

**IMPLICATION OF THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL  
COMMISSION (INEC) ON NIGERIA'S ELECTORAL INTEGRITY: A CASE  
STUDY OF 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

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BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

**SEPTEMBER, 2025**

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**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF  
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FOR THE AWARD OF A BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BSc) DEGREE IN  
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**SEPTEMBER, 2025**

## CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned certify that this project was carried out by **Stephen Obokparo EDOGHO**, with the Matriculation Number; **SSC2105680** in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, in partial fulfillment for the award of Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science.

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## **DEDICATION**

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty.

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I express my heartfelt gratitude to God Almighty, my ultimate source of inspiration, knowledge, and strength, for guiding me through this journey.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study critically examines the implications of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) role on electoral integrity in Nigeria, using Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State as a case study. The research investigates how key INEC functions, logistics and operations, result collation and transmission, institutional independence, voter education, and enforcement of electoral laws; affect the credibility and fairness of elections. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with data gathered from 280 respondents drawn from the 2023 INEC voters' register using multi-stage sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using frequency distributions and mean scores. The findings reveal significant public dissatisfaction with INEC's operational efficiency, transparency in result transmission, enforcement of electoral laws, and voter engagement. These challenges were found to have negatively impacted electoral integrity, fostering public mistrust in election outcomes. The study recommends urgent and comprehensive electoral reforms that address INEC's independence, logistics, legal enforcement, and voter education. It further calls for institutional restructuring and the creation of a framework that ensures accountability, technological transparency, and stakeholder inclusiveness. The research contributes to the growing discourse on electoral governance and democracy in Nigeria and underscores the need to strengthen democratic institutions through genuine reform efforts.*

**Keywords:** *Electoral Integrity, Electoral Reform, INEC, Voter Education*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The integrity of elections is a fundamental benchmark for measuring the health and legitimacy of democratic systems. Electoral integrity refers to the adherence of electoral processes to democratic principles, legal standards, and transparency norms that guarantee free, fair, and credible elections. In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is constitutionally mandated to safeguard electoral integrity by conducting elections that reflect the genuine will of the people (Okoye, 2021). However, over the years, INEC has been at the center of controversy due to recurrent electoral irregularities, administrative lapses, and accusations of political interference. Scholars have noted that logistical failures, delayed election results, and a lack of transparency in vote collation processes continue to cast doubt on the commission's credibility (Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023). These persistent issues raise critical questions about the implications of INEC's performance on the credibility and legitimacy of Nigeria's democratic process, as electoral outcomes that lack credibility can delegitimize elected governments and weaken citizens' trust in democratic institutions (Adeleke, 2023).

INEC plays a pivotal role in ensuring electoral integrity, not only by organizing elections but also by regulating political behavior, enforcing electoral laws, and introducing innovations aimed at enhancing transparency. Nonetheless, public confidence in INEC

has often been undermined by perceived institutional weaknesses, including logistical inefficiencies, inconsistent enforcement of electoral guidelines, and susceptibility to political manipulation. These issues suggest that the electoral outcomes in Nigeria are frequently determined not just by voters' choices but by how effectively or ineffectively INEC executes its mandate (Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023). When the commission is seen as compromised, the legitimacy of elected officials is called into question, weakening the overall democratic structure.

Another major implication of INEC's performance on electoral integrity is the erosion of voter confidence and participation. When citizens perceive electoral processes as flawed or predetermined, they become disillusioned with democratic participation, leading to declining voter turnout and growing apathy (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023). This loss of faith in the electoral system not only delegitimizes outcomes but also threatens political stability, as marginalized groups may resort to protests, litigation, or violence to express their dissatisfaction. Furthermore, when INEC fails to act decisively against electoral malpractices such as ballot box snatching, voter suppression, or falsification of results it fosters a culture of impunity that emboldens political actors to undermine democratic processes for personal gain.

Technological innovations introduced by INEC, including the Smart Card Reader, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), were designed to mitigate electoral fraud and enhance transparency. While these

tools have the potential to boost electoral integrity, their inconsistent deployment and technical failures have often had the opposite effect, generating confusion and mistrust (Adeleke, 2023). Without adequate training, infrastructure, and political will to implement these innovations uniformly, INEC's efforts to digitize electoral processes may end up reinforcing public skepticism rather than confidence.

The independence and accountability of INEC also remain critical to its effectiveness. Although the commission is legally autonomous, its operations are often influenced by executive control, inadequate funding, and the politicization of appointments. These structural and institutional limitations hinder INEC's ability to function impartially and professionally. The perception that INEC is vulnerable to elite capture or partisan interests is damaging to electoral integrity, as it creates a credibility gap between electoral outcomes and public expectations.

Against this backdrop, the 2023 presidential election serves as a pertinent case study for assessing the real-world implications of INEC's role on electoral integrity in Nigeria. The election, which was touted as a litmus test for democratic consolidation, was marred by controversies surrounding the malfunctioning of BVAS, delayed result transmission, logistical setbacks, and allegations of electoral malpractice. These challenges exposed the gaps between INEC's promises and its actual performance, raising critical concerns about the extent to which the commission can guarantee electoral integrity in Nigeria's evolving democratic landscape.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

The conduct of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria once again brought to the fore long-standing concerns about the capacity and credibility of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in fulfilling its constitutional role. Despite the introduction of electoral reforms and the deployment of technological innovations such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV), the election was marred by widespread irregularities that have significant implications for electoral integrity. One of the major problems was INEC's logistical and operational efficiency. Reports of late arrival of materials, malfunctioning of devices, and inadequate personnel were prevalent across polling units, particularly in rural areas (Adeleke, 2023). This failure hindered smooth voting and disenfranchised many eligible voters.

Secondly, INEC's transparency in result collation and transmission was called into question. Despite assurances that results would be uploaded in real-time via the IREV platform, many polling unit results were either not uploaded promptly or were altered during collation, raising suspicions of manipulation (Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023). Furthermore, the impartiality and independence of the Commission have been consistently challenged. Accusations of bias, undue influence by political elites, and the controversial handling of petitions erode public trust in the Commission as a neutral arbiter of electoral competition (Okoye, 2021).

Additionally, INEC's voter education and communication strategy during the 2023 elections was inadequate. A significant portion of the electorate lacked clear understanding of the use of BVAS and the new procedures, leading to confusion and delays (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023). Lastly, the enforcement of electoral laws and sanctioning of offenders remained weak, as incidents of vote buying, violence, and intimidation were rampant without timely punitive actions. These shortcomings not only undermined the legitimacy of the 2023 presidential election but also signaled systemic weaknesses that threaten the foundation of Nigeria's democratic process.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to investigate the implication of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Role on Nigeria's Electoral Integrity using the 2023 Presidential Election as case study; Particularly, the study seeks to;

- I. Examine the impact of INEC's logistical and operational efficiency on the conduct and outcome of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.
- II. Assess the transparency of INEC's result collation and transmission processes during the 2023 presidential election.
- III. Evaluate the extent to which INEC maintained impartiality and independence in the administration of the 2023 presidential election.

- IV. Investigate the effectiveness of INEC's voter education and public communication strategies in ensuring informed electoral participation during the 2023 election.
- V. Analyze INEC's enforcement of electoral laws and its role in addressing electoral offenses during the 2023 presidential election.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

- I. How did INEC's logistical and operational efficiency affect the conduct and outcome of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria?
- II. To what extent was INEC's result collation and transmission process transparent during the 2023 presidential election?
- III. How impartial and independent was INEC in administering the 2023 presidential election?
- IV. How effective were INEC's voter education and public communication strategies in enhancing electoral participation in the 2023 presidential election?
- V. How adequately did INEC enforce electoral laws and address electoral offenses during the 2023 presidential election?

#### **1.5 Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study focuses on examining the implications of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Nigeria's electoral integrity, using the 2023 presidential election

as a case study. It specifically investigates INEC's role in five key areas: logistical efficiency, transparency in result collation, institutional independence, voter education, and enforcement of electoral laws. The study is delimited to the 2023 presidential election and does not cover other elections held in the same year. It draws insights primarily from events, reports, and data related to the election at the national level, without focusing on specific states or local government areas.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the broader discourse on electoral integrity and democratic governance in Nigeria. By critically examining the role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the 2023 presidential election, the study provides valuable insights that will benefit a range of stakeholders. Policymakers and electoral reform advocates will benefit from the findings by gaining evidence-based recommendations that can guide the development of legal and institutional frameworks aimed at strengthening INEC's capacity, independence, and operational efficiency. The study will also be of immense relevance to civil society organizations and election observers, both domestic and international, as it offers an empirical analysis of the challenges and shortcomings in Nigeria's electoral processes. These insights can inform advocacy strategies and monitoring efforts in future elections. Political parties and candidates will gain a clearer understanding of systemic electoral issues, helping them to develop more strategic approaches to political participation,

engagement with electoral bodies, and responses to electoral grievances. Furthermore, the study will benefit the academic and research community by adding to the growing body of literature on electoral governance in Africa, particularly in emerging democracies like Nigeria. It provides a scholarly foundation for further research into the intersection of electoral institutions and democratic consolidation.

Most importantly, Nigerian citizens, particularly the electorate, stand to benefit as the study sheds light on the factors that undermine the credibility of their votes and the overall democratic process. By exposing weaknesses and recommending improvements, the study empowers citizens with knowledge that can enhance civic engagement and promote demand for electoral accountability. Overall, the study serves as a vital tool for strengthening democratic institutions and advancing the cause of credible, free, and fair elections in Nigeria.

### **1.7 Operational Definition of Term**

The following terms are operationally defined as used in this study;

- **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC):** In this study, INEC refers to the constitutionally established electoral body in Nigeria responsible for organizing, overseeing, and regulating elections at the federal and state levels, including the 2023 presidential election.

- **Electoral Integrity:** This refers to the degree to which electoral processes are conducted in a free, fair, transparent, and credible manner, in line with democratic principles and legal frameworks.
- **Logistical and Operational Efficiency:** This term describes INEC's ability to effectively plan, coordinate, and deploy election materials, personnel, and technology to polling units across the country in a timely and organized manner.
- **Result Collation and Transmission:** This refers to the process through which votes cast during the election are counted, compiled, and officially recorded, including the electronic transmission of results through platforms such as the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal.
- **Institutional Independence:** This refers to the autonomy of INEC in making impartial decisions, free from political interference or external pressure, particularly in the administration and declaration of election results.
- **Voter Education and Communication:** This term encompasses INEC's efforts to inform and educate the electorate about voting procedures, use of technology (such as BVAS), and other essential electoral processes before and during the 2023 presidential election.
- **Enforcement of Electoral Laws:** This refers to INEC's role in ensuring compliance with electoral rules and regulations, including the investigation, prosecution, and sanctioning of individuals or groups involved in electoral malpractice or violence.

- **2023 Presidential Election:** In this study, this term specifically refers to the national election held on February 25, 2023, to elect the President of Nigeria, serving as the central case through which INEC's performance and its implications on electoral integrity are evaluated.

## **1.8 Plan of the Study**

The study will be carried out in the following arrangement;

**Chapter One:** Deals with the Introduction to the study; which covers the background, problem statement, objectives, hypotheses, research questions, scope, significance and operational definition of terms.

**Chapter Two:** Deals with the literature review of the study, which will cover areas such as the conceptual review, review of related topics, the empirical review, the theoretical framework and its relevance to the study and the research gap.

**Chapter Three:** The third chapter covers the Methodology of the research, which covers the research design, population of the study, sample size and technique, research instrument, validity of research instrument, method of data collection and the method of data analysis.

**Chapter Four:** The fourth chapter will cover the presentation of data, data analysis and the discussion of findings.

**Chapter Five:** The fifth chapter will cover the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study, in which suggestions for further studies will be included and as necessary the limitations derived in the process of carrying out the research.

References and Appendix will be added to the end of the project work the references will be presented in APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition style.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter deals with the review of relevant literatures to this study, which are categorized under the conceptual review, review of related topics, empirical review and the theoretical framework.

#### **2.1. Conceptual Review**

##### **2.1.1. Electoral Integrity**

Electoral integrity is a fundamental concept in democratic governance that encompasses the adherence of electoral processes to internationally recognized standards, legal norms, and ethical principles designed to ensure that elections are free, fair, and credible. Within the global context, electoral integrity reflects a system in which the entire electoral cycle, from the legal framework and electoral administration to the voting, counting, and dispute resolution is conducted transparently and inclusively, without bias, coercion, or manipulation (Norris, 2020). The concept implies not merely the absence of fraud, but the

presence of positive attributes such as procedural transparency, equitable participation, accurate results, and accountability mechanisms.

Globally, electoral integrity is guided by standards established by international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 25), which affirm the right of citizens to participate in periodic elections that are genuine and reflective of the electorate's will. These principles are further reinforced by normative frameworks from organizations like the United Nations, African Union, and Electoral Integrity Project, which emphasize the independence of electoral management bodies, fairness of the legal framework, equal access to media, and effective mechanisms for resolving electoral grievances (Norris & Grömping, 2019).

In the Nigerian context, electoral integrity has remained a contentious issue due to recurring concerns over manipulation, violence, logistical failures, and institutional bias. Although Nigeria has made legal and technological strides such as the introduction of the Electoral Act 2022 and the deployment of BVAS and IReV platforms, questions persist about the credibility of the processes. Electoral integrity in Nigeria, therefore, refers to the extent to which INEC and related stakeholders conduct elections in a manner that respects the principles of impartiality, transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability, as defined by both local and global benchmarks (Adeleke, 2023).

Furthermore, the credibility of an election is not only determined by the conduct on election day but also by the pre-election environment and post-election processes, including the fairness of campaign financing, voter education, access to information, and the integrity of judicial review mechanisms. In Nigeria, issues such as vote buying, intimidation, logistical setbacks, and delayed transmission of results undermine the integrity of elections, despite the presence of modern electoral technologies (Okonkwo & Ibrahim, 2023). As such, a high level of electoral integrity requires not just structural reforms but also political will, civic education, and institutional independence.

Electoral integrity also has implications for legitimacy and public trust in democratic institutions. When elections are perceived as credible, citizens are more likely to accept outcomes and engage with the political system constructively. Conversely, when integrity is compromised, the legitimacy of elected officials and the broader democratic framework is weakened (Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023). Therefore, upholding electoral integrity in Nigeria is essential not only for the credibility of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) but also for the stability and development of the country's democracy in line with global standards.

### **2.1.2 Logistical and Operational Efficiency in Elections**

Logistical and operational efficiency in elections refers to the strategic planning, timely deployment, and proper coordination of resources, personnel, and electoral materials necessary for the smooth conduct of electoral activities (López-Pintor, 2015; Ibeanu,

2021). It encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, including the transportation of sensitive and non-sensitive materials, the training and deployment of ad hoc staff, the distribution of voter registers and ballot papers, and the establishment of polling units across diverse and often difficult terrains. In a country like Nigeria, with its large population, complex geography, and socio-political diversity, achieving logistical and operational efficiency poses significant challenges and is a critical test of the capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Adeleke, 2023; Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023).

Globally, electoral management bodies are expected to possess the institutional capability to ensure that elections are conducted in a timely and organized manner, free from avoidable delays and disruptions. The integrity of an election is closely tied to how efficiently these operational tasks are handled. According to López-Pintor (2015), logistical failures, such as late arrival of materials, missing documents, or non-functional devices, can undermine public confidence in the electoral process and contribute to voter apathy or allegations of fraud. Therefore, the ability of an electoral body like INEC to plan and execute election logistics effectively is essential for building trust and enhancing the credibility of elections.

In the Nigerian context, INEC is constitutionally responsible for organizing elections and ensuring that logistical arrangements support the conduct of free and fair elections. Over the years, however, the Commission has faced recurring criticisms regarding late

deployment of materials, inadequate training of ad hoc staff, poor coordination, and insufficient voter access to polling units, particularly in rural or conflict-prone areas (Ibeanu, 2021). The introduction of technological innovations such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in the 2023 elections was intended to address some operational weaknesses. However, reports from election observers indicated that these devices often failed to function properly or were deployed late, particularly in remote areas, thus affecting the efficiency and fairness of the electoral process (Adeleke, 2023).

Logistical challenges in Nigerian elections are often compounded by infrastructural deficits, insecurity, and limited funding. These factors make it difficult for INEC to implement plans with precision and consistency across all regions. Moreover, the decentralization of logistics to state and local government levels introduces layers of bureaucracy and potential for mismanagement or interference. Operational efficiency also includes contingency planning, such as preparing for emergencies, equipment failure, or security threats, which are critical in minimizing disruptions during the election period.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of INEC in managing election logistics significantly influences public perception of electoral integrity. When voters experience disorganization, delays, or disenfranchisement due to operational lapses, it not only affects participation but also casts doubt on the legitimacy of the outcomes. Therefore, strengthening logistical and operational efficiency should be a key priority for INEC,

involving continuous staff training, stakeholder coordination, infrastructure investment, and early planning.

### **2.1.3 Result Collation and Transmission in Elections**

Result collation and transmission are fundamental aspects of the electoral process that significantly influence public confidence, transparency, and the credibility of election outcomes. Collation refers to the systematic aggregation of votes from polling units through various administrative levels, ward, local government, state, and national, while transmission involves the transfer of these results either physically or electronically from the source to central repositories (Norris & Grömping, 2019; Omotola, 2023). In any democracy, the accuracy and transparency of these processes are indispensable, as they determine whether the final outcomes reflect the true will of the electorate.

Globally, electoral management bodies have increasingly adopted digital technologies to enhance the speed, accuracy, and security of result transmission. These tools are designed to mitigate human error, eliminate opportunities for result manipulation, and promote real-time public access to vote tallies. According to the Electoral Integrity Project (Norris, 2020), electronic result transmission, when properly implemented, reduces the risks of

fraud and fosters greater voter trust. However, effective deployment depends on a reliable digital infrastructure, technical capacity, and a political environment that supports transparency.

In Nigeria, INEC has attempted to improve collation and transmission processes through innovations such as the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), particularly during the 2023 general elections. These technologies were intended to facilitate real-time upload of polling unit results and limit the scope for manual interference. Nonetheless, election observers and stakeholders reported major setbacks, including network failures, inconsistent uploads, and unexplained delays in result publication, especially for the presidential election (Adeleke, 2023; Yiaga Africa, 2023). Such inconsistencies have raised concerns over the transparency of the process and led to disputes regarding the credibility of the announced results.

Furthermore, legal and institutional ambiguities around the enforceability of electronic result transmission have complicated the process. Despite the Electoral Act 2022 mandating the electronic transmission of results, INEC's discretion in implementation created legal loopholes that political actors exploited (Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023). Moreover, weak oversight mechanisms and the lack of effective sanctions for result manipulation continue to undermine the integrity of collation and transmission in Nigeria.

The credibility of an election does not rest solely on how votes are cast, but critically on how they are counted and conveyed to the public. When collation centers become flashpoints for tension, and transmission systems fail or are manipulated, the legitimacy of the electoral process is called into question. Therefore, strengthening result collation and transmission mechanisms in Nigeria requires investment in infrastructure, clear legal frameworks, civic education on process transparency, and the political will to implement reforms consistently across all electoral levels.

#### **2.1.4 Institutional Independence in Elections**

Institutional independence in elections refers to the extent to which an electoral management body (EMB), such as Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), operates free from external influence, particularly from the executive, political parties, and vested interest groups. A truly independent electoral institution must possess legal, financial, and administrative autonomy to design, implement, and regulate electoral processes without coercion or interference (Gyimah-Boadi, 2020; IDEA, 2021). This independence is essential for ensuring fairness, impartiality, and public confidence in democratic elections.

Globally, institutional independence is one of the defining criteria for assessing the integrity of elections. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2021) emphasizes that for an EMB to function credibly, it must be insulated from

political pressures, adequately funded, and empowered to enforce electoral laws without bias. When independence is compromised, elections risk being manipulated to favor incumbents or dominant political interests, thereby eroding democratic norms. The Electoral Integrity Project also ranks countries' EMBs based on their institutional autonomy, finding that higher levels of independence strongly correlate with higher public trust and more credible electoral outcomes (Norris, 2020).

In Nigeria, although INEC is constitutionally established as an independent body, its practical autonomy has often been questioned. Appointments of INEC leadership are made by the President, subject to Senate confirmation, which raises concerns about partisanship, especially during contentious elections (Omotola & Aiyede, 2023). Additionally, budgetary approvals for INEC are routed through the executive, undermining its financial independence and exposing it to indirect control. These structural dependencies have frequently sparked allegations of bias, particularly when electoral decisions appear to favor the ruling party.

The 2023 general elections provided a significant test of INEC's institutional independence. Despite widespread expectations for a transparent process following legal and technological reforms, many stakeholders accused the Commission of acting under political pressure during key moments of the electoral cycle, especially in the collation and announcement of presidential results (Adeleke, 2023). The perceived failure of INEC

to assert its autonomy in enforcing procedures such as real-time electronic result transmission, cast a shadow on its neutrality and further polarized public opinion.

Institutional independence also entails the ability of an EMB to discipline political actors who breach electoral laws. In the Nigerian context, enforcement mechanisms remain weak, with few consequences for electoral misconduct. This lack of accountability diminishes INEC's authority and emboldens political interference. Ensuring true institutional independence would require reforms in the appointment process, direct access to funding, and legal empowerment to sanction erring stakeholders regardless of their political affiliation.

Ultimately, the credibility of any electoral process depends largely on the perception and reality of an impartial, autonomous electoral body. For Nigeria to strengthen democratic governance, INEC must be institutionally protected from political manipulation and be empowered to function independently in both principle and practice.

### **2.1.5 Voter Education and Communication in Elections**

Voter education and communication are fundamental to fostering meaningful participation in democratic elections. This aspect of electoral administration involves informing citizens about the electoral process, including their rights and responsibilities, voting procedures, the use of electoral technologies, and key timelines. When effectively executed, voter education enhances civic awareness, increases voter turnout, and contributes to the credibility of elections by minimizing errors and confusion among the

electorate (Dunn & Rai, 2020; IDEA, 2021). It also plays a vital role in ensuring that marginalized groups, such as women, youths, and persons with disabilities, are not excluded from the electoral process.

Internationally, voter education is regarded as a cornerstone of electoral integrity. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES, 2022) emphasizes that well-structured and inclusive voter education campaigns help reduce misinformation, dispel myths about electoral processes, and support the implementation of electoral innovations. In pluralistic societies, effective communication strategies must consider language diversity, cultural nuances, and varying levels of literacy to ensure widespread understanding and engagement. The International IDEA (2021) also highlights the need for voter education to be continuous, targeted, and evidence-based to maintain public trust in electoral institutions.

In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is responsible for educating voters and disseminating accurate electoral information. Despite efforts such as collaborations with civil society organizations and the rollout of educational frameworks, INEC's voter education strategies have been critiqued for limited coverage, poor timing, and failure to adequately address grassroots communities (Omotola & Aiyede, 2023). These gaps are particularly concerning in a context marked by widespread misinformation and political manipulation, where uninformed electorates can easily be misled or discouraged from voting.

The 2023 presidential election highlighted the consequences of inadequate voter education. Though INEC introduced new technologies like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), many voters were unaware of how these tools functioned, leading to confusion and reduced confidence in the electoral process. According to reports from Yiaga Africa (2023), technical failures were compounded by inconsistent and insufficient communication, which fostered suspicion and mistrust among the public. These issues underscore the importance of strategic and proactive voter communication, particularly when introducing new reforms or technologies.

To improve electoral credibility, INEC must invest in more inclusive and adaptive communication approaches. These should involve not only traditional media but also social platforms, community networks, and interactive engagements that allow for feedback and clarification. By prioritizing comprehensive voter education, the Commission can significantly enhance public confidence, improve electoral participation, and contribute to the integrity of future elections in Nigeria.

### **2.1.6 Enforcement of Electoral Laws in Elections**

The enforcement of electoral laws is a crucial element in maintaining the fairness, transparency, and legitimacy of elections. It involves the consistent application of legal frameworks, regulations, and sanctions to ensure compliance by all stakeholders, including political parties, candidates, voters, and electoral officials. Effective

enforcement prevents electoral malpractices such as vote-buying, intimidation, ballot stuffing, and fraud, thereby safeguarding the integrity of the democratic process (Barkan, 2019; IDEA, 2021). Without robust enforcement mechanisms, electoral laws risk becoming ineffective, leading to impunity and weakening public trust in election outcomes.

At the global level, enforcement of electoral laws is recognized as a cornerstone of credible elections. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2021) stresses that electoral management bodies (EMBs) must be empowered to investigate violations swiftly, impose appropriate sanctions, and provide legal recourse for aggrieved parties. Furthermore, independent judiciary systems and specialized electoral tribunals play a vital role in adjudicating electoral disputes impartially and expeditiously, reinforcing the rule of law during elections. Research from the Electoral Integrity Project (Norris, 2020) indicates that countries with stronger enforcement institutions tend to experience fewer election-related conflicts and higher levels of electoral legitimacy.

In Nigeria, the enforcement of electoral laws falls largely under the jurisdiction of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the judiciary, including election petition tribunals. However, enforcement has historically faced significant challenges such as political interference, inadequate resources, and delays in adjudication, which undermine the effectiveness of legal sanctions (Omotola & Aiyede, 2023). Political

actors often evade accountability due to weak investigative capacities or delayed prosecutions, contributing to a culture of impunity that harms electoral integrity.

The 2023 presidential election highlighted some of these enforcement challenges. Despite legal provisions to curb electoral offenses and sanctions outlined in the Electoral Act, reports indicated numerous incidents of vote-buying, violence, and procedural irregularities that were not promptly addressed by INEC or the courts (Adeleke, 2023; Yiaga Africa, 2023). The slow pace of dispute resolution and perceived partiality in enforcement further fueled public skepticism about the credibility of the process. This scenario underscores the urgent need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for enforcing electoral laws effectively and impartially.

Ensuring robust enforcement requires reforms that enhance INEC's investigative authority, improve collaboration with security agencies, and bolster the independence of electoral tribunals. Moreover, public awareness campaigns about electoral offenses and consequences can complement legal enforcement by deterring violations through societal pressure. Ultimately, rigorous enforcement of electoral laws is indispensable for building public confidence in elections and consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

## **2.2 Review of Related Topics**

### **2.2.1 History and Role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)**

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the principal body charged with organizing elections in Nigeria. Its history is deeply rooted in the country's post-independence struggle to establish a credible electoral system. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has undergone various transitions between civilian and military rule, each shaping the electoral architecture. The first electoral body, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC), was established in 1958 by colonial authorities to oversee the 1959 elections. However, following political instability and military interventions, electoral management underwent several changes. In 1978, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) replaced FEC under General Obasanjo's military regime, conducting the 1979 and 1983 elections before being dissolved after another coup (Oladapo & Akinlabi, 2021).

The modern evolution of INEC began in 1998, following the collapse of General Sani Abacha's regime. General Abdulsalami Abubakar established INEC through Decree No. 17 of 1998 (later enshrined in the 1999 Constitution), with a renewed mandate to conduct credible elections and oversee democratic processes in the Fourth Republic (Omotola, 2023). INEC conducted its first national elections in 1999, ushering in civilian rule under President Olusegun Obasanjo. Since then, it has managed all general elections in Nigeria, including the most recent 2023 presidential election. Although its legal foundation and administrative scope have evolved, especially through amendments to the Electoral Act, INEC has consistently been at the center of debates on electoral integrity, transparency, and institutional credibility.

The Role of INEC can be categorized as follow;

### **1. Election Management and Logistics**

INEC is mandated to organize, undertake, and supervise all elections into elective offices in Nigeria. This includes planning electoral timetables, registering political parties and voters, and managing election-day logistics (Ibeanu, 2021). However, despite this expansive mandate, INEC has been criticized for repeated logistical failures such as late arrival of materials, malfunctioning accreditation equipment, and poor coordination of ad hoc staff, especially in rural areas. These inefficiencies, witnessed prominently in the 2023 elections, often compromise voter participation and create grounds for post-election disputes (Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023).

### **2. Voter Registration and Electoral Roll Maintenance**

INEC is responsible for compiling and updating the national voter register. This includes biometric registration and periodic voter verification. Although technological tools such as the Permanent Voter Card (PVC) and the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) have improved credibility, there are persistent issues with duplicate entries, missing data, and difficulties in voter card collection (Adeleke, 2023). These inefficiencies disproportionately affect marginalized groups and contribute to disenfranchisement.

### **3. Regulation of Political Parties and Campaign Finance**

INEC registers political parties and monitors their internal operations and campaign financing in accordance with the Electoral Act. Nonetheless, enforcement remains weak. Many political parties fail to submit audited financial statements, and there is little accountability in terms of campaign spending and party primaries. Studies indicate that INEC lacks both the political autonomy and enforcement tools to ensure compliance, particularly when powerful political actors are involved (Omotola & Aiyede, 2023).

### **4. Electoral Dispute Resolution**

INEC is tasked with responding to electoral grievances and conducting reruns where necessary. It also supports electoral tribunals with materials and information during litigation. While INEC has improved transparency by introducing the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) to track results, the lack of timely response to complaints and the slow pace of litigation continues to erode public confidence. Furthermore, limited independence in the face of political pressure diminishes INEC's perceived neutrality in post-election conflict resolution (Okoye, 2022).

### **5. Voter Education and Public Communication**

A core responsibility of INEC is educating the electorate about voting procedures and their civic responsibilities. However, INEC's voter education campaigns have often been urban-centric, poorly funded, and inadequate in addressing linguistic and cultural

diversity. The 2023 elections revealed significant gaps in voter awareness, especially regarding the use of new technologies like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), leading to confusion and distrust (Yiaga Africa, 2023).

Although INEC has played a central role in stabilizing Nigeria's electoral system since the return to democratic rule in 1999, significant institutional challenges remain. These include logistical inefficiencies, weak enforcement of laws, partial autonomy, and inadequate voter engagement. Strengthening INEC's capacity through institutional reforms, legal empowerment, and better funding mechanisms is vital for improving electoral integrity and consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

### **2.2.2 Challenges Associated with the INEC in the implementation of Electoral Responsibilities**

The effectiveness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in managing Nigeria's electoral processes has been a subject of extensive academic and policy discourse. As the primary electoral body, INEC is entrusted with ensuring free, fair, and credible elections across the country. However, its ability to discharge these responsibilities has been repeatedly challenged by a range of institutional, logistical,

political, and socio-economic factors. This review explores key challenges that have impeded INEC's performance, particularly in the context of recent elections;

### **1. Logistical and Operational Inefficiencies**

INEC frequently struggles with the timely and effective deployment of personnel, election materials, and equipment, especially to remote or volatile regions. Despite improved technological integration, logistical breakdowns were still evident in the 2023 general elections, particularly delays in the distribution of sensitive materials and late arrival of officials at polling stations (Ugwueze & Nwankwo, 2023). These lapses compromise the integrity of elections and often result in voter disenfranchisement. Critics argue that INEC's overreliance on temporary ad hoc staff and its inadequate infrastructural base hinder seamless operations, making election day delivery vulnerable to disruption (Adeleke, 2023).

### **2. Weak Enforcement of Electoral Laws**

INEC is constitutionally empowered to regulate political party activities, campaign finance, and electoral offenses. However, its enforcement capacity is severely limited. Political parties and candidates routinely flout campaign finance regulations and engage in vote-buying with minimal consequences (Omotola & Aiyede, 2023). INEC's inability to prosecute offenders independently, relying instead on the police and judiciary,

weakens deterrence and emboldens electoral malpractice. The institutional ambiguity surrounding its prosecutorial powers reduces its effectiveness as a regulator of electoral behavior.

### **3. Technological and Infrastructural Limitations**

While the adoption of technologies such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV) has been praised as a step toward electoral transparency, implementation has been inconsistent. During the 2023 elections, BVAS malfunctions and internet connectivity issues undermined public trust in the technology (Yiaga Africa, 2023). These technological lapses are often attributed to poor planning, inadequate testing, and the lack of robust infrastructure in many rural areas. Moreover, technological failures are frequently exploited by political actors to dispute election results.

### **4. Political Interference and Institutional Autonomy**

INEC's independence remains a contested issue. Although it is established as an independent body by the constitution, its funding, appointments, and general administrative structure are still influenced by the executive arm of government (Omotola, 2023). This dependence opens the door to subtle or overt political interference, especially

in the appointment of top INEC officials. Scholars argue that the perception of bias, even when not substantiated, weakens public trust and contributes to political cynicism (Okoye, 2022).

## **5. Insecurity and Electoral Violence**

INEC's ability to conduct elections is often hampered by insecurity, particularly in conflict-prone states in the North-East, North-West, and parts of the South-East. Armed conflict, banditry, and political thuggery have made it difficult to distribute materials, recruit staff, or even hold elections in some polling units (Umar & Oyewole, 2022). In some cases, attacks on INEC facilities and personnel have disrupted the electoral process entirely. Although INEC works with security agencies, the unpredictable nature of violence and lack of adequate coordination have proven to be significant operational setbacks.

## **6. Public Trust and Communication Gaps**

A persistent challenge facing INEC is the erosion of public trust, often fueled by inconsistent communication and perceived lack of transparency. The gap between INEC's promises and actual outcomes—such as the assurance of real-time result uploads during the 2023 elections which was not fully realized—has further dented its credibility (Yiaga Africa, 2023). Critics emphasize the need for proactive engagement, clear public communication, and transparent feedback mechanisms to rebuild confidence in the commission's processes.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

In a recent study, Adeleke (2023) conducted a mixed-methods analysis of the 2023 Nigerian presidential election to assess the operational efficiency of INEC and its influence on electoral integrity. Using survey data collected from 1,200 voters across six geopolitical zones and in-depth interviews with electoral officials, the study found widespread dissatisfaction with the logistics and result transmission process, especially in remote areas. The malfunctioning of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and delays in result uploads to the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal contributed significantly to public distrust. The study recommended the establishment of a real-time monitoring and contingency unit within INEC to manage technological failures during elections.

Ugwueze and Nwankwo (2023) utilized a qualitative content analysis of observer reports and media accounts to evaluate INEC's performance during the 2023 general elections. Their findings indicated that while INEC made strides in voter accreditation, logistical challenges and inconsistencies in the collation and announcement of results undermined the overall credibility of the process. The authors suggested that INEC improve its engagement with stakeholders and provide more transparent communication mechanisms before, during, and after elections to restore public confidence.

In a 2021 quantitative study, Ibeanu surveyed electoral stakeholders—including INEC officials, political party agents, and civil society observers—to analyze institutional

independence and enforcement of electoral laws. The study found that over 60% of respondents believed INEC's autonomy was compromised by executive influence, especially in the appointment of top officials and funding disbursement. It concluded that the lack of prosecutorial powers limited INEC's effectiveness in sanctioning electoral offenders. The researcher recommended constitutional reform to grant INEC full financial and prosecutorial autonomy.

Omodia and Egwemi (2020) examined INEC's role in democratic consolidation using case studies of the 2015 and 2019 general elections. The authors employed a documentary review approach, analyzing election tribunal judgments, policy briefs, and observer reports. They found a pattern of electoral malpractice, such as ballot box snatching and vote-buying, which INEC was unable to curtail effectively. Their recommendation emphasized the need for INEC to establish a more robust collaboration with security agencies and to digitize the chain of custody of electoral materials for better accountability.

Omotola (2019) adopted a case study approach focusing on three gubernatorial elections held between 2016 and 2018. Through interviews and policy analysis, the study revealed a gap between INEC's institutional mandate and its practical capacity to enforce electoral standards. Key findings highlighted that INEC's efforts to introduce reforms were often stalled by political pressures and weak legislative backing. Omotola recommended the

strengthening of civil society oversight and more frequent voter education to reduce electoral malpractice and promote electoral integrity.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework: Institutional Theory**

Institutional theory, rooted in the works of early sociologists such as Thorstein Veblen (1899) and later developed by John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977), offers a powerful lens for understanding how formal structures and norms influence the behavior of organizations within a socio-political environment. The theory posits that institutions comprising rules, norms, values, and belief systems, shape the behavior, structure, and legitimacy of organizations, including public institutions such as electoral bodies. Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that organizations conform to institutional expectations in order to gain legitimacy, stability, and support from their environment, even when such conformity does not necessarily result in improved efficiency or outcomes.

The core assumption of institutional theory is that organizations are not merely technical systems that pursue efficiency but are also social systems deeply embedded in a wider institutional context. This context includes political pressures, legal frameworks, cultural norms, and societal expectations that define what is considered appropriate or legitimate behavior. As applied to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the theory implies that INEC's conduct, structure, and performance are shaped not only by legal mandates but also by informal institutional pressures such as public expectations, political interference, and international electoral norms (Scott, 2014).

Institutional theory is relevant in analyzing electoral integrity because it provides insight into how INEC may adopt formal rules or technological innovations such as the introduction of the BVAS or IReV not solely for operational effectiveness, but to signal legitimacy and conformity to democratic standards. However, critics of institutional theory argue that it tends to underemphasize agency, innovation, and power dynamics within institutions. For instance, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) noted that the theory often overlooks how powerful actors within institutions may manipulate rules or resist change to serve personal or political interests.

Furthermore, institutional theory may not adequately explain performance failures in electoral bodies that operate in highly politicized and resource-constrained environments like Nigeria. While the theory highlights the importance of legitimacy, it does not fully account for how institutions like INEC navigate or succumb to political manipulation, corruption, or institutional decay. Despite these limitations, institutional theory remains a useful framework for understanding how INEC's legitimacy and operations are shaped by broader socio-political forces beyond technical efficiency.

#### **2.4.1 Relevance of Institutional Theory to the Study**

Institutional theory is highly relevant to this study as it provides a framework for understanding how the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) functions within the broader socio-political and institutional environment of Nigeria. The theory emphasizes that organizations, such as INEC, operate not only based on formal legal mandates but also in response to societal norms, political pressures, and expectations for legitimacy. This perspective helps explain why INEC may adopt electoral reforms, technological innovations like BVAS and IReV, or implement procedural changes not solely for efficiency, but to conform to external demands for transparency and credibility.

By applying institutional theory, this study can critically assess how institutional pressures such as public scrutiny, political interference, international standards, and legal constraints shape INEC's ability to uphold electoral integrity. It also allows for an exploration of the gap between formal compliance and actual performance, shedding light on why INEC sometimes falls short in delivering credible elections despite adopting globally accepted practices. Thus, the theory offers valuable insight into the institutional factors that influence INEC's effectiveness and the broader implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

## **2.5 Literature Research Gap**

While numerous studies have examined the general performance of INEC and electoral processes in Nigeria, there is a limited body of empirical research specifically focused on the implications of INEC's institutional roles such as logistical coordination, result collation, legal enforcement, and institutional independence on the integrity of the 2023 presidential election. Much of the existing literature either provides broad political commentary or emphasizes electoral violence and voter behavior, with insufficient analytical focus on INEC's structural and operational efficiency. Furthermore, few studies have systematically linked INEC's internal institutional challenges to measurable electoral integrity outcomes in the 2023 polls. This study seeks to fill that gap by critically evaluating how the various functions of INEC influenced the credibility of the 2023 presidential election, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of electoral management and integrity in Nigeria's democratic landscape.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

## **METHODOLOGY**

This Chapter deals with the methodology of the study, which informs how the research for the study will be conducted.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study will adopt a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for collecting detailed information on the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of respondents regarding the role of INEC in Nigeria's electoral integrity. This design enables the systematic gathering of quantitative and qualitative data from a representative sample of voters, electoral officials, and stakeholders involved in the 2023 presidential election. By describing and analyzing the current status of INEC's functions and their implications, the study aims to provide an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the electoral process and its challenges.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of the study comprises all registered voters in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, as documented in the most recent voters' register released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the 2023 general elections, which recorded a total of 162,145 registered voters in the area (INEC, 2023). This population forms the basis for sampling and data collection in the study.

### **3.3 Sampling Techniques and Size**

This study will adopt a multistage sampling technique to ensure representativeness and manageability. In the first stage, Ovia North-East Local Government Area will be stratified into its political wards to ensure geographical spread. From each ward, specific polling units will be randomly selected using simple random sampling. In the second stage, registered voters from the selected polling units will be chosen through systematic sampling based on their appearance on the voters' register. This approach ensures that every voter has an equal chance of being selected while controlling for bias.

The sample size will be determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite populations:

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

Where:

- *n* is the sample size,
- *N* is the population size (162,145),
- *e* is the margin of error (0.05).

Applying the formula:

$$n = \frac{162,145}{1 + 162,145 (0.05^2)}$$

$$= 399$$

Thus, the sample size for the study will be approximately 399 respondents, ensuring adequate representation of the target population.

**.3.4. Research Instrument**

The research instrument to be used for this study is through the use of a structured 4 Likert scaled questionnaire titled; “Implication of INEC on Nigeria’s Voters Integrity”. The instrument will be divided into two part of Section A & B; Section A deals with the demographic distribution of the respondents such as Age, Gender, Educational Level, Religion and Voting Status; While Section B deals with 20 questions distributed across the five research variables to probe responses from the respondents. The response to these questions are coded as Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and, Strongly Disagree (1).

### **3.5 Validity of Research Instrument**

The Research instrument will be submitted to the research supervisor and other experts in the Department of Political Science, University of Benin, who will make their review on the questionnaire and any correction and adjustment to the instrument will be effected in the final draft of the instrument before distribution to the study participants.

### **3.6 Sources of Data**

The source of data for this study is both primary and secondary data; primary data sort through field survey to provide answers to the questionnaire, while the secondary data is utilized for the literature review and the discussion of findings.

### **3.7 Method of Data Collection**

Data for this study will be derived through field survey, in which drafted copies of the questionnaire will be printed and distributed to respondents in the study area through the assistance of a research assistance. The research instrument will be retrieved immediately to be coded for analysis.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected will be analysed using mean and standard deviation analysis to report the decision of the analysis. A mean criterion of 2.50 which is the average is used to determine the verdict of the response aggregate. Mean score greater than the criterion of 2.50 will be reported as accepted, while mean score lesser than the criterion of 2.50 will be reported as rejected. The hypothesis will be tested using Chi Square ( $X^2$ ), at 5% significant level.

## **CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

This section covers the presentation and analysis of data gotten through the field survey. Out of 399 expected responses for analysis, 280 responses were returned for analysis, which represent 70% constituting a high return rate. The chapter is then presented through the presentation of demographic data of respondents, the response on the variables of the questionnaire in section B, and the discussion of findings.

#### 4.1. Presentation and analysis of Data

##### 4.1.1 Demographic Distribution

**Table 2: Demographic Distribution**

<b>Demographic Data</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Male</b>	153	52.44%
<b>Female</b>	127	47.56%
<b>Total</b>	280	100%
<b>Age Group</b>		
<b>18 - 27</b>	138	52.03%
<b>28 - 37</b>	82	29.27%
<b>38 and above</b>	60	18.70%
<b>Total</b>	280	100%
<b>Religion</b>		
<b>Christianity</b>	230	89.43%
<b>Islam</b>	16	2.44%
<b>Traditional</b>	13	1.21%
<b>None</b>	21	6.86%
<b>Total</b>	280	100%
<b>Education Level</b>		
<b>Primary</b>	22	4.84%
<b>Secondary</b>	50	16.13%
<b>Tertiary</b>	198	76.42%
<b>None</b>	4	0
<b>Total</b>	280	100%
<b>Registered Voter</b>		
<b>Yes</b>	264	95.12%
<b>No</b>	16	4.88%

<b>Total</b>	280	100%
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**Source: Field Survey (2025)**

#### 4.1.2. Data from Research Questions

##### Research Question 1: Logistical and Operational Efficiency

**Table 2: Mean analysis on Logistical and Operational Efficiency of INEC**

S/N	ITEM	n	Mean	St.D	Decision
1	INEC deployed electoral materials on time during the 2023 presidential election.	280	1.99	0.94	Disagreed
2	INEC prevented delays and confusion through proper logistics on election day.	280	2.05	0.99	Disagreed
3	INEC provided adequate training for ad hoc staff during the election.	280	2.82	0.90	Agreed
4	INEC's operations did not reduce public confidence in the electoral process.	280	2.07	0.98	Disagreed
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2.23</b>		<b>LOW</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2025)**

Table 2 presented the Mean analysis on Logistical and Operational Efficiency of INEC. The result was analyzed using a criterion mean of 2.50 as the bench mark; the result of the analysis showed that the cluster mean (2.23) is lesser than the criterion of 2.50 thereby reporting low assessment of INEC towards logistical and operational efficiency. The interpretation is that, majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that INEC, deployed electoral materials on time during the 2023 presidential election; prevented delays and confusion through proper logistics on election day; and, operations did not reduce public confidence in the electoral process. On the other hand; majority of

the respondents agreed that INEC provided adequate training for ad hoc staff during the election. The assessment of INEC on Logistical and Operational Efficiency is Low.

### Research Question 2: Result Collation and Transmission

**Table 3: Mean analysis on INEC’s Result Collation and Transmission**

S/N	ITEM	n	Mean	St.D	Decision
5	Result collation by INEC promoted public trust in the electoral outcome.	280	2.07	0.98	Disagreed
6	INEC provided consistent and accessible updates during result transmission.	280	2.05	0.99	Disagreed
7	There was no Irregularities in the collation process by INEC.	280	2.13	0.99	Disagreed
8	INEC fulfilled its promise of real-time digital result transmission.	280	2.18	0.99	Disagreed
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2.11</b>		<b>LOW</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2025)**

Table 3 presented the Mean analysis on INEC’s result collation and transmission. The result was analyzed using a criterion mean of 2.50 as the bench mark; the result of the analysis showed that the cluster mean (2.11) is lesser than the criterion of 2.50 thereby reporting low assessment of INEC towards result collation and transmission. The interpretation is that, majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that; Result collation by INEC promoted public trust in the electoral outcome; INEC provided consistent and accessible updates during result transmission; There was no Irregularities in the collation process by INEC; and, INEC fulfilled its promise of real-time digital result transmission. The assessment of INEC on Result Collation and Transmission is Low.

### Research Question 3: Institutional Independence

**Table 4: Mean analysis on Institutional Independence of INEC**

S/N	ITEM	n	Mean	St.D	Decision
9	INEC operated independently off incumbency interference during the 2023 election.	280	2.05	0.95	Disagreed
10	The appointment process of INEC officials was neutral and it increased public trust.	280	2.09	0.93	Disagreed
11	INEC's decisions during the election was not influenced by political actors.	280	2.08	0.98	Disagreed
12	INEC successfully demonstrate full autonomy in managing the electoral process.	280	2.11	0.94	Disagreed
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2.08</b>		<b>LOW</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2025)**

Table 4 presented the Mean analysis on the assessment of Institutional Independence of INEC. The result was analyzed using a criterion mean of 2.50 as the bench mark; the result of the analysis showed that the cluster mean (2.08) is lesser than the criterion of 2.50 thereby reporting low assessment of INEC's Institutional Independence. The interpretation is that, majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that INEC('s); operated independently off incumbency interference during the 2023 election; decisions during the election was not influenced by political actors; successfully demonstrate full autonomy in managing the electoral process. The respondents also disagreed that the appointment process of INEC officials was neutral and increased public trust.

The assessment of INEC on Institutional Independence is Low.

#### Research Question 4: Voter Education and Communication

**Table 5: Mean analysis on Voter Education and Communication by INEC**

S/N	ITEM	n	Mean	St.D	Decision
13	INEC effectively educated voters on the use of BVAS and electoral procedures.	280	2.89	0.96	Agreed
14	INEC's voter education efforts contributed to high voter turnout.	280	2.92	0.89	Agreed
15	INEC communicated changes in electoral processes clearly to the public.	280	2.05	0.87	Disagreed
16	INEC provided sufficient voter education to rural and marginalized communities.	280	3.10	0.79	Agreed
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2.74</b>		<b>HIGHT</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2025)**

Table 5 presented the Mean analysis on the assessment of Voter Education and Communication by INEC. The result was analyzed using a criterion mean of 2.50 as the bench mark; the result of the analysis showed that the cluster mean (2.74) is greater than the criterion of 2.50 thereby reporting high assessment of INEC on Voter Education and Communication. The interpretation is that, majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that INEC('s); effectively educated voters on the use of BVAS and electoral procedures; voter education efforts contributed to high voter turnout; and, provided sufficient voter education to rural and marginalized communities. On the other hand, majority disagreed that INEC communicated changes in electoral processes clearly to the public.

The assessment of INEC on Voter Education and Communication is High.

### Research Question 5: Enforcement of Electoral Laws

**Table 6: Mean analysis on Enforcement of Electoral Laws by INEC**

S/N	ITEM	n	Mean	St.D	Decision
17	INEC has effectively prosecuted electoral offenders, leading to deterrence of electoral crimes.	280	1.97	0.87	Disagreed
18	INEC enforced electoral guidelines against political parties and candidates effectively.	280	1.89	0.77	Disagreed
19	Effective enforcement by INEC discouraged irregularities during the election.	280	1.94	0.86	Disagreed
20	INEC's success in implementing electoral laws promoted the credibility of the 2023 election.	280	2.09	0.88	Disagreed
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1.97</b>		<b>LOW</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2025)**

Table 6 presented the Mean analysis on the Enforcement of Electoral Laws by INEC. The result was analyzed using a criterion mean of 2.50 as the bench mark; the result of the analysis showed that the cluster mean (1.97) is greater than the criterion of 2.50 thereby reporting low assessment of INEC's Enforcement of Electoral Laws. The interpretation is that, majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that INEC('s); has effectively prosecuted electoral offenders, leading to deterrence of electoral crimes; enforced electoral guidelines against political parties and candidates effectively; success in implementing electoral laws promoted the credibility of the 2023 election. The respondents also disagreed that effective enforcement by INEC discouraged irregularities during the election.

The assessment of INEC on the Enforcement of Electoral Laws is Low.

## **4.2 Discussion of Findings**

The analysis of data from Ovia North East Local Government Area reveals significant insights into the perceived performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the 2023 presidential elections. Across five critical dimensions; logistical and operational efficiency, result collation and transmission, institutional independence, voter education and communication, and enforcement of electoral laws, the responses provide a nuanced but generally critical assessment of INEC's role in safeguarding electoral integrity.

### **Logistical and Operational Efficiency:**

The findings for research question one indicate a low assessment of INEC's logistical and operational preparedness. Respondents largely disagreed that INEC ensured timely deployment of electoral materials or prevented delays and confusion on election day. This supports earlier findings by Omotola (2023), who noted that logistical shortcomings were a persistent challenge in Nigerian elections, often leading to delayed polling and voter disenfranchisement. While respondents acknowledged that INEC provided training for ad hoc staff, the overall perception remains negative. As Akinola and Alabi (2021) emphasize, efficient logistics are crucial for electoral credibility, and any breakdown undermines public trust in the electoral process.

**Result Collation and Transmission:**

The data in research question two also showed a low rating for INEC's role in result collation and digital transmission. The failure to fulfill its promise of real-time result transmission, as revealed by the respondents, aligns with Udeh and Bassey's (2023) report that technical inconsistencies and irregularities during collation marred the transparency of the 2023 elections. This gap between expectation and execution not only diminished public trust but also contradicted INEC's own guidelines, which were widely publicized pre-election. Scholars like Adebajo (2022) argue that transparent collation is essential for the legitimacy of democratic outcomes, and its absence often fuels post-election disputes.

**Institutional Independence:**

On research question three, the respondents assessed INEC's institutional independence as low, particularly noting perceived influence by political actors and lack of neutrality in the appointment of officials. This supports the position of Ogunyemi (2020), who observed that institutional capture and executive interference continue to compromise INEC's autonomy. The finding challenges the constitutional provision that empowers INEC as an independent body, suggesting that in practice, political interests may still exert undue influence over its operations. This lack of perceived independence diminishes citizen confidence and creates fertile ground for voter apathy and protest.

### **Voter Education and Communication:**

On research question four; this was the only area rated positively by respondents. INEC was credited with effective voter education, particularly in educating the electorate on the use of BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System), which many respondents believed improved turnout. This aligns with Edewor and Alabi (2021), who found that focused public sensitization campaigns led to greater voter awareness and participation. However, there were concerns about INEC's failure to clearly communicate procedural changes, especially in rural areas; a point emphasized by Oladipo (2023), who calls for more inclusive and decentralized information strategies.

### **Enforcement of Electoral Laws:**

On research question five that deals on Enforcement of Electoral Laws; despite being a key function, INEC's enforcement capacity was poorly rated. Respondents disagreed that INEC effectively prosecuted offenders or enforced guidelines against political parties. This observation is consistent with Nwosu (2020), who noted the culture of impunity surrounding electoral offenses in Nigeria. Without deterrent consequences, political actors are emboldened to commit fraud and violence. As Ogunleye and Eze (2022) argue, enforcement is the backbone of electoral justice, and its absence severely undermines both the process and outcome of elections.

The findings reflect a general lack of confidence in INEC's ability to ensure electoral integrity, particularly in terms of logistics, transparency, independence, and law enforcement. Only in voter education did the commission receive commendable feedback.

This raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of electoral reforms and highlights the need for structural and legal reinforcements to strengthen the credibility of Nigeria's electoral system.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

This study investigated the implications of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Nigeria's electoral integrity using Ovia North East Local Government Area as a case study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from 280 respondents through structured Likert-scale questionnaires. The analysis was based on five key variables drawn from INEC's operational mandate: logistical and operational efficiency, result collation and transmission, institutional independence, voter education and communication, and enforcement of electoral laws. The findings were evaluated using a criterion mean of 2.50.

Based on the analysis, the study revealed the following:

1. INEC's logistical and operational efficiency during the 2023 presidential election was poorly rated, especially in timely deployment of materials and preventing confusion on election day.
2. The process of result collation and transmission by INEC lacked transparency and failed to meet public expectations, particularly with the real-time transmission of results.

3. INEC was perceived to lack institutional independence, with widespread public doubt over its neutrality and resistance to political interference.
4. INEC received high ratings for its voter education and communication efforts, especially regarding BVAS awareness and mobilization of voters in rural areas.
5. INEC's enforcement of electoral laws was seen as weak, with insufficient prosecution of offenders and lack of effective deterrence for electoral misconduct.

These findings underscore the urgent need for electoral reforms that will strengthen INEC's autonomy, operational capacity, and accountability mechanisms to restore public confidence in Nigeria's democratic process.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study examined the implications of INEC's performance on voter integrity in Nigeria, focusing on Ovia North East Local Government Area during the 2023 presidential election. Findings revealed significant deficiencies in INEC's logistical operations, result collation and transmission, institutional independence, and enforcement of electoral laws. These shortcomings undermine the credibility of the electoral process and erode public trust in democratic institutions. However, the commission was positively rated for its voter education and communication efforts, particularly in promoting the use of technology and engaging rural communities. Overall, the research highlights that while INEC has made progress in certain areas, systemic lapses continue to affect electoral transparency and fairness. Strengthening INEC's independence, enhancing logistical preparedness, and ensuring strict enforcement of electoral laws are

essential to safeguarding Nigeria's voter integrity and consolidating its democratic development.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the research that focuses on the implications of INEC's performance on voter integrity during the 2023 presidential election in Ovia North East Local Government Area, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen electoral credibility and democratic governance in Nigeria:

#### **I. Undertake a Holistic Electoral Reform Framework**

There is an urgent need for Nigeria to embark on a holistic electoral reform process that addresses both structural and procedural deficiencies in the country's electoral system. Such reforms should not only focus on INEC as an institution but also overhaul legal provisions, electoral logistics, security arrangements, and judicial responses to electoral disputes. This reform should be people-oriented, transparent, and participatory, involving civil society groups, professional bodies, and academic institutions in shaping the new framework. Among the critical reforms should be the constitutional review of the Electoral Act to institutionalize timelines for election preparations, the conduct of primaries, and the publication of results.

#### **II. Institutionalize INEC's Independence and Accountability**

A major challenge facing INEC is the perception of bias and lack of autonomy. Electoral reforms must revise the current method of appointing the Chairman and Commissioners

of INEC to involve a multi-sectoral selection committee independent of the Presidency or ruling party. This would help insulate the body from political pressures and foster public trust. In addition, INEC must be subjected to regular performance audits by a constitutionally recognized oversight body to improve transparency and accountability.

### **III. Reinforce Electoral Law Enforcement Mechanisms**

The absence of swift and decisive punishment for electoral offenders has continued to undermine electoral integrity in Nigeria. Electoral reforms must prioritize the establishment of a specialized Electoral Offences Commission empowered with prosecutorial authority. This body should be tasked with investigating vote-buying, ballot box snatching, voter intimidation, and falsification of results. Only a firm and impartial enforcement regime will deter future violations and restore credibility to the electoral process.

### **IV. Digitize and Secure the Electoral Process**

Electoral reforms must legally mandate the full digitization of the electoral process, particularly the real-time collation and electronic transmission of results. Technologies such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal should be backed by enforceable legislation that criminalizes any tampering, selective deployment, or failure to transmit results as stipulated. Additionally, investment in cybersecurity and personnel training should be included as part of the reform package.

### **V. Expand and Institutionalize Voter Education**

Electoral reform should provide for a standing, adequately funded department within INEC for continuous voter and civic education. This unit should develop a national voter education strategy, with specific attention to youth, first-time voters, and rural populations. Furthermore, INEC must be compelled by law to partner with community-based organizations, religious institutions, and media outlets to disseminate accurate information before, during, and after elections.

#### **VI. Develop a Permanent Multi-Stakeholder Electoral Monitoring Council**

To further strengthen democratic oversight, electoral reforms should create a permanent Electoral Monitoring and Accountability Council comprising representatives from the judiciary, civil society, academia, and the Nigerian Bar Association. This council should have statutory powers to review the conduct of elections, recommend sanctions, and advise the National Assembly on necessary legislative changes. Its reports should be published and used to improve subsequent elections.

#### **5.4 Suggestion for Future Research**

Future research should explore the long-term effects of electoral commission performance on voter turnout and political trust in different geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Comparative studies between INEC and electoral bodies in other African democracies could also provide deeper insights into institutional best practices. Additionally, future studies could examine the role of civil society and digital technologies in enhancing electoral integrity, with a focus on youth participation and misinformation during elections.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE ON IMPLICATION OF INEC ON NIGERIA'S VOTER INTEGRITY. USING OVIA NORTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA AS CASE STUDY**

Department of Political Science

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Benin

Benin City, Edo State

#### **LETTER TO RESPONDENTS**

I am a final year student of department of from the above institution. I am carrying out an Investigation into the “*Implication Of Inec On Nigeria's Voter Integrity. Using Ovia North East Local Government Area As Case Study.*” The study is purely for academic purposes.

I am soliciting for your co-operation by answering the questions in this questionnaire. The responses are going to be treated as confidential.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

**Stephen Obokparo EDOGHO**  
Researcher.

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

1. Gender: Male (  ), Female (  )
2. Age Group: 18 – 27 (  ), 28 – 37 (  ), 38 and Above (  )
3. Religion: Christianity (  ), Islamic (  ), Traditional Religion (  ), None (  )
4. Level of Education: Primary (  ), Secondary (  ), Tertiary (  ), None (  )
5. Are you a Registered Voter: Yes (  ), No (  )

**SECTION B: QUESTIONS FROM RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Kindly Tick the response that applies to your answer. The response format are;

Strongly Agree, (SA), Agree ( A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD
<b>RQ1</b>	<b>Logistical and Operational Efficiency</b>				
1	INEC did not deploy electoral materials on time during the 2023 presidential election.				
2	INEC failed to prevent delays and confusion caused by poor logistics on election day.				
3	INEC did not provide adequate training for ad hoc staff during the election.				
4	INEC's operational failures reduced public confidence in the electoral process.				

<b>RQ2</b>	<b>Result Collation and Transmission</b>			
5	The delay in result collation by INEC did not promote public trust in the electoral outcome.			
6	INEC failed to provide consistent and accessible updates during result transmission.			
7	Irregularities in the collation process by INEC raised doubts about the election's integrity.			
8	INEC did not fulfill its promise of real-time digital result transmission.			
<b>RQ3</b>	<b>Institutional Independence</b>			
9	INEC did not operate independently of political interference during the 2023 election.			
10	The appointment process of INEC officials lacked neutrality and reduced public trust.			
11	INEC's decisions during the election were influenced by political actors.			
12	INEC failed to demonstrate full autonomy in managing the electoral process.			
<b>RQ4</b>	<b>Voter Education and Communication</b>			
13	INEC did not effectively educate voters on the use of BVAS and electoral procedures.			
14	INEC's poor voter education efforts contributed to confusion and reduced turnout.			
15	INEC failed to communicate changes in electoral processes clearly to the public.			
16	INEC did not provide sufficient voter education to rural and marginalized communities.			
<b>RQ5</b>	<b>Enforcement of Electoral Laws</b>			
17	INEC failed to prosecute offenders, reducing the deterrence of electoral crimes.			
18	INEC did not enforce electoral guidelines against political parties and candidates effectively.			
19	Weak enforcement by INEC allowed irregularities to persist during the election.			
20	INEC's failure to implement electoral laws			

	undermined the credibility of the 2023 election.				
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**Thanks for your response.**