

**THE EFFECT OF PROPAGANDA ON ELECTION CREDIBILITY; A
STUDY OF 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

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AUGUST, 2023

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF
SCIENCE (B.Sc) DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK**

AUGUST, 2023

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was carried by Iyen Precious with Matriculation Number: SSC1810056 in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science (Bsc) degree in Social work, faculty of social sciences, University Of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

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DATE

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for His guidance and protection throughout my stay in school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All gratitude to God Almighty, the one who has made it possible for me to complete this programme and this project work. May his name be praised forever. My unreserved gratitude goes to my amiable and intelligent supervisor, Dr. Omigie Sunday O for his patience, guidance and well-articulated instructions during the course of this project for accuracy and splendid completion. Thank you sir for your painstaking and efficient manner with which you scrutinized every stages of this project, may God reward you bountifully sir.

My most appreciation goes to my ever loving and caring mother Princess Betty Adade (Mrs.) for giving me the opportunity to further my education. I am indeed grateful. Special thanks to my siblings Iyen O. Isabella, Iyen. U. Nelly and Iyen Isaiah for their immense support, prayer and understanding all through my study. Also to my family, Dortie Ovoke, Okundaye Wendy and Afam Naomi. To all my lecturers in the department of social work, I say a very big thank you for their intelligent and scholarly academic excellence through which knowledge, values and morals were impacted in me.

To all my friends within and outside the university of Benin, Ayeh Stephanie, and Ikhuenbor Peace. I say a very big thank you for being my

partner in progress I appreciate you all for your support morally, emotionally,
financially, spiritually, academically and psychologically, thank you all.

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ABSTRACT

This research work seek to examine the effect of propaganda on election credibility; a study of 2023 presidential election. The study made use of questionnaire to obtain data from respondent. Four objectives were raised for the study. The study found that that most respondents believed that campaign propaganda is used by candidates and political parties to modify the views, attitudes and behaviours of the electorate as opined by the high response of respondents. It also observed Campaign propaganda serves a dual purpose of educating electorate on the proposed plans and programmes of the incoming government and committing voters to exercise their franchise during elections. and thus recommend that the media must be regulated by law to disseminate objective messages during electioneering. Specifically, it must be restrained from been an appendage of a given political party, showing preference for any candidate and serving as tool to disseminate disinformation and hate speeches.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background To The Study

Although a free, fair and credible election has been widely recognised as one of the fundamental pillars of democracy (Khadka, 2015) and commonly accepted means of legitimising democratic institutions (Brancati & Snyder, Ayanleye, Citation2013), the level of voter turnout in an election remains a major yardstick for measuring the extent of democratic consolidation in any state. It is mostly believed that the higher the turnout of voters, the higher the likelihood of the election result being accepted by the people and the international community as legitimate and *vice versa*. However, a large voter turnout in an election is largely not feasible outside an efficient and effective awareness creation and dispensing mechanism. Thus, the level of voter participation is mostly contingent upon the sophistication of the channels utilised by candidates and political parties to manage and disseminate political information and campaign messages to the electorate. Succinctly put, the robustness of a party's propaganda machinery is a key determinant of the outcome of an election.

Campaign propaganda in the context of this study is defined as information-moulding and dispensing tools which political parties and

candidates use to circumvent objective reasoning and appeal to the emotion and psyche of the electorates during electioneering. It is a manipulative technique deployed by political actors to divert the attention of the reactors from the actual motive in order to advance a political goal. Corona (2011) argues that while targeting the electorates, campaign propaganda, intends to exert its influence with emotive effects and not through reasons by exaggerating the candidates' qualities and concealing their defects, just like it would happen with products. Political propaganda, made by skilled specialists and foreign advisors, intends to interpret and answer surveys, study different aspects of electoral behaviour, to offer the people what they want to hear.

Additionally, campaign propaganda is used by candidates and political parties to modify the views, attitudes and behaviours of the electorate. Most fundamentally, it is creatively designed not just to provide concrete and feasible programmes and agenda of a political party or its candidates, but also to convince the electorate through popular sentiment. Indeed, campaign propaganda serves a dual purpose of educating electorate on the proposed plans and programmes of the incoming government and committing voters to exercise their franchise during elections.

Given the historical relevance and efficacy of campaign propaganda in elections, political actors and parties have over the years, relied on conventional media channels (radio, television, newspaper, magazine and books) to modify the perceptions and behaviour of voters. However, recent developments in Information Communication Technology (ICT) have caused a paradigm shift in information dissemination and social interaction by all social institutions (Dantani et al., 2017). Particularly, the internet revolution is radically transforming the political landscape in such a way that internet tools such as Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter are not only serving as propaganda tools by political parties and candidates but also determining the outcome of elections in many climes. A number of literature on elections document the roles played by the new media in spreading subjective information and amplifying perspectives in order to influence voter's choice of political parties and/or candidates. For instance, studies have established the influence of the new media-induced propaganda in the electoral processes of the United States of America in favour of Barack Obama and Donald Trump (, Castells, Faris et al., 2017; Woolley & Guilbeault, 2017 and; Persily, 2017). Similarly, Gross (2009) and Barry (2009) demonstrate how internet tools fuelled political protests in Iran and Moldova, respectively.

1.2 Statement of The Problem

In Nigeria, the use of propaganda dates back to the pre-independence era when political activists floated print media organisations to project the evils of colonialism and more importantly, press for self-governance. However, since independence, campaign propaganda has been a critical component of the democratisation processes in Nigeria. The need to control the *juicy centre* after independence enabled the elite to retire to their respective regions to draw mass support from the weak followers who rely solely on the direction of the former for political actions and decisions. Most importantly, the pluralistic and multicultural configuration of the Nigerian state afforded the political players an ample opportunity to deploy ethno-religious propaganda to appeal to the sectarian sentiments of the diverse nationalities to deepen polarisation during elections. In other words, political actors in Nigeria depend on distorted and prejudiced information embellished in religious and ethnic undertones to keep a grip on their political bases. Through the instrumentality of regionalised media outfits, ethno-religious leaders disseminated subjective messages mainly to instill sentiment and attune the consciousness of voters along ethnic and religious lines. This deepens the already established acrimony and the tensed relationship between the competing nationalities, giving room to the propagation of hate speeches and the escalation of violence.

From the foregoing, it is proper to infer that the use of propaganda which characterised earlier democratic governance in Nigeria were tools of the elites to further their narrow political and economic ends.

Although the 2023 presidential election has been described as historic in the annals of Nigeria democracy, the heat generated by the use of social media propaganda tools (such as Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs) in altering political permutations and equations has occupied centre-stage in intellectual debates and discourses. Studies such as Ezeibe (2023), Okoro and Tsegys (2017), Maigari et al. (2017), Onafuwa (2017), Hassan and Hitchen (2019), and Egbunike (2019) clearly demonstrated how the new-media-induced campaign propaganda influenced voter turnout in the election. These studies found either positive, negative or mixed correlations between political propaganda and election credibility during the election. Nevertheless, the link between campaign propaganda, the outcome of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria has remained largely unexplored in the existing literature. As a way of filling this gap, this study evaluates the impact of campaign propaganda on the outcome of the 2023 presidential poll in Nigeria.

1.3 Research questions

In the light of the above, this study seek to find answers to the following questions

1. What is the impact of propaganda on the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.
2. What is the effect of ethno-religious campaign messages of the major political parties on the rational voting choices of individuals
3. What is the impact of propaganda on the triumph of a minority party and the policy direction of the winning party.
4. What is the effect of propaganda by political parties on Nigeria democracy.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is evaluate the effect of propaganda on election credibility with 2023 presidential election in focus; the specific objectives are to:

1. examine the impact of propaganda on the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

2. Find out the effect of ethno-religious campaign messages of the major political parties on the rational voting choices of individuals
3. Ascertain the impact of propaganda on the triumph of a minority party and the policy direction of the winning party.
4. Evaluate the effect of propaganda by political parties on Nigeria democracy.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research work is a critical analysis of the effect of propaganda on election credibility in Nigeria. The study focuses on the outcome of 2023 presidential election. The scope of this study will thus be restricted to Nigeria elections. Were other country (s) are mentioned, it is so to make the work a robust study.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study will be of immense benefit to both electorate, political parties and policy makers.

To the electorate, it will enlighten them on the effect of propaganda on the campaign promises

The study will also help policy makers to formulate policies that will guide against ethno religious conflict arising from propaganda by political parties.

It will educate the general public on the effect of propaganda on the democracy of Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Nigerian state, political parties and voter behaviour

According to Ezirim et al., (2016) Prior to the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, the present entity called Nigeria is a conglomeration of multi-ethnic nationalities which were bereft of a common social, political and economic affinity. Salawu and Hassan (2011) note that this cultural dissimilarity manifested in the differences in language, dressing, beliefs, and social systems. These variations are well-defined and virtually irreconcilable in many ways such that there were no bases for the unification of these ethnic nationalities with competing interests. Nonetheless, amidst the apparent and unbridgeable divergences, the varied and mutually antagonistic ethnic nationalities were forcefully consolidated in a union which was later christened Nigeria in 1914. For temporary colonial expediency and the maximisation of economic gains on investment on the colonial treasury, the unification of these multi-ethnic nationalities under the Nigerian state was forced to thrive. On 1 October 1960, Britain granted Nigeria independence and erroneously but deliberately left intact the first arrangement where the incompatible ethnic groups were left to live in mistrust, acrimony and hatred for

one another, but were unbelievably expected to continue to be governed indigenously as a distinct entity.

In a multifarious setting where democratic governance is prioritised, elections are usually seen as a unifying catalyst that brings together disparate entities under the platform of two or more political parties. Nevertheless, the historical antecedents of electoral politics contradict the foregoing presumptions. Between 1914 and 1915, the British colonial rulers established three regional territories, namely north, east and west. The northern territory was predominately Hausa/Fulani, the Igbo occupied the eastern region, while the Yoruba was in charge of the Western section. This ethnic-based division laid the foundation for divisive politics, and subsequently, ethno-regional tensions.

According to Ebegbulem (2011), the colonial tripodal partitioning of Nigeria prevented a Nigerian nationalistic movement. Instead, it altered geographical boundaries to strengthen disunity between the varied ethnic nationalities and transformed ethnicity into an identity politics by which to gain political power. This colonial formation along with other administrative decisions emphasised ethnic nationalism and regional politics, resulting from consequential unbalanced development within each region (Ebegbulem, 2011, p. 77). G. E. Ezirim et al. (2016) had argued that the divisive politics orchestrated

by the colonial administrators against the nascent Nigerian state reinforced ethno-political consciousness among the competing ethnic groups.

The aftermath of this development was the formation of political parties along ethnic and regional lines which implied that the British administration deliberately prevented the rise and success of Nigerian nationalism and instead, sowed seeds of discord and acrimony among the competing ethnic groups and promoted ethnic chauvinism and nationalism as a means for political ascendancy (Ebegbulem, 2011). The outcome of this development was the emergence of ethnic-based political parties in the Nigeria's first and subsequent republics. In the First Republic, Ayatse and Iorhen (2013) noted that the three major political parties that participated in the 1959 General Elections were formed along ethnic lines with Northern Peoples' Congress representing the north, National Council for Nigerian Citizens consolidating in the East and the Action Group emerging as a Pan-Yoruba Organization. In the Second Republic, five political parties participated actively in the election with three (National Party of Nigeria, Peoples Redemption Party and Great Nigerian Peoples Party) originating and maintaining armies of followers from the northern region. At the same time, the Nigeria Peoples Party dominated the political landscape of the Eastern region while the Unity Party of Nigeria maintained a stronghold in the Western region.

Consequently, the attempts by the then military President Ibrahim Babangida to foster national unity among key political players through the recognition of two national parties were basically exercises in futility. This was in the light of the ethnic leaning of the Social Democratic Party which was deemed more tilted to the Southern province and the National Republican Convention which had more members from the Northern region (Danjibo & Ashindorbe, 2023). In the Fourth Republic, particularly in the 1999 general elections, the Peoples Democratic Party had the majority of its followers from the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones, while All Peoples' Party maintained a grip on the political terrain of some northern states. On the other hand, the Alliance for Democracy held sway in the Western region. More recently, the aftermath of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria reveals that the All Progressives Congress which produced the incumbent President is pro-north and west while the Peoples Democratic Party has the majority of its supporters drawn from the South-East and South-South zones of the country.

Amidst the ethnic orientation of political parties, there are attempts by political actors to either own or hijack the mass media as a tool for subjective reportage and spread of hate speeches. This trend has characteristically influenced the pattern of voting in Nigeria as voters have keyed into the ethnic-based emotion-laden messages promoted by candidates and political parties

through their sophisticated propaganda machinery. The next section of this paper systematically interrogates the nature and character of the media in the Nigeria's democratisation process.

2.2 Media and democratisation in Nigeria

The historical nexus between the media and democracy appears to have received a great deal of attention in the existing literature. Hence many scholars have examined these relationships from a variety of perspectives. Some examined the influential role of the media in the process of political change especially as it relates to the rapid transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic rule which spread through different political systems in the world in the last two or so decades. Others explored the imperative of media in deepening democracy across states (Arthur, 2010; Imoh, 2013; Istenič, 2012). Most recently, following the historic emergence of Barack Obama which was aided by the social media in 2008, scholars have focused on the increasing role of the social media in influencing political participation, election and electioneering processes in many countries (Prokhorv, 2012).

From the studies mentioned above, it became clear that the media play a central role in the democratisation of politics in many societies, particularly states which were hitherto undemocratic. Apart from serving as a channel for

information dissemination to the public, it is also an influential avenue for shaping or moulding the opinion of participants in the political process. In Nigeria, Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution accords the media a pride of place in the democratisation processes of the country. The commitment of the media to the democratisation project of Nigeria as seen in the constitution endows it with the function of not only check-mating all aspects of governance but also assisting in guarding and advancing the frontiers of the peoples' liberties and freedom. Additionally, the media in any democratic clime are saddled with the responsibility of reporting the news, interpreting the news, setting the agenda for government actions and socialising citizens about politics (Ojo, 2000). To excel in this very important mandate, the media are expected to be unbiased, professional and corrupt-free as they moderate and mediate in the processes of democratisation.

Regrettably, the Nigerian media are bereft of the aforementioned fundamental traits arguably present in advanced democratic societies. Unlike in most advanced democracies where media are established by multinational corporations that rarely show interest in domestic politics, the formation and ownership of media in Nigeria are ethnically and religiously based. One implication of such style of ownership is that media institutions are established to pursue and advance the interest of candidates who share similar belief system,

while at the same time, tarnishing the image of those at the opposing sides (Oboh, 2017). Interestingly, this pattern has persisted from colonial to post-colonial Nigeria. For instance, the pioneer newspapers in Nigeria such as the Daily News, established in 1925; Daily Service, 1933; and the West African Pilot, 1937 were largely regarded as party papers and effective organs of the party (Ukonu, 2005).

Indeed, the media in Nigeria serve as willing tool to advance the political ends of the elites. They are channels for mobilisation of voters along religious and ethnic lines. The Nigeria media specialise in image laundering, character assassination, framing and spreading of hate speeches, and publication of questionable electoral promises, as means for political ascendancy. This is analogous to Hansrod's (2017) observation that politicians in multi-ethnic countries such as Kenya and Sierra Leone manipulate voters along ethnic lines through the instrumentality of the mass media. Corroborating, Agba (2007) notes that the media failed to provide unbiased, objective and informative coverage of political parties and candidates contesting elections in Nigeria. It revealed that both the public and private-owned media organisations were biased in favour of different parties, candidates in power, and those who share similar religious and ethnic affiliation. Similarly, Seteolu (2017) found that media-led political campaigns were tainted with sectarian, ethnic and religious-

based pronouncements that accentuated the fragmented nature of the Nigerian state, and sometimes led to violent conflicts that ultimately raised questions on the structure and foundation of the Nigerian federation. Umeagbalasi and Onwuatuegwu (2023) conclude that the media in Nigeria no longer enjoy a national outlook as they have become weapons for the advancement of sectional politics and propaganda.

Deriving from the foregoing, it is evident that the media in Nigeria like other states with multi-ethnic nationalities have systematically fallen short of exemplary performance in the democratisation of politics. Scholars have indicated that the long presence of the military in politics in most African states undermines the effectiveness of the media in the consolidation of democracy in the region. The present study however posits that the ethnic colouration of politics arising from the pluralistic character of the Nigerian state appears useful in understanding the major factor constraining the fourth estate of the realm from moderating, mediating and driving democratic and democratisation processes in the country.

2.3 Political parties and campaign propaganda in the 2023 presidential election

Political parties have undeniably assumed an indispensable status in the democratisation process given the critical role they often play in effectuating good governance, the rule of law and human rights protection. Beyond this, political parties are seen as platforms through which the mobilisation and enlightenment of the citizens on the policy direction of the state are made possible. They perform the latter function by organising opinions and attitudes around sets of issues of public importance which would subsequently be disseminated to the electorate through various the mass media. The essence is to consciously modify the voters' worldview in line with the programmes, sentiments and proposals of the party in order to elicit either objective or subjective support from the targeted group.

Since the beginning of the Nigeria's fourth republic in 1999, the country has witnessed an increased proliferation of political parties mainly established to depict the ethno-regional compartmentalisation of the country. Successive elections held in 2003, 2007 and 2011 were largely seen as contestations between two major political parties whose candidates constantly reflect the North-South dichotomy. In preparation for the 2023 presidential election, the two major political parties organised primaries which produced Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (the then incumbent President) and Muhammadu Buhari (now incumbent) as candidates of PDP and APC, respectively. While Jonathan is a

Christian who hails from Ijaw, a minority group in Southern Nigeria, Buhari is a Fulani Muslim from the majority ethnic group in Northern Nigeria. Given the high-stake nature of electoral contestations in Nigeria, many strategies including media propaganda were deployed to gain the support of the electorate.

Three kinds of propaganda featured prominently in the build-up to the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election, namely ethno-religious propaganda, externally-oriented propaganda, and politicians-activists-propelled propaganda. The first typology reflects the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of the Nigerian state in which political actors seek to manipulate the sensibilities of voters. Above all, the diverse character of the Nigerian state is a proximate condition for sensitivity and political mindfulness of the citizens while electing leaders. Through well-crafted ethno-religious messages, political actors and loyalists of the two major contestants aroused the sentiments of the voters. Politicians used campaign messages rooted in ethno-religious sentiments to pursue their political ambitions. For instance, during the PDP presidential campaign tour in Minna, Niger state, the then Vice President Namadi Sambo advised his Islamic brethren to support PDP since the party had more Muslims in its leadership than the APC. According to him, unlike his party (PDP) which has more Muslims occupying key positions such as himself (the Vice President), the Chairman of the party and the Campaign Director General, the APC has

more Christians in its campaign fold including the Chairman of the party, the Vice Presidential candidate who is a pastor, and the Campaign Director General. Corroborating, the PDP's spokesman, Olisa Metuh urged Nigerians to reject APC at the poll, noting that it is an Islamic-based party bent on promoting Sharia and *Janjaweed* ideology in Nigeria. This position may be linked to a speech credited to the APC Presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari in 2001, pledging to support full implementation of Sharia law across Nigeria. The PDP media officer warned that the election of Buhari would herald the full Islamisation of Nigerian state. An ex-leader of one of the militant groups in the Niger Delta Alhaji Asari Dokubo equally threatened that Nigeria would be thrown into crisis if his kinsman Goodluck Jonathan were not re-elected. Also, the Northern Elder's Forum led by Professor Ango Abdullahi vowed to regard anybody who votes for the PDP's presidential candidate as an enemy of the north, while the Oba of Lagos threatened to drown all Igbo residents in Lagos state if they failed to vote for APC.

Ethno-religious messages by the two major political parties during the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The extracts in the above table reveal the dangerous dimension of campaign propaganda in the 2023 Presidential election in Nigeria. It reflects the long-aged animosity and electoral divides between the North and the South. Campaign messages credited to most northern Muslims in

the All Progressive Congress were principally aimed at supporting the candidacy of Muhammadu Buhari (a Northern Muslim) and discrediting the incumbent President. On the other hand, most Christians from both North and South deliberately launched campaign messages aimed at whipping up sentiment in support of the continuity of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (a Southern Christian) as the President. Lending credence to this, Okonkwo (2023) observes that the 2023 electioneering campaigns were dangerously immersed in ethno-religious sentiments. According to him, the election witnessed an open confrontation in which the minorities of the South-South and the South-East openly stood up against the candidacy of a Northerner. Supporters of PDP alleged that APC is an assembly of Islamic fundamentalist with the intention of Islamising Nigerians.

Secondly, the externally oriented or foreign-based propaganda were seen to have been promoted by western countries in bid to frustrate the re-election of Goodluck Jonathan. It is claimed that some powerful nations were irked that after much entreaties and pressures, Goodluck Jonathan signed the Same-Sex Prohibition Bill into Law in 2014. In retaliation, these western nations acting in complicity with the then opposition party (APC), engaged the services of Axelrod, Kupper, Plouffe, and Del Cecato (AKPD) Media and Message, a US political and media consulting firm (Okolie & Nnamani, 2016).

The spokesperson of AKPD, Isaac Baker, admitted that the firm was hired to render strategic services to APC for a period of nine months and subsequently re-engaged for three weeks to help the party in organising announcement events (Kredo, 2023). With this mandate, the international media giant began its propaganda job by prioritising three critical and emotion-laden areas: internationalisation of the kidnapping of Chibok Girls saga; magnification of the corruption profile of the then administration out of proportion; and amplification of human rights abuses due to military operations in the war-torn North-East zone (Terrang, 2017).

On the alleged kidnap of the 278 Chibok School Girls by the Boko Haram insurgents, the AKPD and other local collaborators launched a massive media attack against the Jonathan administration through both conventional and new media platforms with the hashtag, *#bringbackourgirls* (The Herald, 2023). The media hype drew the attention and solidarity of profiled personalities such as the then United States First Lady, Michelle Obama and the Noble Peace Prize winner Malala Yousfzai who staged protests for the release of the abducted girls (McKelvey, 2016). The outrage, condemnations and protests which accompanied the abduction of the Chibok School Girls were seen as mere ploys to depict the then government as insensitive and incapable of resolving the security challenges in the North-Eastern region (Ekemam, 2016).

As an alternative, the foreign propaganda machinery presented Muhammadu Buhari as an experienced retired military general capable of nipping the spate of insurgency in the bud.

In the area of human rights abuses, the AKPD took advantage of the United States' disposition to effect a change of government in Nigeria to allege that the military operations in the insurgency-infested areas of North-East were tainted with serial human rights abuses (Ekemam, 2016). Citing Leahy Law, the United States government blocked the sale of weapons to Nigeria for the prosecution of counterinsurgency operations in the North-East zone of the country. Okolie and Nnamani (2016) observed that the human rights propaganda used by the United States and allied institutions were the upshot of Nigeria's refusal to reverse the Same-Sex Prohibition Law. It was alleged that the human rights violation clause was a deliberate scheme hatched by foreign conspirators to sabotage the military campaign against Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria (Iwuoha, 2019).

On the anti-corruption propaganda, many public officials under Jonathan's administration including Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Akinwumi Adesina and Mohammed Adoke were sensationally indicted for various corruption charges without trials. The media trial was meant to create an impression that

the government was deeply enmeshed in corruption. This perception, however, contrasts with the official corruption perception index by the Transparency International which for the first time, delisted the country from the comity of 10 most corrupt countries in the world and placed it between 31st in 2013 and 39th in 2014. This substantial feat notwithstanding, the foreign propaganda machinery reported unverified corruption cases against the administration of Jonathan and strategically positioned Muhammadu Buhari as a man with an impeccable record of zero-tolerance for corruption. Little wonder the APC candidate in many of his numerous speeches and interviews declared that one of his key priorities was to wipe out corruption, insisting that if Nigeria does not kill corruption, corruption would kill Nigeria. These media onslaughts against Goodluck Jonathan were viciously and repeatedly reported to decrease the likelihood of his being accepted by the majority of the electorate while at the same time, increasing the chances of Muhammadu Buhari. In fact, Shapiro (2014) observes that through the instrumentality of AKPD Media and Message, the then President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was depicted as a weak, corrupt, clueless, and insensitive leader while Muhammadu Buhari was presented as decisive, corrupt-free and a peoples' leader.

In the final discourse, this study analyses the roles played by local political actors and activists (whether acting independently or under the

umbrella of civil society organisations) in the build-up to the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria. In the context of this election, *politician-activists-propelled propaganda* consists of sets of information and misinformation used by key local players to shape the voting behaviour as well as the outcome of the 2023 poll in Nigeria. Politicking or political ascendancy is a lucrative enterprise and often a source of survival for local key players. Local political actors in Nigeria thrive on political patronage, rent-seeking and prebendalism. This group relied on the efficacy of media outlets to engage in a campaign of calumny, hate speeches, character assassination, and division of voters along ethnic and religious lines to either bring down a government not beneficial to them or tighten their grip on political power. This feature was evident in the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria.

For instance, the then ruling party PDP sponsored controversial documentaries which depicted Muhammadu Buhari as a religious extremist, a walking corpse, an ethnic jingoist and a perennial loser (Owen & Usman, 2023). Particularly the then Governor of Ekiti State, Chief Ayo Fayose in a widely circulated publication described Buhari as a diaper-wearing old man, surrounded and being funded by corrupt politicians. In a follow-up documentary, the Media Director of PDP Presidential Campaign Organisation, Femi Fani Kayode, alleged that the APC Candidate received campaign funds

from dreaded terrorist organisations such as ISIS, Al Qaeda and Boko Haram. In the same vein, the PDP media team coordinated two documentaries entitled the Real Buhari and the Lion of the Bourdillion which were directed against the personalities of the Presidential Candidate and the National Leader of the APC respectively. Given the image-plundering nature of these documentaries, the then National Publicity Secretary of the All Progressive Congress, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, accused the Presidency of expending huge public funds on negative propaganda against the person of Muhammadu Buhari.

In retaliation, APC stalwarts published and circulated messages seen to be undignified of the person and office of the President. Virtually every action of the President was analysed and turned into objects of caricature. At one time, the President was described as a useless *Otuoke* man (*Otuoke* is the hometown of Jonathan); *Ogogoro-drinking* president (*Ogogoro* is local dry gin); *Jonadaft* (aportmanteau of “Jonathan” and “daft”); Kindergarten President; clueless leader and, many others. In one of his numerous “tweets”, Nasiru El Rufai, a Chieftain of the All Progressive Congress and the party’s governorship candidate for Kaduna State, labelled the PDP Presidential candidate a stupid drunk and the sponsor of Boko Haram terrorist. In another tweet posted below, El Rufai described Jonathan as a lazy, docile, incompetent, clueless, hopeless

and useless leader who relies on prayers to solve the multifarious challenges that besiege the Nigerian state.

Also, a political activist and Nobel Laureate for Literature, Prof. Wole Soyinka likened President Goodluck Jonathan to the Biblical Babylonian autocrat, King Nebuchadnezzar. According to Soyinka (2014) the figure that currently sits on the top of our political pile himself evoked it, albeit in a context that virtuously disclaimed any similarities, even tendencies ... Without any claims to prophecy—unlike Shadrach and company, we wake up each morning to a sensation that we have been cast in the furnace together with those who at least committed the crime of dissent or criticism. No divine miracle appears to be at hand for a last-minute rescue.

In furtherance of this, Animashaun (2023) recounts and highlights the nature of negative campaign messages which dominated the political landscape of Nigeria before the 2023 Presidential election: Vote Good Governance not Good Luck; No to Continuity of Corruption; No to Continuity of Boko Haram; Vote a Democrat not a Dictator; Vote Continuity not Change. On the other hand, some of the messages, specifically, sponsored by the Peoples Democratic Party to malign the character of the opposition Presidential Candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari included Do not allow this Dictator to

take us back to the Era of Doom and Brutality; Faces of Hypocrites; Buhari Pull Over, among others. Although the two main parties signed a Peace Accord to avoid actions or messages capable of promoting rancour, hate and violence; evidence as seen above suggest that the key players flagrantly abused the terms of the agreement.

2.4 Campaign propaganda and outcome of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria

It is suggested in literature that voting behaviour in emerging democracies could be influenced by many factors such as ethno-religious affiliation, material inducement, the personality of the contestant, party organisation and slogans, and the prevailing economic condition (Ali & Yakubu, 2017; Sule et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the unique and influential role which campaign messages play in shaping voters' choice has remained incontrovertible. McNair (2011) outlined three ways through which the effect of propaganda on the attitudes and behaviour of voters could be evaluated. These include ascertaining peoples' reactions to specific messages and collating these responses into statistically significant aggregates, usually in the form of public opinion polls; transmitting messages to the communication strategies of the

candidates in a political campaign; and conducting experiments to purposely isolate the effects of particular elements of the communication process.

Over the years, existing studies have interrogated the implication of propaganda and negative campaigns on the voters. Homogeneously, these studies with varying backgrounds demonstrated a strong correlation between negative political advertising and the outcome of the election. For example, Merritt (1984) observed that harmful political information stirs up a negative influence on both the target opponent and the sponsor, thereby instigating confusion on the actual candidate to be voted for by the electorate. In a similar study, Blackwell (2013) submitted that while negative political information remains an effective electoral strategy that affords the opposition party the opportunity to outwit the ruling party in a contest, the incumbents are usually hurt by going negative. More recently, Schuck et al. (2016) found that conflict framing in campaign information often predisposes voters to vote in an election.

One assumption emerging from the foregoing argument is that the effects of the campaign messages are usually at the climax when information is attuned in consonance with the present values, dispositions and opinions of the recipients. Therefore, when changes occur, it is essentially a product of multifarious factors emanating from socially contextual conditions, strong and

virile mass media, group interactions, the perceived credibility of the sources of the information, the influence of the opinion leaders as well as the public recognition of an idea being expressed without coercion or inducement.

Accordingly, campaign propaganda is result-oriented when rooted and intertwined around an existing belief (like many millions of Nigerians are grappling with extreme poverty and barely eke out a living; interference in the form of rigging which the PDP Government has practised since 2003 is the worst form of injustice; corruption is the greatest form of human rights violation); when it come in the form of policy prescription such as creating a social welfare programme of at least N5000 that will cater for the 25 million poorest and most vulnerable citizens; equalling N1.00 to 1.00 USD; stabilising oil prices; creating three million jobs per year; reducing fuel price to forty-five Naira per litre; crushing Boko Haram within three months; ensuring that no Nigerian will have a reason to go outside of the country for medical treatment); and when it is framed in conflicts or conspiracy (as seen in the Boko Haram insurgency and alleged Chibok girls kidnap).

According to Ogaraku (2023), the campaign propaganda of the then opposition party (APC) before the 2023 general election was not designed for the Nigerian electorate to compulsorily accept the dispenser of the propaganda

(the APC), but to deepen their hatred against the then ruling party (PDP) who they believed to have controlled the machinery of governance for sixteen (16) years without considerable positive impact. To produce overwhelming effects, the APC, having a grip on the major conventional media outfits, as well as the social media platforms such as Facebook, Blogs, Twitter and YouTube relied on emotion-laden and questionable messages as seen in Table 1, to harvest the support of less literate and unemployed Nigerians. The aforementioned categories of citizens are usually susceptible to all forms of manipulation than the educated, self-reliant and employed ones because the former only need limited information and little inducement to go into action.

Through wide circulation of hate speeches and half-truth promises (Apuke & Tunca, 2023), the coast became clear for the then opposition party. Indeed, the projection made by political pundits and media organisations that the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party would historically emerge the first Nigerian ruling party to lose their grip on governance at the national level became a reality. Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate of the All Progressive Congress was declared the winner of the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria against the then incumbent, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and the candidate of the People's Democratic Party by the Independent National Electoral Commission. A tabular analysis of the 2023 presidential election illustrating the

spatial voting patterns across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria is presented below:

The foregoing outcome of the 2023 presidential poll is a reflection of the rational choice of the electorate largely influenced by ethno-religious sentiment, conspiratorial framing, hate-speeches and questionable election promises. Through its sophisticated and wide-reaching propaganda machinery, the APC harped into the socio-economic and political realities of Nigeria ranging from the perceived political fragmentation, growing economic disparity, deepening social inequality to rising insecurity in the North-East, to alter the political landscape in the country. For instance, it was reported that six out of every ten Nigerians were poor in 2014 as against five out of ten in 2004 (Owen & Usman, 2023). Also, Nigeria's record of 10.5 million out of the cumulative global 20 million out-of-school children in 2014 was of great concern, requiring urgent intervention (UNICEF, 2023). The prospect of securing descent job in Nigeria in became uncertain due to the influx of an average of 1.8 million fresh graduates into the labour market on annual basis (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Despite an annual military budget of up to 6 USD billion from 2012 to 2014, the Boko Haram terrorist group became more emboldened in 2014, and executed deadlier and sophisticated operations, leading to the death

of over 13,000 and abduction of several women including 276 Chibok girls in 2014 (Okolie and Nnamani, 2019).

Beyond the aforementioned realities, the geographical analysis of voting in Table 2 confirms the predominant roles played by ethno-religious campaign messages and sentiments in the 2023 Presidential Election. In other words, voters were fed with and thoroughly indoctrinated into campaign messages tainted with ethnic and religious chauvinism. If these realities were accepted as the historical basis for political ascendancy in Nigeria, then it stands to justify the geographical dispersion of voting in Nigeria in which all the three zones in the northern axis with the highest number of Muslim electorates voted for the presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress, Muhammadu Buhari. At the same time, South-South and South-East voted massively for the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. Nevertheless, the voting disposition of the South-West geopolitical zone (located on the southern hemisphere of Nigeria) which favoured the All Progressive Congress may not be unconnected with three existing political realities including: historical grievances and hostilities between the region and the South-East due to the role the former played against the latter during the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–70; the adoption of Professor Yemi Osibanjo who hails from the South-West zone as the Vice Presidential Candidate of the All

Progressive Congress and; the alleged marginalisation of the South West zone by the administration of Goodluck Jonathan.

2.5 Election promises and the dynamics of governance in the post-2023 presidential poll

Election promises have come to represent one of the fundamental elements of the representative democracy through which hopes and expectations are created and sustained in any society. It is also the larger context of the strategies which political parties adopt to stimulate voter turnout, motivate supporters to vote in an election and, ultimately, determine the outcome of the election. Manin et al. (1999) remarked that campaign promises stimulate and determine the level of voter participation and accountability in governance. Significantly, a political party does not only limit itself to the role of aggregating and articulating the conflicting interests of society, but it also takes proactive measures to convert these divergent demands into concrete terms. Thus, given the general distrust against election promises by the citizens, the tripodic linkage between campaign promises, election outcomes and post-election governance have constantly remained the subject of scientific inquiry. Essentially, the crux of the inquest has revolved around: inspecting the electoral promises made by politicians and political parties before an election,

determining how it largely influenced the outcome of the election and understanding the modalities on ground to faithfully convert these ideas into reality in the post-election governance.

Existing studies have cross-examined campaign promises and the extent to which they are fulfilled after elections (Mansergh & Thomson, 2007; Naurin, 2013; Royed, 1996; Thomson et al., 2017). While some parties implemented the promises they made before the election, others were caught in the web of disowning their pledges after emerging victorious at the poll. However, Naurin's (2013) findings reveal that the concretisation of election promises is largely dependent on the system of government in practice. While single-party majority governments in Canada, Britain and New Zealand fulfil between 70 and 85 of the promises made in their election manifestoes, the same cannot be said of the United States which records a lower percentage of 60 to 70% due to a constitutional arrangement where the President, the Senate and the House of Representative have joint control over decision-making (Naurin, 2013). The study further found that the lowest levels of fulfillment are found in systems with frequent coalition governments. Generally, Naurin (2013) believes that election promises are inherently laden with mistrust as they are increasingly becoming difficult to locate any context where the positive reviews of campaign promises outweigh the negative.

Following in this trend, the context of Nigeria's post-2023 election governance invalidates Thomson et al.'s (2017) proposition which argues that many political party members that become government executive official are highly likely to fulfil their pledges, and significantly more than parties that do not enter government executive positions. The sixteen (16) years of PDP's control of the executive are fraught with misgovernance and misrule which analysts believed undermined the economic, social and political development of Nigeria. In a critical assessment of the more than a decade and a half of PDP's governance of the Nigerian state, Odigie-Oyegun in a foreword to the APC Manifesto lamented that the then ruling party led Nigeria from one crisis to another, lurching deeper into political anarchy, economic decline and social disillusionment. He further argued that the PDP-led government at the centre thrived on chaos, corruption, impunity, injustice and the systematic exploitation of ethnicity, religious sentiments and other primal instincts to divide and rule Nigeria.

As a follow-up, the then opposition party utilised the opportunity provided by the prevailing socio-economic conditions of the country to articulate and outline a manifesto captioned a *New Nigeria*. On the other hand, the then ruling party coordinated its campaign promises under

the *Transformation Agenda*. A succinct comparative review of the content of the campaign promises of both parties is presented in the Table 3.

2.6 Campaign promises of the two major parties in the Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election

In the area of security, the presidential candidate of PDP, Goodluck Jonathan during his declaration of presidential intent at Eagle Square Abuja on 11 November 2014, affirmed his government's readiness to combat insecurity particularly the rising wave of insurgency in the northeast geopolitical zone of the country through multilateral engagements (Channels, 2014). On infrastructure development, the PDP candidate promised to consolidate on the gains made in the power sector by completing the ongoing 450 megawatts Azura power plant project in Edo state and 3,050 megawatts Mambilla hydro-power plant in Niger state. Goodluck Jonathan further credited his administration for reviving the moribund rail sector through rehabilitation of the Lagos-Kano and Port-Harcourt–Maiduguri gauge rail lines, respectively, promising to connect other parts of the country if reelected in 2023. He also pledged to continue with the ongoing ICT-based public sector reform to ensure that the wave of corruption is tackled to the barest minimum. Also, during the PDP flag-off of the 2023 presidential campaign in Lagos on 9 January 2023,

Goodluck Jonathan in his remark reiterated the achievements of his administration in providing jobs and empowerment programmes for the youths through Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programs (SURE-P), YouWin, the Graduate Internship Scheme, the 220 billion naira grant to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and 3 billion naira grant to Nollywood industry (Sahara Reporters, 2023). He promised that his government if re-elected, would create 2 million jobs annually through these schemes.

On the other hand, the APC through its manifesto and series of speeches delivered by the party's presidential candidate between 2014 and 2023, pledged to effect a fundamental change that would positively transform the living conditions of the disadvantaged segment of Nigerians. In the area of human development, the APC presidential candidate promised to create 3 million jobs per year; provide interest-free loans for university/technical school students who meet the required entry qualifications and; provide allowances to the discharged but unemployed for twelve (12) months while in the skills and entrepreneurial development programme (APC, 2014). Buhari also assured that his administration would pursue aggressive industrialisation drive by reviving the Ajaokuta steel company and resolving the power sector crisis (Vanguard, 2023). Specifically, he promised to generate, transmit and distribute at least 20,000 MW of electricity within the first four years and increasing it to

50,000 MW within 10 years. The APC candidate further hoped to make Nigeria's economy one of the fastest-growing economies in the world with a real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaging 10% annually. Other promises made by the APC candidate include: declaration of assets and liabilities by public officers; ban all public officials from seeking medical care abroad; implementation of the National Gender Policy, which prioritises ceding at least 35% of appointive positions to women (APC, 2014).

Meanwhile, in advanced democracies, fact-checking tools are used to scrutinise the originality and feasibility of electoral promises made by political parties and their candidates. This is in line with the belief that the best tool to counter fake news is prevention (Mercator European Dialogue, 2019). Fact-checkers seek to keep false political claims and promises out of the public discourse (Amazeen, 2013). According to Graves (2016), it helps to inoculate readers against misleading claims and reduce political lying by making it more difficult for candidates and political parties to distort the truth. In the United States often described as the largest market for fact checking (Ireton & Posetti, 2023), tools such as the Politifacts, Truth-O-Meter and Flip-O-Meter rate the accuracy of election promises. While Politifacts uncovers when a politician is making outrageous promises, Truth-O-Meter informs the voter when a candidate is saying the truth or not. Similarly, FactCheck and Reality

Checks are the two major fact-checking tools in the United Kingdom (Graves & Cherubini, 2016). These tools have not only been useful in checking disinformation and propaganda in the recent 2016 presidential elections in the United States, they are often described as umpires of democracy.

The utilisation of the fact-checking tools in Nigeria could help to limit hate speeches and spread of questionable campaign messages. Again, it will serve as a viable instrument for deepening democracy in Nigeria. However, the absence of these tools suggests that political parties and candidates are unhindered from coining and spreading controversial electoral promises. Although the exciting and inviting promises of the then opposition candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, were fundamental to his emergence as the President of Nigeria, a post-election analysis of the APC-led government 5 years after political ascendancy reveal an immeasurable gap between what was promised and what has been fulfilled. A mid-term assessment report, as well as general opinion elicited from individuals and civil society organisations, uniformly demonstrates that the ruling party (APC) has performed poorly in meeting the social, economic and political needs of Nigerians. For instance, statistical data generated from the National Bureau of Statistics confirmed that Nigeria's unemployment rate rose steadily from 8.2% in the period Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in to 13.9% in the 3rd quarter of 2016, and up

to 18.8% in the third quarter of 2017, representing the highest unemployment rate recorded since 2009 (Adeyemo, 2023). In concrete terms, the statistical figure shows that 3.67 million Nigerians lost their jobs between 2023 and 2016 while the number of jobs lost appreciated to 18.0 million in the third quarter of 2017. The foregoing contradicts the promise by the APC to generate 3 million new jobs per annum through industrialisation, public work, and agricultural expansion.

In the same vein, additional reports revealed that President Buhari repeatedly sought for medical attentions in London against his electoral promise of ending medical tourism for all public officials and curtailing wastage of public funds. Between 2023 and 2017, Nigeria's economy witnessed historic retrogression, a figure that was last observed in 1987 (Inyokwe, 2023). Against APC's campaign promise of positioning Nigeria as the fastest-growing emerging economies in the world with a projected 10–12% annual GDP growth, evidence substantiate that the policies and actions of Buhari's administration contributed to the sliding of the economy into full-blown recession with negative GDP growth in 2016 and early 2017 (Inyokwe, 2023; Wakawa, 2016). On the promise of appointing 35% of women into his cabinet, it was found that only five females including Khadija Abba Ibrahim, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs; Hajia Zainab Ahmed, the Minister of State Budget and

National Planning; Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan, the Minister of Women Affairs; Aisha Abubakar, the Minister of State for Trade, Industry & Investment, and Kemi Adeosun, the Minister of Finance, made the ministerial list.

Furthermore, against APC's pledge to generate, transmit and distribute at least 20,000 megawatts of electricity within four years, data from the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission shows that although Nigeria attained a peak generation capacity of 4,800 Megawatts before the inauguration of Muhammadu Buhari in 2023, the ascension of the APC government depleted the power capacity to 2,591 megawatts in 2016. Similarly, Nnodim (2016) notes that the power crisis in the country worsened on 31 March 2016 when the power generation collapsed totally at exactly 12:58 pm to zero megawatts, and remained at this point for about three hours. Moreover, on 25 December 2016, the Nigeria Electricity Supply Industry reported that about twelve power stations in the country failed to produce electricity during the off-peak period and as such could not produce a single megawatt.

On security, there is growing concern that the Boko Haram insurgency and banditry has intensified in most northern states, leading to the deaths and kidnap of many citizens (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2023). In the area of fight against corruption, although Nigeria made significant progress under the then President

Goodluck Jonathan based on the annual corruption perception index which placed Nigeria as the 136th least corrupted country in 2014, the anti-corruption stance of the President Buhari administration suffered a setback following the rating of Nigeria as 148th least corrupted out of 180 countries (Transparency International, 2023). In addition, analysts believe that the poor management of the Nigeria's economy by the Buhari's administration may have been responsible for the rise in exchange rate from 190 naira in per dollar in 2023 to more than 400 naira per dollar in 2019 and increase in the pump price of Petroleum Motor Spirit (fuel) from eighty-six (86) naira per litre in 2023 to 145 naira per litre in 2017 (Fick, 2016; The Economist, 2019).

Other campaign pledges which the APC government has disowned or left unfulfilled include: stabilising prices of Premium Motor Spirit to forty-five Naira per litre; equalising 1 dollar to 1 naira; providing allowances to the discharged but unemployed Youth Corps members for twelve months while in a skills and entrepreneurial development programme; reviving the Ajaokuta Steel Company which is currently comatose; reviving and reactivating of minimally performing refineries to optimum capacity; creating an additional number of middle-class citizens of at least 2 million new home owners in its first year in government and subsequently 1 million annually; speedy passage of Petroleum Industry Bill; creating at least six new universities of science and technology

with satellite campuses in various states; reducing infant mortality to 3 percent; reducing maternal mortality by more than 70%; decreasing Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) spread by 50%, and other infectious diseases by 75%; increasing the number of physicians from 19 per 1000 population to 50 per 1000; improving life expectancy by additional 10 years on average; and numerous others (APC, 2014).

Although there is a wide disconnect between the promises made by the All Progressive Congresses during the 2023 presidential election and the unfolding realities in the post-election era, this study notes that the incumbent government has continued to elicit strategic and unflinching support among followers drawn mostly from the northern axis of the country who, perhaps, constitute a significant segment of the voting population of Nigeria. This continued support may be attributed to the lopsided and exclusionary policies of the incumbent which concentrates major development projects and political appointments in the northern region and among Muslims, who the President believed, gave him major support during the 2023 election (for details on these, see Punch, 2016; Akhigbe, 2017; Akinloye, 2017; Ezeibe et al., 2016; Intersociety, 2023). Similar support was also obtained from local political players whose economic and political interests were prioritised, protected and

guaranteed by the incumbent government. Deriving from the foregoing, the present study postulates that the reinforced support elicited by the APC government during the election is attributable to the sophistication of the party's propaganda machinery which were tactically deployed to whip-up ethno-religious sentiments during its extensive campaigns across the country. Aside from helping to influence voters' choice in the election, these tactics including the entrenchment of asymmetrical policies, have been found useful in the retention nay consolidation of power and the legitimisation of their rule in the post-election governance.

2.7 Theoretical framework

This study adopts the Rational Choice theory (RCT). Although this theory has a historical origin in economics, it has been effectively applied in other fields of social sciences including psychology, political science, sociology, and anthropology (Becker, 1976; Green & Shapiro, 1996; Hogarth & Reder, 1987; Radnitzky & Bernholz, 1987; Swedborg, 1990). However, one common denominator which pervades these multidisciplinary usages is the understanding that social occurrences cannot be adequately explained outside the rational actions/decisions of individuals (Hedström and Stern, 2017). According to Levin and Migrom (2004), rational choice refers to the process of

deciding what options are available and then selecting the most preferred one according to some consistent benchmark. Rational choice is based on the belief that individuals select a course of action that best aligns with their personal choices. In other words, it states that actors depend solely on self-interest as basis for making rational choices or decisions that are consistent with their preferences. RCT seeks to explain the intended and unintended results of individual decision (Heath, 2023) by examining (i) how social environments orient actors into a context of action, influencing their beliefs, choices and opportunities; (ii) how these orientations impact on the behaviour of individuals; and (iii) how their decisions affect social outcomes (Lindenberg, 1985, 1990, as cited in Hedström and Stern, 2017). Generally, the crux of the RCT is to explain social phenomena by demonstrating how they arise from the planned pursuit of self- interest by social actors (Elster, 1986; Satz & Ferejohn, 1994).

In political analysis, RCT emerged to counteract the earlier philosophical perspective which among other things, identified history and culture as the basis for comprehending the political behaviour of people. On the contrary, Riker (1962) argue that it is the individual's interest which necessitates and promotes his/her participation in political activities. Similarly, Downs (1957) maintains that the significant elements of one's political life can be explained in terms of voter self-interest. RCT views voters as rational

entities and repositories of knowledge who absorb information available at their disposal and make appropriate choices. It proposes that as rational entities, voters do not exist and operate outside a given social group. It is these social groups which collectively shape and inform individuals' electoral decisions, sentiments and political awareness.

Synder (2023) postulates that rational choice is applied when an actor is presented with two political choices to decide on. In this context, an actor makes a choice that best advances his/her goals on the one hand and those of his social group(s) on the other hand. These choices are usually evaluated using a cost-benefit analysis, similar to making a list of pros and cons. The theory therefore argues that individuals or groups vote for a candidate in an election based on how their intended promises will be beneficial to them. It observes that a voter tends to vote for a party candidate who is a member of the same ethnic group due to the higher possibility of the candidate keeping his/her political promises to members of their own ethnic community (Landa et al., 1995). In other words, political parties and candidates in most African societies depend on ethnocentric propaganda to elicit the support of their kin during elections. In other developed climes, voters' allegiance and support to political parties and candidates are based on informed decisions driven by ideology, antecedence, manifesto and capacity.

In Nigeria, political parties and candidates are usually seen as representatives of ethnic or religious groups (Olayode, 2023). Individuals have strong attachment and allegiance to their ethnic nationalities and religion since these variables often constitute basis for political patronage and reward. As a result, voters are incapable of making objective political decisions on the basis of the antecedence and competence of candidates, as well as the ideological leaning of the political party. Rather, electoral choices of individuals are informed by ethno-regional and religious considerations, and pattern of voting reflects deep polarisation of the electorate along parochial interests. Indeed, political parties and candidates exploit this deep vacuum to frame campaign propaganda that depicts the north-south dichotomy in order to influence electoral outcome (Isiaq et al., 2023).

In the 2023 presidential electioneering, the two major political parties used ethno-religious campaign propaganda to ignite sentiments and tactically elicit the support of voters who have been historically embroiled in the pursuit of parochial interests. The candidate of the All Progressive Congress Muhammad Buhari was portrayed to the southern voters as a jihadist from the north bent on accomplishing the Islamisation agenda of Sheik Usman Dan Fodio. In the north, Buhari was seen as a believer and a saviour who would protect and promote the northern socio-economic and political interests. On the

other hand, the Peoples Democratic Party's candidate Goodluck Jonathan was described as an *arne* (a non-believer in Hausa parlance) and sponsor of Boko Haram insurgency, while being hailed in the southern region of Nigeria as the son of the soil. These messages were repeatedly disseminated to the target audience in their local dialects through radio, newspapers, magazine, television, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

No doubt, the voting pattern and outcome of the 2023 presidential election reflected the ethno-religious dimension of the campaign messages of the two major political parties deployed to influence the perception and choices of voters. Meanwhile, the seemingly sectional posture of the Buhari's administration in terms of concentration of major appointments and critical infrastructure in the north represents the dynamics of governance in the post-2023 presidential election era. By and large, the rational choice theory is well suited for this study. It provides an insight into how political parties and candidates in a multicultural deploy ethno-religious campaign propaganda to influence the electoral decisions of voters and how this decision affects the distribution of spoils of office in the post-election governance.

Hypotheses of the study

For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses are stated

H0: there is a significant relationship between propaganda and the credibility of 2023 presidential election in Nigeria

Hi: there is no significant relationship between propaganda and credibility of 2023 presidential election in Nigeria

H0: There is a significant relationship between propaganda and ethno religious violence during electioneering

Hi: There is no significant relationship between propaganda and ethno religious violence during electioneering

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This is the specification of the method and procedures for acquiring the information needed for the research. It will make use of both quantitative and qualitative method of data collection which involve conducting interviews and the circulation of carefully designed questionnaires to respondents in the study area.

3.2 Population of the Study

The National Population Census of Nigeria in 2006 puts the population of Nigeria at one hundred and forty million, four hundred and thirty one thousand, seven hundred and ninety, of which Edo state figures stood at three million, two hundred thirty three thousand, three hundred and sixty six (3,233,366). The population of male and female adults of voting age (18 years and above) will be used for this study. Edo State will be used in the investigation of this study. However, it comprises of the three senatorial districts. The results obtained can therefore be used to generalize voter participatory behaviour towards elections in Nigeria.

3.3 Sample Size/Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in this study is the simple random sampling. The simple random sampling will be adopted in order to avoid act of bias, on the ground that every member of the population in the study Area has an equal chance of being included or selected in the sample drawn from the population irrespective of their gender, ethnic group, age and others. in view of the researcher's inability to reach out to the entire population, the sample size of hundred and twenty persons will be considered for this study. The sample size of 120 respondents will be randomly selected from the population which comprises of male and female adults of voting age (18 years and above). This is a representative sample of the population of electorate in the three senatorial districts of Edo State for interview and administration of questionnaire.

3.4 Instrument of data collection

The standardized questionnaire will be use to elicit information from the respondents. It guarantees subjects anonymity and encourages high response rate. The questionnaire comprised of standardized questions structured to appropriately elicit useful information from the respondents. The questionnaire will be divided into two sections, sections A and B. Question in section A dwells on the bio-data of respondents – sex, age, educational qualifications, gender and occupation. Section B comprised of questions that relate to the

effect of propaganda on election credibility in Nigeria and other related issues which enabled us to get the required information or data for the analysis.

Also, officials of the State Independent Electoral Commission and officials of the State political parties' secretariats will be interviewed.

3.5 method of Data Collection

For the purpose of the study, primary and secondary data will be adopted. The primary source of data will be based on the administration of questionnaire and the conduct of interviews, while the secondary source included perusal of textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines, internet amongst others.

3.6 Validity and Reliability Of Instrument

Reliability and validity of data will be fortified by allowing experts in statistical analysis to make useful inputs on the research instruments. The questionnaire constructed will also given to supervisor to read and scrutinize so as to ensure that the research instruments will be consistent with variables raised in the hypotheses and that they actually measure the issues under study by the researcher. This therefore improved without doubt the validity of the research instruments.

3.7 method of data analysis

The data collected will be analyzed using standardized methods. To this end, the Chi-Square (χ^2), simple percentage and t-test will be used to analyze the questionnaire. Analysis of data by simple percentage will enable the researcher to know the different opinions in assessing and testing the hypothesis for interpretations. The chi-square will be used to substantiate the data or facts of the study. The data will be presented in tables according to bio-data information like sex, age, marital status, educational qualification, and occupation.

The formula for the computation of the chi-square (χ^2) is given below:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where:

χ^2 = Chi-square

f_o = Observed frequency

f_e = Expected frequency

While the formula for computing the simple percentage is:

$$\% = \frac{PC}{N} \times \frac{10}{100}$$

Where

PC = Percentage compliance

N = Total number of respondents

100 = Common base of simple percentage

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

The researcher made use of Likert scale question to gather her information from respondents. The major aim of this research study is to examine the effect of propaganda on election credibility in Nigeria.

The questionnaire was designed to capture the demographic data of the respondents and their opinions with respect to the research question/statement, the questionnaire was divided into two (2) parts. Part I sought to obtain information on demographic details of respondent while Part II consisted of items measuring the respondents' perceptions.

In all a total of hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were administered to officials of the State Independent Electoral Commission and officials of the State political parties' secretariats in the study area and ninety nine (99) were retrieved, one (1) was wrongly filled and nine.

The response are presented in tables and percentages which were used to illustrate the responses received.

$$\frac{\text{Number of Responses}}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Data Presentation Part I

In this chapter, the researcher presents and analysis the data collected from field survey. Deduction/findings are also made.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics Of Respondents

TABLE 1: SEX DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Sex	Response	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	63	63.6%
	Female	36	36.4%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table indicates that 63.6% of the total respondents are male and 36.4% re females. This shows that there are more male respondents.

TABLE 2: AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS.

Age group	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	20-30yrs	73	73.7%
	31-40yrs	16	16.2%
	41-50yrs	8	8.1%
	51 and Above	2	2.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The age group distribution of the sample population shows that majority of the respondents falls within the age group of (20-49), while 16.2% represent age group of 31-40yrs, 8.1% for age group 41-50yrs and 2.0% for 51 and above.

TABLE 3: EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

Educational Qualification	Responses	Frequency	Total
	WAEC/GCE	12	12.1%
	OND/NCE	29	29.3%
	BSC/HND	58	58.6%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The analysis of findings as shown in table 3 reveals that 12.1% of the respondents had WAEC/GCE, 29.3% of the respondents had OND/NCE while 58.6% of the respondent had BSC/HND degrees.

TABLE 4: OCCUPATION OF RESPONDENTS

Occupation	Reponses	Frequency	Percentage
	Civil servant	14	14.1%
	Private Employee	35	35.4%
	Self Employed	47	47.5%
	Retired	3	3.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table above shows that 14.1% were civil servant, 35.4% were private employee, 47.5% were self-employed and 3.0% are retired.

TABLE 5: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF RESPONDENTS

Religion	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Christian	87	87.9%

	Muslim	9	9.1%
	ATR	3	3.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The religious affiliation of the respondents in the table above shows that 87.9% of respondents were Christians representing the highest percentage, while 9.1% are Muslims and 3.0% are African Traditional Worshippers.

TABLE 6: MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS.

Marital Status	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Single	87	87.9%
	Married	9	9.1%
	Divorced	3	3.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The findings shows that 87.9% of the respondents were single, 9.1% were married and 3.0% of the respondents were divorced.

TABLE 7: campaign propaganda filled with hate speeches and questionable information

campaign propaganda filled with hate speeches and questionable information	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	21.2	21.2%
	Agree	45.5	45.5%
	Disagree	21.2	21.2%
	Strongly Disagree	8	8.1%

	Undecided	4	4.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

From the findings above, 21.2% of the respondents are of the opinion that campaign propaganda filled with hate speeches and questionable information, while 45.5% also agree to that, 21.2% of the respondents disagree with the opinion and 8.1% strongly disagree while 4.0% responds were undecided.

TABLE 8: a large voter turnout in an election is largely not feasible outside an efficient and effective awareness creation

a large voter turnout in an election is largely not feasible outside an efficient and effective awareness creation	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	14.1	14.1%
	Agree	47.5	47.5%
	Disagree	22.2	22.2%
	Strongly Disagree	7.1	7.1%
	Undecided	9.1	9.1%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table above shows that 14.1% of the respondents are of the opinion that a large voter turnout in an election is largely not feasible outside an efficient and effective awareness creation, while 47.5% also agree to that, 22.2% of the respondents disagree with the opinion and 7.1% strongly disagree while 7.1% responds were undecided.

TABLE 9: 2023 general elections were credible largely due to the card readers

2023 general elections were credible largely due to the card readers	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	55	55.6%
	Agree	32	32.3%
	Disagree	6	6.1%
	Strongly Disagree	3	3.0%
	Undecided	3	3.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table above shows that 55.6% of the respondents are of the opinion that 2015 general elections were credible largely due to the card readers, while 32.3% also agree to that, 6.1% of the respondents disagree with the opinion and 3.0% strongly disagree while 3.0% responds were undecided.

TABLE 10: There is a significant relationship between propaganda and 2023 presidential election credibility in Nigeria

There is a significant relationship between propaganda and 2023 presidential election credibility in Nigeria	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	53	53.5%
	Agree	36	36.4%
	Disagree	3	3.0%
	Strongly Disagree	4	4.0%
	Undecided	3	3.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

From the table above 53.5% of the respondents strongly agree that There is a significant relationship between propaganda and 2023 presidential election credibility in Nigeria, while 36.4% agreed. 3.0% disagree, 4.0% strongly disagree while 3.0% respondent are undecided.

Table 11: the robustness of a party's propaganda machinery is a key determinant of the outcome of an election.

the robustness of a party's propaganda machinery is a key determinant of the outcome of an election	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	41	41.4%
	Agree	43	43.4%
	Disagree	8	8.1%
	Strongly Disagree	5	5.1%
	Undecided	2	2.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table above shows that 41.4% of the respondents strongly agree that the robustness of a party’s propaganda machinery is a key determinant of the outcome of an election, while 4.4% agree also to that, 8.1% disagree, 5.1% strongly disagree while 2.0% of the respondents responses were undecided.

Table 12: Campaign propaganda could be referred to as information-moulding and dispensing tools which political parties and candidates use to appeal to the emotion and psyche of the electorates during electioneering

Campaign propaganda could be referred to as information-moulding and dispensing tools which political parties and candidates use to appeal to the emotion and psyche of the electorates during electioneering	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	21	21.2%
	Agree	47	47.5%
	Disagree	15	15.2%
	Strongly Disagree	5	5.1%
	Undecided	11	11.1%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table above shows that 21.2% of the respondents strongly agree that Campaign propaganda could be referred to as information-moulding and dispensing tools which political parties and candidates use to appeal to the emotion and psyche of the electorates during electioneering, while 47.5% agree,

also to that, 15.2% disagree, 5.1% strongly disagree while 2.0% of the respondents responses were undecided.

TABLE 13. propaganda is a manipulative technique deployed by political actors to divert the attention of the reactors from the actual motive in order to advance a political goal

propaganda is a manipulative technique deployed by political actors to divert the attention of the reactors from the actual motive in order to advance a political goal	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	53	53.5%
	Agree	38	38.4%
	Disagree	4	4.0%
	Strongly Disagree	3	3.0%
	Undecided	1	1.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

From the table above, 53.5% strongly agree that It is a manipulative technique deployed by political actors to divert the attention of the reactors from the actual motive in order to advance a political goal in Nigeria, while 38.4% also agree to it respectively.

TABLE 14. campaign propaganda is intended to exert its influence with emotive effects and not through reasons by exaggerating the candidates' qualities and concealing their defects

campaign propaganda is intended to exert its influence with emotive effects and not through	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	41	41.4%
	Agree	42	42.4%
	Disagree	8	8.1%

reasons by exaggerating the candidates' qualities and concealing their defects	Strongly Disagree	6	6.1%
	Undecided	2	2.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

From the table above, the result shows that 41.1% of the respondent strongly agree that campaign propaganda is intended to exert its influence with emotive effects and not through reasons by exaggerating the candidates' qualities and concealing their defects, 42.4% agree that economic recession brings about unemployment, 6.1% strongly disagree while 2.0% undecided.

TABLE 15: Political propaganda, made by skilled specialists and foreign advisors, intends to study different aspects of electoral behaviour, to offer the people what they want to hear

Political propaganda, made by skilled specialists and foreign advisors, intends to study different aspects of electoral behaviour, to offer the people what they want to hear	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	52	52.5%
	Agree	38	38.4%
	Disagree	4	4.0%
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.0%
	Undecided	3	3.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The table shows that 52.5% strongly agree that Political propaganda, made by skilled specialists and foreign advisors, intends to study different aspects of

electoral behaviour, to offer the people what they want to hear in Nigeria, 38.4% agree, while 4.0% disagree, 2.0% strongly disagree while 3.0% undecided.

TABLE 16: campaign propaganda is used by candidates and political parties to modify the views, attitudes and behaviours of the electorate

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	41	41.4%
Agree	49	49.5%
Disagree	5	5.1%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.0%
Undecided	2	2.0%
Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

From the table above, 41.4% strongly agree that campaign propaganda is used by candidates and political parties to modify the views, attitudes and behaviours of the electorate, while 49.5% also agree to it respectively.

TABLE 17: campaign propaganda serves a dual purpose of educating electorate on the proposed plans and programmes of the incoming government and committing voters to exercise their franchise during elections

campaign propaganda serves a dual purpose of educating	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	51	51.5%

electorate on the proposed plans and programmes of the incoming government and committing voters to exercise their franchise during elections	Agree	42	42.4%
	Disagree	2	2.0%
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.0%
	Undecided	2	2.0%
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The table shows that 51.5% strongly agree that campaign propaganda serves a dual purpose of educating electorate on the proposed plans and programmes of the incoming government and committing voters to exercise their franchise during elections in Nigeria, 42.4% agree, while 2.0% disagree, 2.0% strongly disagree while 2.0% undecided.

TABLE 18: Political actors and parties have over the years, relied on conventional media channels to modify the perceptions and behaviour of voters.

Political actors and parties have over the years, relied on conventional media channels to modify the perceptions and behaviour of voters	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	55	55.6%
	Agree	38	38.4%
	Disagree	5	5.1%
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.0%
	Undecided	-	-
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

From the table above, the result shows that 55.6% of the respondents strongly agree that Political actors and parties have over the years, relied on conventional media channels to modify the perceptions and behaviour of voters, 38.4% agree to it, 5.1% strongly disagree while 1.0% strongly disagrees.

TABLE 19: Propaganda in Nigeria are tools of the elites to further their narrow political and economic ends.

Propaganda in Nigeria are tools of the elites to further their narrow political and economic ends	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	43	43.4%
	Agree	50	50.5%
	Disagree	5	5.1%
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.0%
	Undecided	-	-
	Total	99	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The table above shows that 43.4% of the respondents strongly agree that Propaganda in Nigeria are tools of the elites to further their narrow political and economic ends, 50.5% agree to it, 5.1% strongly disagree while 1.0% strongly disagrees.

Hypothesis Testing

At the inception of this study, we formulated some hypothesis which were designed to act as guide to the conduct of this study. In this section, we shall

attempt to test these hypothesis in order to give credence to our Assumptions about the problems under investigation.

Hypothesis One

H₀: there is a significant relationship between propaganda and the credibility of 2023 presidential election in Nigeria

H_i: there is no significant relationship between propaganda and credibility of 2023 presidential election in Nigeria

$$\text{Chi-Square (X}^2\text{)} \quad X^2 \sum = \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Fe

Where

X² = Chi-square symbol

F_o = Actual or frequency observed

F_e = Frequency expected

∑ = Summation

Decision Rule

At 0.05 level of significance the null hypothesis will be rejected if the computed X² is greater than the table value of X² is greater than the table value of X² at 4 degree of freedom.

TEST DATA: The data used to test this hypothesis was obtained from the responses of respondents to questions contained in the questionnaires.

Table 4.4.1: One-Way Classical

	Respondents		Fo – Fe	(Fo-Fe) ²	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
	Fo	Fe			
Strongly Agree	52	20	32	1024	51.2
Agree	38	20	18	324	16.2
Undecided	4	20	-16	256	12.8
Disagree	2	20	-18	324	16.2
Strongly Disagree	3	19	-16	256	12.8
Total	99	99	0	926	109.2

Calculated Chi-Square (X^2) = **109.2**

From the chi-square table the critical value of 4 degree of freedom (5-1) (2-1) is 9.49 the computed value of 109.2 is greater than the critical value of 9.49.

Conclusion

Since the computer X^2 value is greater (109.2) than the table value of X^2 (9.49) at 5% level of significance and 4 degree of freedom we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between propaganda and the credibility of 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Therefore the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between propaganda and the credibility of 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, stands and accepted.

Hypothesis Two

H0: There is a significant relationship between propaganda and ethno religious violence during electioneering

Hi: There is no significant relationship between propaganda and ethno religious violence during electioneering

Decision Rule

At 0.05 level of significance the null hypothesis will be rejected if the computed X^2 at 4 degree of freedom.

Test Data

The data used to test this hypothesis was obtained from true responses of respondents to questions contained in the questionnaire as reproduced below:

Table 4.4.2: One-Way Classical

	Respondents		Fo – Fe	(Fo-Fe) ²	$\frac{(Fo - Fe)^2}{Fe}$
	Fo	Fe			
Strongly Agree	51	20	31	961	48.05
Agree	42	20	22	484	24.2
Undecided	2	20	-18	324	16.2
Disagree	2	20	-18	324	16.2
Strongly Disagree	2	19	-17	289	14.5
Total	99	99	0	718	119.2

Calculated Chi-Square (X^2) = 119.2

Using a level of significance of 5% at 4 degree of freedom, table X^2 is equals to 9.49, hence we establish our physical acceptance value.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study found that Political propaganda, made by skilled specialists and foreign advisors, intends to study different aspects of electoral behaviour, to offer the people what they want to hear. This is contained in the response of the respondents.

The study also discovered that most respondents believed that campaign propaganda is used by candidates and political parties to modify the views, attitudes and behaviours of the electorate.

Campaign propaganda serves a dual purpose of educating electorate on the proposed plans and programmes of the incoming government and committing voters to exercise their franchise during elections.

propaganda is a manipulative technique deployed by political actors to divert the attention of the reactors from the actual motive in order to advance a political goal. Hence, lack transparency. This is because transparency is a key principle in credible elections; and this will bring about trust and public confidence in the electoral process.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to bring to the limelight the historic role of campaign propaganda in influencing the electoral choices of voters in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It argued that voters in Nigeria do not necessarily make independent electoral choices rather they rely on the decisions of ethno-religious leaders who equally double as the representatives of various political parties to make political decisions. Presidential election in Nigeria is usually a heated contest between various ethnic nationalities struggling to acquire state power to advance sectional interest. Access to state power enables the occupant to share political positions and juicy contracts to people of same religion and ethnicity. It also allows political leaders to concentrate key development projects in those regions that overwhelmingly voted for them. As such, hate speeches, ethno-religious campaign messages and questionable campaign promises are used to elicit the support of voters who are incapable of thinking outside the realm of ethnicity and religion.

These realities largely seen as the proximate determinant of voting behaviour in Nigeria, no doubt, played out, and ultimately determined the outcome of the 2023 presidential election. For the first time in the history of Nigeria's democratic journey, a minority party candidate was largely supported

by Nigerians. But the winner as announced by INEC turn out to be the ruling part candidate. This study therefore concludes on the need to overhaul the whole gamut of election architecture in Nigeria through aggressive and comprehensive reforms.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on the above findings, the study recommend the following:

Firstly, there is need to strengthen the administrative, financial and institutional autonomy of INEC to regulate the use of hate speech during electioneering. In most cases, the EMB lacked the capacity to punish highly placed public officials who violate extant electoral rules and guidelines mainly due to institutional incapacitation. The institutional weakness no doubt, has hindered effective coordination of the electoral processes by the EMB

Secondly, the statutory functions of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be expanded to undertake the democratic role of political education and enlightenment of the electorate on the borderline between conventional campaign promises and political propaganda. In carrying out this function, the agency must prioritise use of indigenous languages in order to get to wider audience not conversant in English language. By so doing, the electorate would be well-informed on what constitutes a realistic campaign

promise and a mere slanderous propaganda targeted at discrediting an opponent unjustly and scoring cheap political popularity.

The NOA should also insist that Nigerians deserve the truth and should be told the truth and nothing more, no matter how unpalatable it may appear.

Thirdly, the media must be regulated by law to disseminate objective messages during electioneering. Specifically, it must be restrained from been an appendage of a given political party, showing preference for any candidate and serving as tool to disseminate disinformation and hate speeches.

Fourthly, the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) drawn from academia, trade unions, media and social research institutes should jointly conduct background checks on contestants and manifestoes of political parties, and subsequently, educate voters on the qualification of candidates and feasibility of their programs.

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