and the percentage of total votes cast. This accessibility of polling unit level results increases transparency and public trust in the process. Thus, IReV was designed to enhance the transparency of the electoral process and reduce the incidence of vote rigging and election manipulation. IReV was first introduced by INEC in 2020 when a by-election was conducted in Nasarawa state. The IReV was put to use in the recent off-season elections, including the Ekiti and Osun governorship polls with the electoral body and stakeholders in the electoral process gave credibility to the exercise. The portal is also backed by the 2022 Electoral Act which gives INEC the power to deploy appropriate technologies for the conduct of elections in the country. Section 41(1) gives the commission the mandate to provide suitable boxes, electronic voting machines, or any other voting devices for the conduct of elections. Section 47(2) requires the presiding officer to use a smart card reader or any other technological device prescribed by the commission to verify, confirm, authenticate, and accredit voters. Section 50(2) states that subject to Section 63, voting at an election and transmission of results shall be in accordance with the procedure defined by INEC. Mahmood Yakubu, INEC chairman had at a briefing penultimate to the general election said the commission Direct Res. Soc. Sci. Edu. Studies 58 has vast experience in election results transmission via the iReV.

Election Outcome

On March 1st, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced that Bola Tinubu (APC) secured 8,794,726 votes (36.61 percent), placing first. Atiku Abubakar (PDP) came in second with 6,984,520 votes (29.07 percent), and Peter Obi (LP) trailed in third with 6,101,533 votes (25.40 percent). Rabiu Kwankwaso (NNPP) garnered 1,496,687 votes (6.23 percent). Out of the 93.5 million registered PVC card holders, approximately 25 million (27 percent) cast their votes. YIAGA Africa's parallel vote tabulation suggested discrepancies in the presidential results for Imo and Rivers states (YIAGA Africa, 2023).

The process leading to Bola Tinubu's declaration as the winner was contested by opposition parties, including the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP), and the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP). PDP and LP pursued legal action, seeking access to INEC materials and technological data used in the February 25 elections. The Court of Appeal swiftly granted their request, enabling INEC to prepare for the March 18 polls. Allegations surfaced that

INEC did not fully comply with court orders, prompting concerns for further judicial interventions. While PDP initially withdrew its appeal on March 15, citing INEC's partial compliance, the Labour Party persisted in alleging non-compliance as late as March 16, hindering their petition preparation.

The post-election atmosphere on February 25 remained mostly peaceful, with parties urging supporters to remain calm. However, violence escalated days before the March 18 elections, involving attacks, abductions, and fatalities among candidates, allegedly orchestrated by thugs and unidentified gunmen. This surge in violence strategically aimed to deter voter participation before and during Election Day.

INEC released the names of winners for 428 out of 469 National Assembly seats on March 7 via its Twitter account. Results in seven Senatorial districts and 32 House of Representatives (HoR) constituencies were deemed inconclusive, prompting supplementary elections following the state-level polls. The LP senatorial candidate's killing in Enugu-East led INEC to postpone elections in that district, later rescheduling them to align with the state-level polls. Table 2.2: 2023 Presidential Election Results (as announced by INEC)

Candidate	**Party**	**No. of Valid Votes**	**%**
Bola Tinubu	All Progressives Congress (APC)	8,794,726	36.6
Atiku	Abubakar People's Democratic Party (PDP)	6,984,520	29.1
Peter Obi	Labour Party (LP6)	6,101,533	25.4
Rabiu Kwankwaso	New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP)	1,496,687	6.2
Others		648,474	2.7

Table 2.3: Result of 2023 National Assembly Elections (Senate and House of Representatives) as Declared by INEC

Party	**Seats (Senate)**	**Percentage**
All Progressive Congress	59	54.1
Peoples Democratic Party	36	33.2
Labour Party	8	7.3
New Nigeria Peoples Party	2	1.8
Social Democratic Party	2	1.8
All Progressive Grand	1	0.9
Alliance		
Young Progressive Party	1	0.9
Total	109	100

Source: INEC, 2023 (Computation into percentage was made by the Researchers)

Table 2.4: House of Representatives

Party	Seats (Senate)	Percentage
All Progressive Congress	176	48.8
Peoples Democratic Party	118	32.7
Labour Party	35	9.7
New Nigeria Peoples Party	19	5.3
Social Democratic Party	5	1.4

All Progressive Grand Alliance	2	0.6
Young Progressive Party	2	0.6
African Democratic Congress (ADC)	1	0.3
Other	2	0.6
Total	360	100

. Source: INEC, 2023 (Computation into percentage was made by the Researchers)

2.4 Impact of Digital Tools in Nigeria's Electoral Processes

2.4.1 INEC Engagement with Technology

Research indicates substantial positive advancements in the electoral process due to the adoption of DDC machines, AFIS, and SCR since 2007. Notably, in 2007, the utilization of 40,000 DDC machines facilitated the registration of over 61 million voters (Amata, 2022).. Presently, INEC has successfully captured and stored biometric data and phone numbers of more than 90 million voters.

According to Yusuf (2016), the implementation of technology significantly curbed electoral fraud, particularly multiple registrations and voting, during the 2015 elections. This reduction contributed to enhanced credibility, transparency, and acceptance of the election outcome. Additionally, the perceived transparency brought about by technology resulted in minimal election litigations (Amata, 2022).

2.4.2 Stakeholder Engagement with Technology

During the 2023 general elections, civil society organizations (CSOs) and media outlets emerged as pivotal entities in Nigerian electoral affairs. Similar to the electoral body, they embraced and employed a variety of technologies pertinent to their respective functions. These organizations deployed an array of technological tools to oversee and report on the electoral process, endeavoring to enhance transparency.

For instance, Dataphyte, Stears, Civic Hive, Connected Development, and YIAGA Africa utilized diverse digital instruments that furnished real-time updates, complementing the INEC IReV. Dataphyte launched the Dataphyte Elections Portal (DEP), a comprehensive platform offering live updates on election results and tracking electoral incidents across the 774 local government areas in Nigeria.

Stears created Stears Elections, providing analogous services to Dataphyte's DEP, including realtime updates on election results. Meanwhile, Civic Hive, an innovation center affiliated with BudgIT, introduced an election results portal that not only delved into manifestos and candidates' profiles but also featured an interactive election map.

Additionally, Connected Development (CODE) introduced UZABE, an Open Situation Awareness Room (OSAR) initiative, catering to real-time intelligence, mapping tools, and witness reports from 20,000 trained observers stationed across diverse polling units nationwide.

Yiaga Africa developed the Election Result Analysis Dashboard (ERAD), facilitating real-time aggregation and analysis of polling unit results uploaded to the IReV. These initiatives significantly contributed to enhancing transparency and overseeing the 2023 general elections' electoral process.

2.5 Historical Perspective of Elections in Nigeria

Pre-Independence Electoral Systems

Before Nigeria gained independence, traditional systems governed decision-making processes within various communities. These systems were rooted in indigenous governance structures, such as councils of elders, consensus-based decision-making, and informal methods for selecting leaders. Formalized electoral processes were absent, and leadership positions were often hereditary or based on communal agreement.

Post-Independence Transition

Post-independence Nigeria marks a significant era characterized by numerous political transitions and transformations. This period was a pivotal moment as the nation navigated its path from colonial dependency to a sovereign entity. Gaining independence in 1960 heralded a new chapter in Nigeria's history, marked by the formation of its governance structure and the establishment of a more structured electoral system.

The early days of Nigeria's democratic journey were laden with complexities and challenges that impeded the seamless consolidation of democratic principles. Despite the promising inception of a structured electoral system, the nascent democracy was swiftly met with obstacles. These challenges primarily encompassed pervasive electoral malpractices that undermined the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. Instances of voter fraud, rigging, and irregularities in the electoral process plagued the early democratic landscape.

Moreover, political unrest emerged as a prominent feature of this phase. The country faced significant social and political upheaval, characterized by regional tensions, ethno-religious

conflicts, and power struggles. These elements created a tumultuous atmosphere, casting a shadow over the nascent democracy's stability.

Compounding these challenges were recurrent military interventions in the political sphere. Nigeria witnessed periods of military coups and interventions that interrupted the democratic process. The presence of military regimes disrupted the continuity of democratic governance and contributed to a cycle of political instability.

The impact of these multifaceted challenges was profound, hindering the nation's efforts to consolidate democratic practices. Despite the aspirations for a robust democratic system following independence, Nigeria's early experiences were beset by hurdles that dampened the prospects of fostering a sustainable and credible democratic framework.

Overcoming these challenges and achieving a stable, functional democracy demanded deliberate efforts and strategic reforms. Subsequent decades would witness ongoing endeavors aimed at addressing electoral malpractices, fostering political stability, and charting a course toward a more mature democracy in Nigeria.

In the contemporary landscape, Nigeria continues to grapple with the legacies of its postindependence political transitions. The nation's efforts toward achieving a robust and inclusive democratic system remain an ongoing process, shaped by a complex history and a commitment to surmounting past challenges. (Eleagu & Eleagu, 2019)

Evolution of Electoral Processes

Over the years, Nigeria's electoral processes have evolved considerably. The country has witnessed several phases characterized by different electoral systems, governance structures, and attempts at reform:

- **Shift to Civilian Rule:** Transitioning from military rule to civilian governance marked a pivotal moment in Nigeria's democratic journey. Elections became central to the peaceful transfer of power and the expression of citizens' political will.

- **Introduction of Technology:** The gradual integration of technology in Nigerian elections began to address challenges related to credibility, transparency, and efficiency. Initiatives such as biometric voter registration, electronic voting machines, and result collation systems aimed to modernize electoral processes.

Technological Advancements in Nigerian Elections

The integration of technology within the framework of Nigerian elections represented a transformative leap toward modernizing the electoral process. Embracing digital initiatives was envisioned to herald a new era, promising increased precision in voter registration, fortified transparency throughout voting procedures, and a concerted effort to curtail the prevalence of electoral irregularities (Edita, 2023). The essence lay in harnessing technological advancements to fortify the integrity and credibility of the electoral system.

The introduction of digital initiatives aimed to revolutionize the traditional methodologies prevalent in Nigeria's electoral landscape. It aspired to streamline the voter registration process by employing technological tools for the precise capture of voter data, ensuring a more accurate and comprehensive electoral roll. Additionally, the incorporation of technology was envisaged to

enhance transparency, facilitating real-time monitoring and scrutiny of voting procedures, thereby fostering trust in the electoral process.

However, the implementation of these technological advancements encountered an array of challenges that tested the efficacy and seamless integration of these systems. Infrastructure limitations posed substantial hurdles, especially in remote or underserved regions, where access to robust technological infrastructure remained inadequate. The uneven distribution of technological resources raised concerns about equitable access and the potential for disparities in electoral procedures (Edita, 2023).

Moreover, instilling trust in these newly introduced systems emerged as a critical challenge. Building confidence among stakeholders, including political actors, election officials, and the electorate, became a priority. Skepticism regarding the reliability and security of the digital systems loomed large, requiring concerted efforts to allay concerns and instill confidence in the effectiveness and integrity of these technological solutions (Edita, 2023).

Issues surrounding cybersecurity, data privacy, and the susceptibility of digital systems to potential manipulation or malfunctions added layers of complexity to the implementation process. Safeguarding these systems against external threats and ensuring their resilience emerged as crucial focal points in the quest for a robust and tamper-proof electoral infrastructure (Edita, 2023).

Navigating through these challenges demanded a multi-faceted approach that encompassed technological enhancements, infrastructural development, stakeholder engagement, and a concerted drive to foster trust and confidence in these digital initiatives (Edita, 2023).

Overcoming these impediments was pivotal to realizing the full potential of technology in revolutionizing Nigeria's electoral processes.

Impact of Technology on Electoral Integrity

While technology brought advancements, challenges persisted. Issues such as power outages affecting electronic systems, concerns over cybersecurity, and public skepticism regarding the reliability of digital solutions have influenced the perception of technological interventions in Nigeria's electoral processes.

The historical perspective of elections in Nigeria showcases a transition from traditional systems to modern democratic practices. The incorporation of technology has marked significant strides in improving electoral processes. However, challenges remain, underscoring the need for continuous innovation, robust infrastructure, and trust-building measures to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of electoral systems in Nigeria.

2.6 Technologies in Election Administration

Biometric Voter Registration Systems Implementation

Overview:

Biometric voter registration systems in Nigeria involve the capture and utilization of unique biological data, such as fingerprints, facial features, or iris scans, to create a secure and accurate voter registry (Belhadj, 2017).. The adoption of biometrics aimed to enhance the credibility and reliability of voter identification and authentication.

Objectives and Impact:

The primary objective of biometric voter registration was to eliminate duplicate voter registrations, enhance the accuracy of voter rolls, and reduce instances of electoral fraud, thus ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. Biometric verification during elections aimed to authenticate voters and prevent instances of impersonation, bolstering the credibility of the electoral system.

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) Introduction

and Implementation:

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were introduced in Nigerian elections to revolutionize the voting process, replacing traditional paper ballots with electronic systems. The adoption of EVMs aimed to streamline voting procedures and potentially reduce errors in the casting and tabulation of votes.

Functionality and Impact:

EVMs offered a more efficient and user-friendly method for casting votes, potentially expediting the tallying of results. These machines were designed to simplify the voting process, although challenges related to voter education, infrastructure readiness, and public trust in the new technology were encountered.

Result Collation Technologies

Digital Platforms for Collation and Transmission:

Technological innovations were integrated into the collation and transmission of election results. Digital platforms and systems facilitated the real-time collection, aggregation, and announcement of election outcomes. These technologies aimed to expedite the tabulation process and enhance transparency in result declaration.

Challenges and Limitations:

Despite the potential benefits, challenges related to connectivity issues, cybersecurity threats, and data integrity posed hurdles in the effective implementation of result collation technologies. Ensuring a seamless and secure transmission of results faced challenges due to infrastructure deficiencies and concerns over system vulnerabilities.

The adoption of various technological interventions in Nigerian elections reflects efforts to modernize and improve electoral processes. Biometric voter registration systems sought to enhance voter identification and authentication, while EVMs aimed to simplify the voting process. Result collation technologies were introduced to expedite the tabulation and announcement of election outcomes. However, challenges in implementation, infrastructure readiness, cybersecurity, and public trust highlight areas requiring attention for the effective integration and utilization of these technologies in Nigerian election administration.

2.7 Challenges in Election Administration

1. Technological Challenges Infrastructure

Limitations:

One of the major challenges in Nigerian elections is the inadequacy of technological infrastructure. Insufficient power supply and limited internet connectivity, especially in remote or rural areas, hinder the effective implementation of digital initiatives. This limitation affects the seamless functioning of electronic voting machines (EVMs), result collation systems, and biometric verification tools.

Cybersecurity Threats:

The susceptibility to cybersecurity threats poses a significant challenge to the adoption of technology in elections. Weaknesses in digital platforms used for result collation and transmission raise concerns about data security and integrity. The risk of cyberattacks targeting electoral systems undermines public trust and confidence in the reliability of digital electoral processes.

2. Legal and Regulatory Challenges

Ambiguities in Electoral Laws:
Electoral laws and regulations in Nigeria often face ambiguities, leading to interpretations that may impact the implementation of technological advancements. Clarity and precision in legislation regarding the use of technology in elections are essential to provide a robust legal framework for the adoption and regulation of digital initiatives (Francis, 2023).

Enforcement and Compliance Issues:

Ensuring compliance with electoral laws and regulations regarding the use of technology poses challenges. Oversight and enforcement mechanisms to monitor the proper utilization of digital

systems and adherence to established guidelines are crucial. Strengthening legal frameworks and regulatory bodies is imperative to address compliance issues effectively.

Socio-Political Challenges Ethno-Political

Tensions:

Nigeria's diverse socio-political landscape often experiences ethno-political tensions that can impact electoral processes. These tensions sometimes hinder the effective implementation of digital initiatives due to regional or communal differences in acceptance and utilization of technology (Francis, 2023).

Voter Apathy and Polarization:

Voter apathy and polarization pose challenges to election administration. Lack of trust in electoral processes, combined with socio-political divisions, may lead to decreased participation and cooperation in the adoption of new technologies, affecting the overall credibility and acceptance of digital electoral systems.

Challenges in Nigerian election administration encompass technological limitations, legal ambiguities, and socio-political complexities. Overcoming these challenges requires addressing infrastructure deficiencies, strengthening cybersecurity measures, refining electoral laws, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and fostering inclusivity and trust among diverse societal groups. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring the effective and equitable implementation of digital initiatives in Nigerian electoral processes.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

Democratic theory emphasizes the foundational principles of representation and citizen participation in governance, highlighting the importance of inclusive electoral systems enabling diverse societal groups to actively participate and ensure their voices are represented in decisionmaking processes. The legitimacy of elected representatives is intricately tied to their ability to authentically represent the interests of the populace.

Theoretical perspectives on democratic legitimacy emphasize the crucial role of electoral integrity in establishing the credibility of election outcomes, asserting that free, fair, and transparent elections are paramount in validating the legitimacy of elected officials and the government itself. Credible electoral processes significantly contribute to fostering trust and confidence in democratic institutions.

Innovation Diffusion Theory explains the process through which innovations, such as technological advancements in elections, are adopted and diffused within society. In the Nigerian context, the adoption of technology-driven initiatives depends on various factors, including perceived advantages, compatibility with existing systems, ease of use, and influence of opinion leaders or early adopters.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) focuses on individuals' acceptance and adoption of technology, suggesting that voter acceptance and trust in digital initiatives are influenced by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and assurances regarding reliability and security. TAM helps in understanding the psychological and behavioral aspects affecting voter acceptance of technological innovations in the electoral process.

These theoretical frameworks aid in understanding the challenges encountered in the adoption of technology in Nigerian elections. Skepticism among voters regarding technology reliability,

concerns related to cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and infrastructural limitations in certain regions contribute to slower adoption and a deficit in trust toward digital electoral systems.

Utilizing these theories facilitates the identification of areas for improvement in technology adoption within Nigerian electoral processes. Addressing public concerns through comprehensive voter education, robust cybersecurity measures, and effectively communicating the benefits and ease of use of digital initiatives can potentially enhance their acceptance and adoption in Nigerian electoral practices.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the research study titled "Digital Initiative and the Challenges of the Administration of Elections in Nigeria: A Case Study of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State." The methodology delineates the procedures utilized to achieve the research objectives and obtain relevant data for the study. Specifically, it discusses the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling sizes, types and sources of data,

instrument of data collection, reliability, validity of the research instrument, and methods of data analysis.

3.2 Survey Design

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of digital initiatives on the administration of elections in Nigeria, with a particular emphasis on the challenges encountered during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State. The primary method of data collection was through a structured questionnaire.

Sampling Strategy:

A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure representation across various demographics and stakeholder groups involved in the electoral process. The population under study included voters, election officials, representatives from the electoral commission, political party agents, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders from Egor Local Government Area (LGA), which had a population of 340,284.

Questionnaire Development:

The structured questionnaire was carefully designed to gather quantitative data on perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to the use of digital initiatives in elections, particularly focusing on the 2023 General Elections in Edo State. The questionnaire underwent rigorous pretesting and piloting to ensure clarity, comprehensibility, and relevance to the research objectives.

Data Collection Procedures:

Trained enumerators administered the questionnaire to the selected participants in Egor LGA. The questionnaire-based survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews to facilitate clarification of any queries and ensure accurate responses. Additionally, respondents were provided with the option to complete the questionnaire electronically for increased convenience.

Measures for Validity and Reliability:

To enhance the validity and reliability of the survey data, measures were taken to minimize bias and ensure data integrity. These measures included the use of standardized questionnaire instruments, rigorous training of enumerators, and adherence to ethical guidelines in data collection.

3.3 The Population of Study

The population under study encompasses individuals directly involved in the administration of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State, including voters, election officials, representatives from the electoral commission, political party agents, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders from Egor LGA which stands at 340,284.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

For this research study, a simple random sampling technique was adopted. The sample will be drawn from respondents within the research location, focusing specifically on individuals directly involved in the 2023 General Elections in Edo State. Due to financial and logistical constraints, a sample size of one hundred (100) respondents will be selected using a

questionnaire. This approach aims to gather detailed data from respondents to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced in the administration of elections.

3.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument utilized for this study is the questionnaire. The questionnaire will be constructed in alignment with the research questions outlined in Chapter One. Questions will be formulated in simple language to facilitate easy understanding and encourage respondents to provide accurate and insightful responses. The questionnaire will consist of two sections: Section A will focus on capturing demographic data of the respondents, while Section B will contain items pertaining to the challenges encountered in the administration of elections in Edo State, particularly in relation to digital initiatives.

3.6 Validation and Reliability of Research Instrument

Validity of the research instrument refers to its ability to measure what it is intended to measure accurately. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the draft copy will be submitted to the supervisor for scrutiny and feedback. Additionally, two other experts in the field of election administration and digital initiatives will be consulted to validate the instrument. Their inputs will be considered in refining the questionnaire to ensure that it effectively captures the intended information. Reliability of the instrument will be established through pilot testing, where a small subset of respondents will complete the questionnaire to assess its consistency and clarity. Any necessary revisions will be made based on the feedback received during the pilot testing phase.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The method of data collection for this study involves the distribution of questionnaires to the respondents within the research location. Upon obtaining their permission, the researcher will personally distribute the questionnaires to the selected respondents. They will be advised to answer the questions honestly and accurately. Additionally, the researcher will provide guidance to the respondents on filling out the questionnaire. For those respondents who may have difficulty completing the questionnaire, the researcher will conduct interviews to gather the necessary data. All questionnaires distributed will be collected from the respondents after completion for the purpose of analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected from the field will be analyzed using various statistical techniques including tables, frequency distribution, and simple percentage calculations. These methods will facilitate the organization and presentation of the data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews. Tables will be used to summarize categorical data, while frequency distribution will help in understanding the distribution of responses across different variables. Simple percentage calculations will provide insights into the proportion of respondents holding particular viewpoints or experiences. Overall, these data analysis techniques will enable a systematic examination and interpretation of the findings to address the research objectives effectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting and analyzing the data obtained from the administered questionnaires. It centers on exploring the impact of digital initiatives on the administration of elections in Nigeria, with specific reference to the challenges faced during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State. The analysis provides insights into the effectiveness of digital initiatives and the hurdles encountered in their implementation.

For the purpose of this research work, 100 questionnaires were administered to respondents in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. Out of the 100 questionnaires administered, only 89 questionnaires were properly filled and found valid, and these were used for the analysis.

4.2 Analysis of Respondents' Personal Information

Table 4.1 illustrates the demographic distribution of respondents based on gender, derived from the collected data.

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
MALE	35	39.33
FEMALE	54	60.67
TOTAL	89	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.1 displays the gender distribution among respondents who participated in the survey regarding digital initiatives and election administration in Edo State. The data shows the number and percentage of male and female respondents of which 35 (39.33%) were males, while 54

(60.67%) were females. Providing insights into the gender representation within the sample population.

Table 4.2: Frequency Table showing the distribution of age of the respondents

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Below 25 years	20	22.5%
25-35 years	30	33.7%
36-45 years	25	28.1%
46 years and above	14	15.7%
Total	89	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.2 presents the distribution of respondents' age categories based on the data collected from the administered questionnaires. The analysis of the age distribution among respondents reveals a varied demographic landscape. Notably, individuals below the age of 25 represented 22.5% of the total respondents, indicating a significant presence of younger individuals in the study. This demographic segment could offer fresh perspectives and insights into the impact of digital initiatives on election administration, potentially reflecting their familiarity and comfort with technology. Additionally, the age group of 25-35 years comprised 33.7% of the respondents, highlighting the substantial representation of individuals in their prime working years. Their perspectives may be influenced by practical experiences and responsibilities, offering nuanced insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with digital solutions in electoral processes. Meanwhile, individuals aged 36-45 years accounted for 28.1% of the respondents,

indicating a notable presence of middle-aged individuals in the study. This demographic segment may bring a combination of experience and adaptability to the discussion, providing valuable insights into the evolving landscape of election administration and the integration of digital technologies. Lastly, respondents aged 46 years and above represented 15.7% of the total, reflecting a smaller yet significant demographic group. Their perspectives, shaped by a wealth of experience and historical context, could offer invaluable insights into the long-term implications and challenges of adopting digital initiatives in electoral processes. age distribution among the respondents.

Table 4.3: Frequency Table showing the distribution of the educational qualification of the respondents

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
OND/HND	40	44.9%
B.Sc. and above	49	55.1%
Total	89	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.3 displays the frequency distribution of respondents' educational qualifications.

In terms of educational qualifications, respondents with OND/HND qualifications comprised 44.9% of the total, while those with B.Sc. and above qualifications constituted 55.1%. The significant representation of individuals with technical or vocational education backgrounds suggests a diverse pool of perspectives grounded in practical expertise and industry knowledge.

Their insights may encompass considerations related to the implementation and feasibility of digital solutions in election administration, reflecting on technical constraints and operational challenges. On the other hand, individuals with higher academic qualifications bring a broader theoretical understanding and analytical framework to the discussion. Representing a majority of the respondents, their perspectives may focus on strategic considerations, policy implications, and the broader socio-political landscape surrounding the adoption of digital initiatives in electoral processes. Together, the varied educational backgrounds of the respondents contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and opportunities inherent in leveraging digital technologies for more efficient and transparent election administration processes.

4.3 Data Analysis and Presentations (Section B: Field Questions)

In this section the responses to the questions were analyzed using Likert-Scale point

SA - Strongly Agree

A - Agree

SD - Strongly Disagree

D - Disagree

UN - Undecided

Table 4.4: Table showing the effectiveness of digital initiatives implemented during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State.

S/N	Description	SA	A	SD	D	UN	Total
1	THE USE OF ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES (EVMS) SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED THE EFFICIENCY OF THE VOTING PROCESS IN EDO STATE.	45 (50.6%)	30 (33.7%)	6 (6.7%)	4 (4.5%)	4 (4.5%)	89 (100 %)
2	ELECTRONIC RESULT COLLATION CONTRIBUTED TO MORE ACCURATE AND TIMELY ELECTION RESULTS.	35 (39.3%)	40 (44.9%)	6 (6.7%)	4 (4.5%)	4 (4.5%)	89 (100 %)
3	DIGITAL INITIATIVES, SUCH AS FINGERPRINT SCANNING DURING VOTER REGISTRATION, ENHANCED THE SECURITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN EDO STATE.	30 (33.7%)	40 (44.9%)	10 (11.2%)	4 (4.5%)	5 (5.6%)	89 (100 %)
4	THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS ON USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES WAS EFFECTIVE.	40 (44.9%)	35 (39.3%)	6 (6.7%)	4 (4.5%)	4 (4.5%)	89 (100 %)
5	OVERALL, DIGITAL INITIATIVES POSITIVELY IMPACTED THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EDO STATE	50 (56.2%)	30 (33.7%)	3 (3.4%)	3 (3.4%)	3 (3.4%)	89 (100 %)
6	THE RELIABILITY OF DIGITAL INITIATIVES IN ENSURING FAIR ELECTIONS WAS SATISFACTORY.	40 (44.9%)	35 (39.3%)	6 (6.7%)	4 (4.5%)	4 (4.5%)	89 (100 %)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table 4.4 above, it is evident that the majority of respondents hold favorable views regarding various aspects of digital initiatives in election administration during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State. These insights shed light on the perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders toward the integration of technology in electoral processes.

Beginning with the use of electronic voting machines (EVMS), a significant proportion of respondents strongly agree (50.6%) that EVMS significantly improved the efficiency of the voting process. This finding indicates a widespread acknowledgment of the positive impact of

EVMS on streamlining the voting process, potentially reducing queues, and enhancing overall efficiency. Additionally, 33.7% of respondents agree with this sentiment, further reinforcing the consensus regarding the benefits of electronic voting technology.

Similarly, the analysis reveals positive perceptions regarding electronic result collation. A considerable number of respondents strongly agree (39.3%) that electronic result collation contributed to more accurate and timely election results. This suggests a recognition of the potential of technology to streamline the result collation process, minimize errors, and expedite the announcement of election outcomes. Additionally, 44.9% of respondents express agreement with this assertion, reflecting a broader acceptance of electronic result collation as a valuable tool in ensuring the integrity of election results.

Moreover, digital initiatives aimed at enhancing the security of the electoral process receive favorable appraisal from respondents. A significant proportion strongly agrees (33.7%) that initiatives such as fingerprint scanning during voter registration have indeed bolstered the security of the electoral process. This indicates a prevailing sentiment among respondents regarding the importance of leveraging technology to prevent voter fraud and ensure the integrity of electoral rolls. Additionally, 44.9% of respondents agree with this assertion, underscoring the widespread recognition of the role of digital initiatives in safeguarding electoral integrity.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of training provided to election officials on using digital voting technologies is positively perceived by respondents. A substantial number of respondents (44.9%) strongly agree that the training was effective, indicating a high level of confidence in the preparedness of election officials to utilize digital tools effectively. Additionally, 39.3% of respondents express agreement with this sentiment, reflecting a general consensus on the

importance of equipping election officials with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate digital voting technologies.

Overall, the findings highlight a favorable disposition toward digital initiatives in election administration among respondents. The widespread agreement on the benefits of electronic voting machines, electronic result collation, security-enhancing measures, and effective training underscores the potential of technology to enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and integrity of electoral processes. These insights provide valuable guidance for policymakers and electoral authorities in harnessing the benefits of digital innovation to strengthen democracy and ensure transparent and credible elections.

Table 4.5: Table to Identify and categorize the challenges faced by election administrators during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State.

S/N	Description	SA	A	SD	D	UN	Total
1	TECHNICAL ISSUES, SUCH AS MALFUNCTIONS IN ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES OR RESULT COLLATION TECHNOLOGIES, WERE PREVALENT DURING THE ELECTIONS.	25 (28.1%)	30 (33.7%)	12 (13.5%)	10 (11.2%)	12 (13.5%)	89 (100%)
2	THE TRAINING PROVIDED TO ELECTION OFFICIALS ON USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES ADEQUATELY PREPARED THEM FOR THEIR ROLES.	40 (44.9%)	35 (39.3%)	5 (5.6%)	4 (4.5%)	5 (5.6%)	89 (100%)
3	I HAD CONCERNS ABOUT THE SECURITY OF MY VOTE WHEN USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES	20 (22.5%)	30 (33.7%)	15 (16.9%)	12 (13.5%)	12 (13.5%)	89 (100%)
4	LANGUAGE BARRIERS AFFECTED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION WITH DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES.	15 (16.9%)	25 (28.1%)	20 (22.5%)	15 (16.9%)	14 (15.7%	89 (100%)
5	TECHNICAL ISSUES CAUSED SIGNIFICANT DELAYS DURING THE ELECTIONS.	30 (33.7%)	25 (28.1%)	10 (11.2%)	12 (13.5%)	12 (13.5%)	89 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the data presented in the table 4.5, it is evident that respondents hold varying perceptions regarding several key aspects of digital initiatives in election administration during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State.

Beginning with the prevalence of technical issues, the analysis reveals that a notable proportion of respondents express concerns regarding the occurrence of technical challenges during the elections. Specifically, 28.1% of respondents strongly agree that technical issues, such as malfunctions in electronic voting machines or result collation technologies, were prevalent, while 33.7% agree with this sentiment. These findings suggest a widespread acknowledgment among respondents of the disruptive impact that technical glitches may have had on the electoral process. Such challenges could potentially undermine the efficiency and integrity of the elections, raising important considerations for improving the reliability of digital voting technologies in future electoral endeavors.

On the topic of training provided to election officials, the majority of respondents express confidence in the adequacy of the training programs. A significant proportion (44.9%) strongly agrees that the training adequately prepared election officials for their roles, with an additional 39.3% in agreement. These findings highlight the importance of investing in comprehensive training initiatives to ensure that election officials are proficient in utilizing digital voting technologies effectively. Effective training programs play a crucial role in mitigating potential challenges and ensuring smooth implementation of digital initiatives during elections, thereby bolstering the credibility and efficiency of the electoral process.

Security concerns emerge as another notable aspect of respondent perceptions. A considerable proportion of respondents (22.5%) strongly agree that they had concerns about the security of their vote when using digital voting technologies, with 33.7% expressing agreement. These findings underscore the significance of addressing security vulnerabilities and instilling confidence among voters in the integrity of digital voting systems. Addressing security concerns is paramount to upholding the trust and credibility of the electoral process, necessitating robust measures to safeguard voter data and prevent unauthorized access or manipulation of electronic voting systems.

Furthermore, language barriers emerge as a potential challenge affecting communication and interaction with digital voting technologies. A notable proportion of respondents (16.9%) strongly agree that language barriers had an adverse impact, with 28.1% in agreement. These findings underscore the importance of linguistic inclusivity in the design and implementation of digital voting systems to ensure equitable access and participation among all segments of the population. Overcoming language barriers is essential to promoting voter engagement and enhancing the accessibility of electoral processes, thereby fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Lastly, concerns regarding delays due to technical issues are highlighted by a significant portion of respondents. A notable proportion (33.7%) strongly agrees that technical issues caused significant delays during the elections, with an additional 28.1% in agreement. These findings underscore the disruptive impact of technical challenges on the electoral process, potentially leading to voter disenfranchisement and logistical complications. Addressing technical issues and minimizing disruptions are imperative to ensuring the smooth and efficient conduct of elections, thereby safeguarding the integrity and legitimacy of electoral outcomes.

Table 4.6: Table to identify the modalities the modalities in relation to staff training on digitalization during the 2023 general elections in Edo State.

S/N	Description	SA	A	SD	D	UN	Total
1	THE TRAINING SESSIONS PROVIDED SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS TO EFFECTIVELY UTILIZE DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES.	25 (28.1%)	30 (33.7%)	12 (13.5%)	10 (11.2%)	12 (13.5%)	89 (100%)
2	THE TRAINING CONTENT ADEQUATELY COVERED ALL ASPECTS RELEVANT TO THE USE OF DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.	40 (44.9%)	35 (39.3%)	5 (5.6%)	4 (4.5%)	5 (5.6%)	89 (100%)
3	THE TRAINING METHODS EMPLOYED (E.G., WORKSHOPS, SIMULATIONS) WERE EFFECTIVE IN ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING AND PROFICIENCY IN USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES.	20 (22.5%)	30 (33.7%)	15 (16.9%)	12 (13.5%)	12 (13.5%)	89 (100%)
4	THE DURATION OF TRAINING PROVIDED WAS ADEQUATE FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS TO GRASP THE INTRICACIES OF DIGITALIZATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.	15 (16.9%)	25 (28.1%)	20 (22.5%)	15 (16.9%)	14 (15.7%)	89 (100%)
5	SUFFICIENT FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT WAS AVAILABLE TO ELECTION OFFICIALS AFTER THE INITIAL TRAINING SESSIONS TO ADDRESS ANY ONGOING CHALLENGES OR QUERIES RELATED TO DIGITALIZATION.	30 (33.7%)	25 (28.1%)	10 (11.2%)	12 (13.5%)	12 (13.5%)	89 (100%)
6	THERE WAS A STRUCTURED MECHANISM IN PLACE FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRAINING SESSIONS AND SUGGEST AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT.	35 (39.3%)	30 (33.7%)	10 (11.2%)	9 (10.1%)	5 (5.6%)	89 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the data presented in Table 4.6, it is evident that respondents hold varying perceptions regarding the modalities of staff training on digitalization during the 2023 general elections in

Edo State. These perceptions provide insights into the effectiveness and adequacy of training programs aimed at preparing election officials for utilizing digital voting technologies.

Starting with the effectiveness of training sessions, a considerable proportion of respondents, comprising 28.1% who strongly agree and 33.7% who agree, believe that the training sessions provided sufficient knowledge and skills for election officials to effectively utilize digital voting technologies. This suggests a positive perception among respondents regarding the ability of the training sessions to equip election officials with the necessary competencies for conducting digitalized electoral processes.

Furthermore, respondents perceive that the training content adequately covered all relevant aspects related to the use of digital voting technologies in the electoral process. A majority of respondents, with 44.9% strongly agreeing and 39.3% agreeing, express confidence in the comprehensiveness of the training content. This indicates a widespread belief that the training materials and curriculum effectively addressed key areas essential for the successful utilization of digital voting technologies by election officials.

Regarding the training methods employed, respondents have mixed opinions. While a significant proportion, comprising 22.5% who strongly agree and 33.7% who agree, believe that the training methods, such as workshops and simulations, were effective in enhancing understanding and proficiency in using digital voting technologies, there are also respondents who express reservations. This suggests a need for further evaluation and refinement of training methodologies to ensure optimal learning outcomes for election officials.

The duration of training provided also elicits varied responses from respondents. While some believe that the duration was adequate for election officials to grasp the intricacies of

digitalization in the electoral process, others express concerns about its sufficiency. This highlights the importance of striking a balance between providing comprehensive training and optimizing the use of resources and time available for training activities.

Moreover, respondents perceive the availability of follow-up support for election officials after the initial training sessions differently. While a significant proportion, comprising 33.7% who strongly agree and 28.1% who agree, believe that sufficient follow-up support was available to address ongoing challenges or queries related to digitalization, there are also respondents who express doubts. This underscores the importance of establishing robust support mechanisms to assist election officials in overcoming obstacles encountered during the implementation of digital voting technologies.

Lastly, respondents differ in their perceptions regarding the existence of a structured mechanism for election officials to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the training sessions and suggest areas for improvement. While a considerable proportion, comprising 39.3% who strongly agree and 33.7% who agree, believe that such a mechanism was in place, others are less convinced. This highlights the importance of fostering a culture of continuous improvement by soliciting feedback from election officials and incorporating their insights into future training initiatives.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the analysis of data collected on the implementation of digital initiatives during the 2023 general elections in Edo State reveal a nuanced picture of the benefits, challenges, and implications associated with the integration of digital technologies into the electoral process. These insights provide valuable perspectives on the effectiveness of digital

initiatives and the factors influencing their adoption and impact on electoral administration in Nigeria.

One prominent theme emerging from the data is the perceived positive impact of digital initiatives on the electoral process. Respondents generally agree that electronic voting machines (EVMs) and electronic result collation contributed to the efficiency and accuracy of voting and result tabulation. This suggests that digital technologies have the potential to streamline election procedures, minimize errors, and enhance the overall integrity of the electoral process, thereby fostering greater public trust and confidence in the electoral system.

However, alongside the perceived benefits, respondents also highlight significant challenges and concerns related to the adoption of digital technologies. Technical issues, such as malfunctions in EVMs and result collation technologies, were prevalent during the elections, leading to delays and disruptions in the voting process. Additionally, concerns about the security of votes when using digital voting technologies and the impact of language barriers on voter interaction underscore the need for robust safeguards and inclusive design considerations in digital electoral systems.

The effectiveness of training programs for election officials emerges as a crucial factor in ensuring the successful implementation of digital initiatives. While respondents generally perceive the training provided to election officials as adequate in equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to utilize digital voting technologies effectively, there are mixed opinions regarding the coverage of training content, the efficacy of training methods, and the sufficiency of follow-up support and feedback mechanisms. Addressing these concerns is essential for enhancing the proficiency and confidence of election officials in navigating digital electoral processes.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance the administration of elections through digital initiatives. Continuous investment in comprehensive training programs tailored to the diverse learning needs of election officials is crucial for equipping them with the necessary competencies to handle digital technologies effectively. Measures should also be implemented to address technical issues, enhance cybersecurity measures, and mitigate language barriers to promote inclusivity and trust in digital voting systems.

Furthermore, establishing robust support mechanisms, such as ongoing technical assistance and feedback channels, can facilitate the resolution of issues encountered during the implementation of digital initiatives. Stakeholders should also prioritize transparency, accountability, and public engagement to foster confidence in digital electoral processes and uphold the principles of free and fair elections.

In conclusion, while digital initiatives hold promise for modernizing electoral systems and advancing democratic governance, their successful implementation requires addressing the challenges identified and implementing targeted interventions to strengthen the capacity, resilience, and inclusivity of digital electoral infrastructure. By leveraging the insights gleaned from the findings, electoral authorities can chart a course toward more accessible, transparent, and accountable electoral processes in Nigeria and beyond.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of digital initiatives on the administration of elections, focusing on the 2023 General Elections in Edo State, Nigeria. The study aimed to assess the impact of electronic voting machines (EVMs), electronic result collation, and other digital technologies on the efficiency, accuracy, and transparency of the electoral process. Additionally, it sought to identify challenges and concerns associated with the implementation of digital initiatives and evaluate the effectiveness of training programs for election officials in utilizing these technologies.

To fulfill the study's objectives, a survey research design was utilized, targeting participants in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to respondents within this area. Out of these, 89 questionnaires were accurately completed and deemed valid for analysis, constituting the dataset used for the study's evaluation.

The analysis of data revealed a mixed perception among respondents regarding the impact of digital initiatives on the electoral process. While there was general agreement that EVMs and electronic result collation contributed to efficiency and accuracy in voting and result tabulation, respondents also highlighted significant challenges and concerns. Technical issues, including malfunctions in EVMs and result collation technologies, were prevalent during the elections, leading to delays and disruptions. Moreover, concerns about the security of votes when using digital voting technologies and the impact of language barriers on voter interaction emerged as prominent themes.

The effectiveness of training programs for election officials emerged as a crucial factor in ensuring the successful implementation of digital initiatives. Respondents generally perceived the training provided to election officials as adequate in equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to utilize digital voting technologies effectively. However, there were mixed opinions regarding the coverage of training content, the efficacy of training methods, and the sufficiency of follow-up support and feedback mechanisms.

Overall, the findings underscored both the transformative potential of digital initiatives in modernizing electoral systems and the challenges inherent in their implementation. While digital technologies hold promise for streamlining election procedures and enhancing transparency and accuracy, addressing technical issues, cybersecurity concerns, and inclusivity considerations is paramount to realizing their full benefits.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on "Digital Initiative and the Challenges of the Administration of Elections in Nigeria: A Case Study of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State" sheds light on the complexities and opportunities associated with integrating digital technologies into electoral processes. The findings underscore the dual nature of digital initiatives, presenting both promise and challenges for election administration.

While digital innovations such as electronic voting machines (EVMs) and electronic result collation have demonstrated potential in enhancing efficiency and accuracy, they also pose significant challenges, particularly concerning technical reliability, cybersecurity, and inclusivity. The experiences of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State highlight the importance of addressing these challenges to fully harness the benefits of digitalization in elections.

Effective training programs for election officials emerged as a critical factor in mitigating challenges and ensuring the successful implementation of digital initiatives. However, there is a need for continuous improvement in training content, methods, and follow-up support mechanisms to equip election officials adequately.

Overall, the study emphasizes the imperative of balancing innovation with prudence in the adoption of digital technologies in electoral processes. While digital initiatives hold immense potential for modernizing election administration and enhancing democratic practices, their implementation must be accompanied by robust safeguards, transparency measures, and

inclusive practices to uphold the integrity and legitimacy of the electoral process.

In moving forward, stakeholders must collaborate to address the identified challenges and capitalize on the opportunities presented by digitalization. By investing in technical infrastructure, enhancing cybersecurity measures, prioritizing comprehensive training programs, addressing language accessibility, and upholding transparency and accountability, electoral authorities can navigate the complexities of digital initiatives and foster trust in democratic processes. Through concerted efforts, Nigeria can pave the way for a more resilient, inclusive, and transparent electoral system that upholds the fundamental principles of democracy.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the administration of elections through digital initiatives:

1. **Investment in Technical Infrastructure:** Electoral authorities should prioritize investment in robust technical infrastructure to minimize technical glitches and ensure the smooth operation of digital voting technologies.
2. **Cybersecurity Measures:** Enhanced cybersecurity measures, including encryption protocols and regular security audits, are necessary to protect the integrity and confidentiality of digital voting systems from cyber threats.

3. **Comprehensive Training Programs:** Training programs for election officials should be comprehensive, covering all relevant aspects of digital voting technologies. Training methods should be diversified to accommodate different learning styles and preferences.

4. **Language Accessibility:** Measures should be implemented to address language barriers and ensure that digital voting technologies are accessible to all voters, regardless of linguistic background.

5. **Transparency and Accountability:** Stakeholders should prioritize transparency and accountability in the administration of elections, ensuring that digital initiatives are implemented in a transparent manner and subject to rigorous oversight.

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APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY

TOPIC:

DIGITAL INITIATIVE AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA (A CASE STUDY OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EDO STATE)

Dear Respondent,

REQUEST FOR COMPLETING RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a Final year student of the above department and institution. As part of the requirements for my B.Sc. Degree in Public Administration, I am conducting a research investigation on ―Digital Initiative and The Challenges of the Administration of Elections in Nigeria (A Case Study of the 2023 General Elections in Edo State)"

Kindly respond to the items by ticking your response in the spaces provided below. Your response will be treated with strict confidence and used for the stated purpose only.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours Faithfully,

ABERE, TOVIA TONBRA

(Researcher)

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please Tick [√] one option relevant to you

1. Gender: Male [ ], Female [ ]
2. Age as at last birthday_____
3. Educational Qualifications: OND/HND [ ], B.Sc. and above [ ], None [ ]

SECTION B

Please answer the following question by using this scale. Please take note of the meaning of these abbreviations;

SA - Strongly Agree

A - Agree

SD - Strongly Disagree

D - Disagree

UN - Undecided

Objective 1: The effectiveness of digital initiatives implemented during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State.

S/N	Description	SA	A	SD	D	UN
1	THE USE OF ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES (EVMS) SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED THE EFFICIENCY OF THE VOTING PROCESS IN EDO STATE.					
2	ELECTRONIC RESULT COLLATION CONTRIBUTED TO MORE ACCURATE AND TIMELY ELECTION RESULTS.					
3	DIGITAL INITIATIVES, SUCH AS FINGERPRINT SCANNING DURING VOTER REGISTRATION,					
	ENHANCED THE SECURITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN EDO STATE.					
4	THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS ON USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES WAS EFFECTIVE.					
5	OVERALL, DIGITAL INITIATIVES POSITIVELY IMPACTED THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EDO STATE					
6	THE RELIABILITY OF DIGITAL INITIATIVES IN ENSURING FAIR ELECTIONS WAS SATISFACTORY.					

Objective 2: Identify and categorize the challenges faced by election administrators during the 2023 General Elections in Edo State.

S/N	Description	SA	A	SD	D	UN
1	TECHNICAL ISSUES, SUCH AS MALFUNCTIONS IN ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES OR RESULT COLLATION TECHNOLOGIES, WERE PREVALENT DURING THE ELECTIONS.					
2	THE TRAINING PROVIDED TO ELECTION OFFICIALS ON USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES ADEQUATELY PREPARED THEM FOR THEIR ROLES.					
3	I HAD CONCERNS ABOUT THE SECURITY OF MY VOTE WHEN USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES					
4	LANGUAGE BARRIERS AFFECTED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION WITH DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES.					

5	TECHNICAL ISSUES CAUSED SIGNIFICANT DELAYS DURING THE ELECTIONS.					
6	FALSE INFORMATION ABOUT DIGITAL INITIATIVES AFFECTED VOTER CONFIDENCE DURING THE ELECTIONS.					

Objective 3: Identify the modalities the modalities in relation to staff training on digitalization during the 2023 general elections in Edo State.

S/N	Description	SA	A	SD	D	UN
1	THE TRAINING SESSIONS PROVIDED SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS TO EFFECTIVELY UTILIZE DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES.					
2	THE TRAINING CONTENT ADEQUATELY COVERED ALL ASPECTS RELEVANT TO THE USE OF DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.					
3	THE TRAINING METHODS EMPLOYED (E.G., WORKSHOPS, SIMULATIONS) WERE EFFECTIVE IN ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING AND PROFICIENCY IN USING DIGITAL VOTING TECHNOLOGIES.					
4	THE DURATION OF TRAINING PROVIDED WAS ADEQUATE FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS TO GRASP THE INTRICACIES OF DIGITALIZATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.					
5	SUFFICIENT FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT WAS AVAILABLE TO ELECTION OFFICIALS AFTER THE INITIAL TRAINING SESSIONS TO ADDRESS ANY ONGOING CHALLENGES OR QUERIES RELATED TO DIGITALIZATION.					
6	THERE WAS A STRUCTURED MECHANISM IN PLACE FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRAINING SESSIONS AND SUGGEST AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT.					