THE ADMINISTRATION OF 2015 GENERAL ELECTION AND THE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF CARD READER MACHINE IN NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM EKITI NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT
The study assessed the operational efficiency of Smart Card Reader machine on the success of 2015 general election in Ekiti North Senatorial District and analyzed the challenges confronting INEC in the use of Smart Card Reader machine during the 2015 general election. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for this study. Primary data were collected through the administration of thequestionnaire. The study population is one thousand five hundred and ninety (1, 590) consists staff of Ekiti State Independent Electoral Commission (ESIEC); selected valid register voters in the five local government areas of Ekiti North Senatorial District (Ido-Osi, Ikole, Ilejemeje, Moba and Oye Local Government Area),respectively, using purposive sampling technique.Secondary data on election administration were obtained from textbooks, academic journals,seminars/workshops/conference papers, internet materials, newspaper clips, government gazette, official documents such as Independent National Electoral Commission publications and election progress report. Data collected were analyzed usingdescriptive, frequency and simple percentages.The study revealed that the use of Smart Card Reader machine in the 2015 general election averted the incident of multiple voting that as well as limited cases of litigation arising from election outcome that characterised the preceding elections in Nigeria. The study also revealed that poor awareness of electorates about the usage of the card reader (99.2%) and technology deficiency (69.2%) weresome of the challenges confronting INEC during the 2015 general elections.The study concluded that the use of Smart Card Reader Machine contributed significantly to the success of 2015 general election in Ekiti North Senatorial District and Nigeria at large.
Keywords: Election, administration, operation, efficiency, card reader machine, electorates

Introduction

The 2015 general election appears to be the most keenly contested in the history of elections in Nigeria because it was the first time about four major opposition parties came together to form a very strong party, All Progressive Congress (APC) in order to challenge the dominance of the

ruling party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the polity. Indeed, according to Omotola (2013), the election became the only game in town, shaping and reshaping public discourse and political actions.

Prior to the 2015 general elections, a number of technologically based reforms (e.g. biometric Register of Voters, Advanced Fingerprints Identification System) were embarked upon by the new leadership (headed by Prof Attairu Jega) of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the election management body empowered by the 1999 Constitution (as amended) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to organize, undertake and supervise all elections in Nigeria.

The use of card readers at the 2015 general election in Nigeria has infused some level of transparency and credibility into Nigeria's electoral process (Okonji, 2015). It was observed that when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) first announced its plan to introduce card reader machine for the March 28 and April 11, 2015, general elections, many Nigerians, especially politicians, vehemently opposed to it. They felt the country has not developed to a level where such technology can be employed for elections.

The public outcry that greeted the planned introduction of card reader machines was enough to discourage INEC from introducing it. However, because of INEC confidence in the efficacy of modern technologies in achieving quick results, coupled with its vision to transform the country's electoral process from its old norms that was characterized by ballot box snatching and multiplicity of ballot tomb- printing, INEC went ahead and introduced the technology against all odds (Vanguard, 2015). However, many technology experts in Nigeria and outside, who monitored the elections are full of praises for INEC for insisting on the use of card reader machines, saying it is the best thing that has ever happened to the Nigerian electoral process in the area of election transparency. They have called on the electoral umpire to introduce card reader machines in subsequent elections, believing it is a sure way to achieve transparency and credibility in every election.

However, despite the confidence of INEC in the use of Card Reader in the 2015 general elections, the machines came with some challenges, even though the elections have been widely adjudged as being successful. For instance, during the March 28 Presidential and National

Assembly elections across the country, the card readers malfunctioned in several polling units, a situation that caused undue delay in the accreditation process. It, however, worked perfectly in other polling units. The challenges ranged from the rejection of permanent voter's card (PVC) by the card readers, inability to capture the biometrics from finger tips, to irregular capturing and fast battery drainage. INEC officials have to abandon their polling units and took the card readers back to their office for proper configuration. In order to salvage the situation, which was almost becoming frustrating, INEC ordered the use of manual process for accreditation, But before the order could go round the states and local government areas, it was already late to conduct accreditation and actual voting in some areas, a situation that forced INEC to extend the exercise to the next day in all affected areas.

Concerned about the massive electoral fraud witnessed in the past general elections in Nigeria, INEC deployment of the card reader in 2015 general elections was to ensure a credible, transparent, free and fair election in order to deepen Nigeria's electoral democracy. However, the used of the electronic device in the 2015 general elections generated debate among election stakeholders before, during and after the elections. Against this background, the study assesses the impact of card reader machine in the administration of 2015 general election in Ekiti North senatorial district.

Statement of Problem

The use of the biometric machine; Smart Card reader (SCR) during the elections has been a source of national and international concern in recent time. This is as a result of its malfunctions characteristics. Added to this is range of limited or non-verification of voters' fingerprints even after authenticating their PVCs, slow accreditation process as a result of poor internet server operations in some locations to inadequate knowledge of the use of card readers by both INEC officials and voters, cases of fingerprint and even PVC rejection, especially of cards brought from other polling units; a number of fingerprint rejections were among the elderly; cases of card readers not working at all; delays in using the card readers in some polling units; network failure; cases where voters' pictures did not appear on card reader; some of the card readers functioned slowly and did not pick up on time; some card readers were not very sensitive to thumbprints; some card readers rejected their passwords initially; few cases of low battery

strength and in some instances the batteries were completely drained; a case where the card reader did not correspond with the manual; some card readers stated card mismatch information; some of the card readers had incorrect setting. Unfortunately, existing studies have only explained the reasons for introducing the Smart Card Readers and its application during the 2015 elections with little or no attention paid to its (SCR) operational efficiency.

There is therefore, the need to examine the impact of card reader machine adopted by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in ensuring the administration of 2015 general election in Ekiti North senatorial district; hence, this study.

Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to

i.   examine the reasons for the adoption of Smart Card Reader machine in the administration of 2015 general election in the study area;

ii.   assess the effect of Smart Card Reader machine on the success of 2015 general election in Ekiti North Senatorial District; and

iii.   analysethe challenges confronting INEC in the use of Smart Card Reader machine during the 2015 general election.

Literature Review

Historical Antecedent of Election Administration in Nigeria

Elections and election administration in Nigeria date back to 1923. These were facilitated by the inclusion of an elective principle in the 1922 Constitution introduced into Nigeria's body polity by the colonial administration of Sir Hugh Clifford (Akanji 2014:38; Bamidele & Ikubaje 2004:4). Though no electoral body was formally established, elections were conducted in 1923, and thereafter, every five years till 1938. The elections were for the purpose of electing four representatives into the Central Legislative Council in Lagos; three of whom represented Lagos while one represented Calabar. The elections of 1923, 1928, 1933 and 1938 were however limited to only those that fulfilled the constitutional provisions of one-year residency and gross annual income of £100 (Bamidele & Ikubaje 2004:4; Akinboye & Anifowose 1999:240).

However, like the 1922 constitution, the 1946 constitution did little to engender broad-based political and electoral participation in Nigeria, as women and unpropertied men in Lagos and Calabar, and women and men in other parts of the country were completely disenfranchised in the elections that took place between 1946 and 1951. It was, however, the relentless agitations by the nationalists for an inclusive government that led to the introduction in 1951 of another constitution to replace that of 1946. The 1951 Constitution broadened the political space in Nigeria by enlarging the Central Legislative Council and provided for the election of more Nigerians into the council. It also granted some measure of legislative power to the regional legislatures and replaced the elective principle of the 1922 and 1946 constitutions with the one that enfranchised all adult tax-paying males, as well as introduced Electoral College system (Akanji 2014; Keay & Thomas 1986).

These engendered local participation in governance and encouraged the formation of political parties across the country. Some of the political parties that emerged to take the opportunities created by the 1951 constitution were the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC), both established in 1951; the Middle Belt Peoples" Party (MBPP), in 1953; and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), in 1954 (Ngou 1989; Dare 1989).

These political parties and others existing at the time, such as the National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), formed in 1946, and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), established in 1950 (Akanji 2014), changed the nature and character of elections and electoral and political participation in Nigeria. This was in view of the fact that elections in the country became fully multi-party and more competitive though more crisis prone than previously. At the same time, the interface between ethnicity, sectionalism and politics in the country assumed a frightening dimension, as ethnic and sectional considerations became factors for victory at regional and general elections by political parties. This posed a very serious challenge to the unity and stability of Nigeria, as it, for example, underlined the threat of secession by northern Nigeria in 1953, following its declaration of an eight point programme of non-fraternization with the south, and violent protest in Kano, northern Nigeria, against the visit

of southern political leaders to the region in August 1953 (see Akanji 2014; Albert 1998; Ngou 1989 for details).

Furthermore, Nigeria's political and electoral landscape was altered when the colonial administration of Oliver Lyttleton introduced a constitution in 1954 to remedy the defects in the 1951 Constitution. The 1954 Constitution, however, reintroduced the principle of direct election and further decentralized the electoral process. This was in view of the fact the constitution granted relative electoral autonomy to the regions, allowing them to formulate electoral rules and regulations and conduct elections into regional political offices. This gave rise to a situation where different electoral systems and regulations were adopted and used by the regions in the conduct of elections, both regional and federal. For example, while the Western region adopted and used the single member constituency system, the Eastern region used the multi-member constituency system for elections Baldini, G. (2011).

Also, while the Western and Eastern regions put in place electoral frameworks that accommodated the electoral and political rights of women, the northern regional electoral framework ignored women's electoral rights. The multiple approaches to elections, however, promoted ethnic politics, as it gave dominate political party in each region, usually, the party formed and/or dominated by politicians of the ethnic colouration of the region, the opportunity to manipulate elections and political appointments, theinter-ethnicrelations in the country. The practice of multiple approaches to election thereby undermining was however revised at the 1957 and 1958 constitutional conferences where a uniform electoral approach and a single election management body for federal elections was articulated and adopted. It was based on this new framework that the 1959 federal elections were conducted. Part of the electoral guidelines for the 1959 federal election, for example, stated that "every person shall be entitled to register as an elector and if so registered to vote at an election who on the qualifying date is ordinarily resident in Nigeria and in Northern region a male" (cited in Oyekanmi 1999: 86). Also, the 1959 federal elections were conducted by a single election management body, the Electoral Commission of Nigeria Baldini, G. (2011).

Ever since then, management/conduct of elections into federal and state executive and legislative offices have been the responsibility of the national electoral body, which assumed different names at different times, while States manage/conduct elections into local government councils. For example, under the Third Schedule, Part 1F of the 1999 (Amended) constitution, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has the power to organize, undertake and supervise all elections into federal and state offices, while Part IIB of the same schedule of the Constitution provides for the existence of State electoral commissions to conduct elections into local government councils Powell, G. B. (2000). This shows why INEC conducted the Presidential and National Assembly elections and the Governorship and House of Assembly elections across the country on March 28 and April 11, 2015, respectively.

Reason for the Adoption of Card Reading Machine in Nigeria Electioneering

Past elections in Nigeria had witnessed the desperate bid for political power by some stakeholders with vested interests in the Nigerian electoral process. Some of these stakeholders engaged in all forms of electoral malpractices including multiple voting, impersonation, manipulation and falsification of results which had led to legal actions, electoral conflicts and violence. Electoral malpractices make the citizens lose confidence in the electoral process; and lack of confidence by the citizenry in the democratic process is an impediment in deepening electoral democracy because if the citizenry does not believe in the fairness, accuracy, openness, and basic integrity of the election process, the very basis of any democratic society might be threatened (Alvarez & Hall, 2008: 134).Electoral fraud according to López-Pintor (2010: 9) has more serious political implications, in that it allows a party or candidate to take over public positions contrary to the popular will. This undermines the democratic process and usually leads to electoral violence, insecurity and political instability.

The governments of Cote d'Ivoire, Peru, and Serbia all fell in the year 2000 as a result of popular rebellions against fraudulent elections. Similarly, the so called "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004 caused presidential elections to be completely re-held after the extensive fraud was demonstrated (López-Pintor, 2010: 5).

In view of the negative impacts of electoral malpractices, global attention is now focusing on how to mitigate this undemocratic behaviour and improve the electoral process. One of such strategies to combat electoral malpractices is the introduction of information and communication technology into the electoral process. Though the use of technology in elections is not an end in itself, assists in the various aspects of electoral administration (ACE Project). It is against this background that an electronic technologically based device, the smart card reader was introduced into the Nigerian electoral process in 2015 to help improve and deepen electoral democracy.

The Use of Card Reading Machine in Nigeria's 2015 General Election

The smart card reader is a technological device setup to authenticate and verify on election day a Permanent Voter Card (PVC) issued by INEC. The device uses a cryptographic technology that has ultra-low power consumption, with a single core frequency of 1.2GHz and an Android 4.2.2. Operating System (INEC, 2015). In other words, the INEC card reader is designed to read information contained in the embedded chip of the permanent voter's card issued by INEC to verify the authenticity of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and also carry out a verification of the intending voter by matching the biometrics obtained from the voter on the spot with the ones stored on the PVC (Engineering Network Team, 2015). The ability of the card reader to perform the above described functions as well as keeping a tally of the total numbers of voters accredited at the polling unit and forwarding the information to a central database server over a Global System for Mobile (GSM) network makes the card reader most welcome at this point in time in the nation's electoral history (Engineering Network Team, 2015).

Methodology

Based on primary data collection, the study specifically covered the Ekiti North Senatorial District with a specific focus on the impact of card reader machine in the administration of 2015 general election. Ekiti is a state in western Nigeria, declared a state on 1st October 1996 alongside five others by the military under the leadership of General Sani Abacha. The state, carved out of the territory of old Ondo State, covers the former twelve local government areas that made up the Ekiti Zone of old Ondo State. On creation, it had sixteen Local Government Areas (LGAs).

The study was carried out in Ekiti North Senatorial District in Ekiti State. The researchers purposively choose Ekiti North Senatorial District of Ekiti state as a suitable location for the study of an appraisal of the usage of card reader machine in 2015 general election. Ekiti North Senatorial District comprises the following five (5) local government areas and they are; IdoOsi, Ikole, Ilejemeje, Moba and Oye respectively.

The study population of 191, 275 consists senior staff on Grade Level (GL 7) and above ofEkiti State Independent Electoral Commission (ESIEC) (72); valid register voters in Ido-Osi (43,070); Ikole (49,274); Ilejemeje (11,796); Moba (40,570); Oye (45,918) in the five local government areas of Ekiti North Senatorial District using purposive sampling technique. The purpose of their involvement in this study is because they are the key actors in charge of election administration and the provider of card reader machine for the conduct of election, while the electorates serve as the category that make use of the card reader machine during the 2015 election in the selected study area.

Purposive sampling technique wereutilised to select the five local government areas in Ekiti North Senatorial District, which include; Ilejemeje, Imoba, Oye, Ido-osi and Ikole, respectively. Considering the large number of people involve in the administration of election within the state during the 2015 election, the study therefore applied Taro Yemane method for sample size calculation from the study population, resulted to 159 respondents as sample size for this study whichwas selected for questionnaire administration for this study. The data collected from both primary and secondary were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as, tables, frequency distribution and percentages.

Research Findings

As presented in the table below, it was asserted that the incidence of multiple voting was one of the reasons for the adoption of smart card machine. In their response, 26.7 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that dissuade multiple voting (as only accredited and verified PVC holders could vote) is a reason for the adoption of smart card reader, while 72.5 percent ordinarily agreed to the assertion. The interpretation of this data distribution is that smart card reader was adopted so as to dissuade multiple voting. Also, the table 4.2 shows that 18.0 percent

of the respondents strongly agreed that infused some level of transparency and credibility into Nigeria's electoral process could be one of the reasons for the adoption of smart card reader machine for the general election, while 69.2 percent agreed to the statement. This reveals that the use of card reader machine is characterized as an harbinger for transparency and credulity into Nigerian electoral process.

The table also shows that 21.7 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that electoral conflicts and violence is one of the major reasons for the adoption of smart card reader machine, 60.8 percent ordinarily agreed to this same assertion. Although, an aggregate of 6.7 percent of the respondents disagreed possibly on the basis of the failure of the smart card reader machine in its operations during the elections. It was asserted that smart card reader machine is the best option to curb electoral malpractices. In reactions to this assertion, 18.3 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that smart card reader still remains a strong impetus for curbing electoral malpractices during the elections, 74.2 percent agreed to the statement. This connotes that larger percentage of the respondents identified with the use of smart card machine and its efficacy aimed at curbing electoral malpractices.

The table also shows the position of respondents on the confidence level which is being reposed on the adoption of the smart card reader machine. In their reactions, 19.2 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that it will boost Nigerians confidence in the process, 75.8 percent ordinarily agreed to this statement. Meanwhile, just about 5% still maintained that they are still in doubt as to the confidence to be reposed in the smart card reader machine. This is rather an indication that although the smart card reader machine has potentialities of boosting confidence in the Nigerian electoral process, but it must be adequately implemented.

With respect to the manipulation and falsification of electoral results, 11.7 percent respondents strongly agreed that smart card reader will disable the manipulation and falsification of electoral results, while 67.5 percent of the respondent complemented this same assertion. This implies that smart card reader machine seems capable of eliminating results manipulation. In addition, the table 4.2 shows that 20.0 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the card reader had been promoted by INEC as an anti-electoral fraud, 79.2 percent agreed to the statement, while 0.8

percent of the respondent disagreed that The card reader had been promoted by INEC as an anti-electoral fraud. The element of doubt is minor, thus the adoption of card reader machine had been promoted by INEC as an anti-electoral fraud.

The Reasons for the Adoption of Smart Card Reader Machine in the Administration of 2015 General Election in the Study Area

Variables	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	F	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
Dissuade multiple voting (as only accredited and verified PVC holders could vote)	32	26.7	87	72.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Infused some level of transparency and credibility intoNigeria's electoral process	36	30.0	83	69.2	-	-	6	3.4	3	1.7
It reduces electoral conflicts and violence	26	21.7	73	60.8	-	-	5	4.2	3	2.5
It is the best option to curb electoral malpractices	22	18.3	89	74.2	-	-	1	0.8	1	0.8
It will boost Nigerians confidence in the process	23	19.2	91	75.8	-	-	3	2.5	1	0.8
It reduces manipulation and falsification of results	14	11.7	81	67.5	-	-	2	1.7	-	-
The card reader had been promoted by INEC as an anti-	24	20.0	95	79.2	-	-	1	0.8	-	-

electoral fraud										

Source: Field Survey, 2017

NB: f = Frequency
     % = Percentage

The table 4.3 shows that 20.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the smart card reader did not give room for multiple voting in the 2015 general election, while 79.2 percent ordinarily agreed to the assertion. The interpretation of this data distribution is that multiple voting was not obtainable in the 2015 General election. Also, the table 4.3 shows that 30.0 percent of the respondents strongly agree that smart card reader did not allow any form of electoral malpractices in the senatorial district, while 70.0 percent agreed to the statement. This reveals that the use of card reader machine is an obscurity to electoral malpractices during the election.

The table 4.3 shows that 22.5 percent of the respondents strongly agree that smart card reader has ensured effective screening and accreditation of voters at respective poll units in the senatorial district, 76.7 percent agree that smart card reader has ensured effective screening and accreditation of voters at respective poll units in the senatorial district, while 0.8 percent of the respondent undetermined that smart card reader has ensured effective screening and accreditation of voters at respective poll units in the senatorial district. The table above shows that 30.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that smart card reader has reduced litigations arising from elections in the senatorial district, 67.5 percent agreed to the statement. This connotes that larger percentage of the respondents identified with the long-run effect of smart card machine on its capability of reducing litigations arising from the elections.

The table 4.3 shows that 35.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that smart card reader enabled the compilation of a range of statistical analysis of the demographics of voters, 60.0 percent agreed that smart card reader enabled the compilation of a range of statistical analysis of the demographics of voters, 3.3 percent respondents undetermined that smart card reader enabled the compilation of a range of statistical analysis of the demographics of voters, while 0.8 percent of the respondent disagree that smart card reader enabled the compilation of a range of statistical

analysis of the demographics of voters. This confirms that the smart card reader has the potentialities of computing the socio-demographics details of the accredited voters during the elections.

In addition, the table 4.3 shows that 33.3 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that smart card reader has reduced electoral rigging during the 2015 general elections, 65.8 percent agreed that smart card reader has reduced electoral rigging during the 2015 general elections, while 0.8 percent of the respondent disagree that smart card reader has reduced electoral rigging during the 2015 general elections.

The effect of Smart Card Reader machine on the success of 2015 general election in Ekiti North Senatorial District

VARIABLES	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		UNDECIDED		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE	
	F	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*
Smart card reader did not give room for multiple voting in the 2015 general election	25	20.8	95	79.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Smart card reader did not allow any form of electoral malpractices in the senatorial district	36	30.0	84	70.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Smart card reader has ensured effective screening and accreditation	27	22.5	92	76.7	-	-	-	-	-	-

of voters at respective poll units in the senatorial district										
Smart card reader has reduced litigations arising from elections in the senatorial district	37	30.8	81	67.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Smart card reader has facilitated the auditing of results from the polling units across the senatorial district	36	30.0	77	64.2	-	-	1	0.8	-	-
Smart card reader enabled the compilation of a range of statistical analysis of the demographics of voters	43	35.8	72	60.0	-	-	1	0.8	-	-
Smart card reader has reduced electoral rigging during the 2015 general elections	40	33.3	79	65.8	-	-	1	0.8	-	-

Source: Field Survey, 2017

NB: ƒ = Frequency
     % = Percentage

The table 4.4 provides the analysis of the challenges confronting INEC in the use of smart card reader machine during the 2015 general elections. About 99.2 percent of the respondents acknowledged that poor awareness of electorates about the usage of the card reader. Also, similar percentage affirmed that inadequate training of ad-hoc officials on the usage of the card reader. Moreover, there appears to be skepticism about the Non-activation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device. Hence, this can only be technological proven.

In addition, over 90.0 percent of the respondents identified with low battery as one of the challenges confronting the use of smart card reader machine during the general elections. Also, poor management of card reader was also identified with the weight of similar percentage as major challenge confronting the use of smart card reader machine. Similarly, about 70.0 percent of the respondents noted that Poor public confidence and trust in the smart card reader; while about 75.0 percent of the respondents identified with technological deficiencies as a major challenge confronting the use of smart card reader machine during the 2015 general elections.

TABLE 4.4: The challenges confronting INEC in the use of Smart Card Reader machine during the 2015 general election

VARIABLES	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		UNDECIDED		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE	
	F	%	*F*	%	*F*	*%*	*F*	%	*F*	%
Poor awareness of electorates about the usage of the card reader	21	17.5	98	81.7	-	-	1	0.8	-	-
Inadequate training of ad-hoc officials on the usage of the card reader	27	22.5	92	76.7	-	-	1	0.8	-	-

Non-activation of the subscriber identification module (sim) card in the device	8	6.7	28	23.3	-	-	12	10.0	7	5.8
Low battery	17	14.3	77	64.3	-	-	2	1.7	-	-
Poor management of the card reader	23	19.2	83	69.2	-	-	2	1.7	1	0.8
Poor public confidence and trust in the smart card reader	16	13.3	73	60.8	-	-	9	7.5	-	-
Technological deficiencies	22	18.3	83	69.2	-	-	7	5.8	1	0.8

Source: Field Survey, 2017

NB: *ƒ* = Frequency
  % = Percentage

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that the incidence of multiple voting was one of the reasons for the adoption of smart card machine. It was further discovered from findings that dissuade multiple voting (as only accredited and verified PVC holders could vote) was a reason for the adoption of smart card reader, while smart card reader was also adopted so as to dissuade multiple voting. Also, infused some level of transparency and credibility into Nigeria's electoral process could be one of the reasons for the adoption of smart card reader machine for the general election. Findings revealed that electoral conflicts and violence is one of the major reasons for the adoption of smart card reader machine. It was discovered from findings that smart card reader machine is the best option to curb electoral malpractices. Smart card reader still remains a strong impetus for curbing electoral malpractices during the elections.

On the effect of Smart Card Reader machine on the success of 2015 general election in Ekiti North Senatorial District, findings revealed that the smart card reader did not give room for multiple voting in the 2015 general election. Also, smart card reader did not allow any form of electoral malpractices in the senatorial district, while smart card reader has ensured effective screening and accreditation of voters at respective poll units in the senatorial district; it has also ensured effective screening and accreditation of voters at respective poll units in the senatorial district. It was discovered that smart card reader has ensured effective screening and accreditation of voters at respective poll units in the senatorial district.

On the challenges confronting INEC in the use of Smart Card Reader machine during the 2015 general election, findings showed thatpoor awareness of electorates about the usage of the card reader. Also, findings revealed that inadequate training of ad-hoc officials on the usage of the card reader. Moreover, there Non-activation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device. Findings showed that there was an incidence of low battery as one of the challenges confronting the use of smart card reader machine during the general elections. Also, poor management of card reader was also identified; poor public confidence and trust in the smart card reader and technological deficiencies as a major challenge confronting the use of smart card reader machine during the 2015 general elections.

Conclusion

Findings also showed that INECs introduction of the card reading system eased accreditation processin Ekiti North senatorial district, that the device ensured that each electorates only voted in the ward where he or she was registered; that Card Reader (CR) authentication of the genuineness of PVCs in almost all cases was achieved, that prompt commencement of voting exercise to voters was aided with the application of CR, that CR provided aggregated data of accredited voters in male/female and elderly/youth categories.

The introduction of information and communications technologies (ICT) into the electoral process is generating both interest and concern among voters, as well as practitioners across the globe. Today, most electoral management bodies (EMBs) around the world use new technologies with the aim of improving the electoral process. These technological software and devices

including the smart card reader must however be deployed in manner that will lead to their effectiveness. No doubt, the smart card reader had played a very significant role in the administration of 2015 general election in Ekiti North senatorial district. However, there is need to ensure that the issues and challenges which confronted the use of the device before, during and after the elections do not reoccur in future elections. Therefore, a number of mechanisms would need to be in place by INEC for the deployment of the card reader in future elections so as to strengthen the democratic process. However, despite challenges that inhibited its effective and efficient application, the study concluded that there is significant effect in the use of Smart Card Reader machine on the success of 2015 general election in Ekiti North Senatorial District.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were postulated;

Awareness of electorates about the usage of the card reader should be enhanced in which users would be acquainted with nitty-gritty of the systems application during the elections However; this will facilitates ease of use on the part of electorates.

Training of ad-hoc officials on the usage of the card reader is an important of part of electoral management. Staff of the electoral body should receive adequate training on how to initiate the systems. Staffs will be updated on the technicalities involved in the use of the technological innovation.

Skepticism about the Non-activation of the Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card in the device should be leveled out. Users require assurance of the importance of adopting the technology in the prosecution of elections in the State and Nigeria at large. Electorates' fear must be allayed to enable them key into the innovation.

Low battery as one of the challenges confronting the use of smart card reader machine during the general elections can be addressed via readily made available batteries in the events of such experience. Technological device inevitably experience low battery after a long time of usage, but constant charging is a veritable remedy in that situation.

Also, poor management of card reader should be given priority. Card readers should be well kept in a safe environment. Management of this device constantly will enable its future use, while its maintenance ensures efficiency erasing possible rust.

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