

# STRATEGIC MAPPING AND PERFORMANCE OF ELECTORAL UMPIRES IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

This study investigates the effect of strategic mapping and performance of the Independent National Election Commission (INEC). The specific objectives were to ascertain the effect of electoral education on participation of electorate during election in Nigeria as well as to examine how modes of releasing election results minimizes the post-election agitations. The study adopted a survey research design. The sample size of 405 staff of INEC and officers of the two major political parties were selected across six geopolitical zones at the rate of 3 states per zone, including FCT Abuja. The hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis at 5% level of significance. The findings indicated that: Electoral education by INEC significantly promotes electorates' participation during election in Nigeria ( $\beta = 0.612$ ;  $t$ -value= 10.377;  $p$ -value= 0.000), and the mode of releasing election results significantly minimized the post-election agitations in Nigeria ( $\beta = 0.718$ ;  $t$ -value= 12.821;  $p$ -value= 0.000). The study concluded that strategic mapping by INEC has enhanced their performance as electoral umpire in Nigeria. The study recommended that the management team in INEC should intensify in various aspects of electoral process through strategic mapping, to further achieve better performance as electoral umpire.

**Keywords:** Strategic Mapping, Performance, Electoral Umpires in Nigeria

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership selection through voting during elections is the last hope of common people to right the wrongs in the leadership system by putting trusted individual in deserving posts. It is not untrue that poor election outcomes due to various election malpractices could put the whole system in jeopardy at least till the next cycle of elections. Therefore, The Independent National Election Commission (INEC) that is statutorily assigned to organize election at various levels has to ensure that the process is free from fraud, irregularities, and other malpractices. One of the approaches by INEC is to ensure strategic mapping of its activities in order to enhance their overall performance as the electoral umpire. However, the persistent post-election violence that mostly leads to loss of lives and properties suggests that people are not willing to accept the outcome of an election (Birch, Daxecker & Höglund, 2020). Not accepting election results could be as a result of ineffectiveness of INEC's mapping strategies such as electoral education, identification of conflict prone area, appointment of electoral officers, release of election results, ineffective resource allocation, and weak internal control. All these could account

for low turnout of electorates during elections, poor security, lack of transparency, low worker commitment, and fraudulent activities.

Evidences from reports written by observers (national and international) about general elections in Nigeria has shown that there is consistent improvement in conduct of elections (Isma'ila & Othman, 2015). However, their reports do point at one or two aspects of lapses on the part of INEC which serves as the election umpire. Also, no election in Nigeria has gone without violence and protests (Yusuf, 2019; Kohnert, 2023), which is why numerous election petitions have to be dealt with in courts of laws across Nigeria. This shows that winning or losing elections are not mostly determined by outcome of the election umpire (INEC), except by judges who are distances away from polling units, and not involved in the monitoring of election processes. All these point to the fact that there is a need to reassess how INEC maps its strategies and how effective these strategies are, which aspects need to be improved on, among other issues. This study therefore is an attempt to assess the effectiveness of strategic mapping by INEC during their performances as umpire for elections in Nigeria.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Electoral Umpires in Nigeria**

The origin of Electoral bodies in Nigeria can be traced to the period before Independence when the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was established to conduct 1959 elections. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEC), established in 1960 conducted the immediate post-independence federal and regional elections of 1964 and 1965 respectively. The electoral body was however dissolved after the military coup of 1966. In 1978, a new Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) was constituted by the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. FEDECO organized the elections of 1979 which ushered in the Second Republic under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. It also conducted the general elections of 1983.

In December 1995, the military government of General Sani Abacha, which earlier dissolved NEC in 1993, established the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), which also conducted another set of elections; Local Government councils to National Assembly. These elected institutions were however not inaugurated before the sudden death of General Abacha on June 1998 aborted the process. In 1998 General Abdulsalami Abubakar's Administration dissolved NECON and established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The body organized all transitional elections that ushered in the 4th republic on May 29, 1999. It has today repositioned itself to deliver credible elections that would sustain Nigeria's nascent democracy.

As a permanent body, INEC comprises the workforce recruited since 1987 under the defunct National Electoral Commission (NEC). Its presence has been established in all the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to among other things, organize elections into various political offices in the

country. The functions of INEC is contained in Section 15, Part 1 of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution (As Amended), and Section 2 of the Electoral Act 2010 (As Amended).

The establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1999 was based on the expectation that the body will be responsible for organizing elections of citizens into various political office in Nigeria. The top target of assignments given to INEC was to conduct free, fair, and credible elections. The specific objectives and mandate given, and the guiding activities of INEC by Nigeria constitution were detailed in Section 15, Part 1 of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (As Amended), and Section 2 of the Electoral Act 2010 (As Amended). As electoral umpire, the INEC can be judged by its performance in various aspects of election conduction such as voters' participation, election security, transparent process, minimal post-election agitation, workers commitment, and fraud-free elections. Uzedhe and Okhaifoh (2016) expressed that INEC will not be reckoned with if outcome of election depicts systemic irregularity that is engineered by an INEC official, INEC representative, or even ad-hoc staff engaged by INEC. This shows that the watch-word for INEC as an electoral umpire is performance.

The need to perform by INEC during every election cycle cannot be overemphasized when considering the importance of voting as a means of leadership selection among people, especially in Nigeria where there are wider range of diversities among people; religion, gender, ages, education, ethnic, tribe, political affiliations, among others. Thus, failure by INEC to deliver a generally adjudged free and fair election could spark problems that would likely result to serious anarchy within Nigeria. Okocha (2019) noted that INEC has a huge responsibility when it comes to elections. Based on the fact that Nigeria represents Africa at global scene, whatever happens in Nigeria is expected to replicate in other countries of Africa. Thus, INEC are not only conducting elections in Nigeria for Nigerians' sake but also for Africa and for the whole world to see that black nations can get it right when allowed.

One of the measures of performance of INEC in any cycle of election is voter participation. Different analyses and empirical research have pointed at the fact that commitment and transparency from INEC could affect how electorate comes out to vote during election periods. Uzedhe and Okhaifoh (2016), and Obianyo and Emesibe (2015), observed that electorates feel unimpressed and uninterested once they are aware that INEC is biased or favoring any party or its candidate to win at all cost. Thus, the activities of INEC before, during, and post-election could define how electorates could be willing to participate in general elections. Daniel (2015) expressed that poor voter turnout could be as a result of inconsistent electoral education. Such inconsistency could simply discourage participation, which usually results in low turnout or total decline participation in voting. At some stages, the voter education could also define participation. Obianyo and Emesibe (2015) noted that at various stages of Nigeria elections, there are still cases of void voting or invalid voting despite electorates spending much time on queue to vote a candidate of their choice.

Election security is also one of the more sensitive aspects of voting exercise, though it is a partnership arrangement between INEC and other security agencies. The onus of identification of conflicting areas or election violence volatile area lies on INEC, who provides election architecture and security requirements to top security personnel for their further investigations and projections. Election insecurity could be termed failure in term of what is expected of INEC as umpire for Nigerian election. Thus, election could be adjudged as a failure if post-election agitations go beyond control. It is mostly the case that violence could ensue once some groups or political parties feel unconvinced with the outcome of elections, or they perceived foul play along the line of results transmission from polling units to collation centers. Any inconsistency in the results of elections could promote post-election agitation, reduced participation, and affects overall transparency.

In some cases, having brilliant working staff during election is always seen as success on the part of the electoral umpire. People, experts, and various election observers always commend the electoral umpires when their roles are played professionally by following the detailed ethics of their jobs. In most cases, negligence or indolence by the electoral umpire could mar the overall outcome of an election irrespective of input in other aspects. Meanwhile, one of things that likely determine workers' commitment is the provision of necessary facilities and election resources. Unequipped workers would naturally fail irrespective of expertise. Okocha (2019) argued that logistic distribution or disbursement of electoral materials empowers electoral staff such as INEC in Nigeria to work maximally toward elections. Some studies (Elekwa, 2019; Daniel, 2015; Uwadiogwu, 2015) have claimed that in most election cycles, the failure to perform results from the fact that assigned electoral workers cannot do the right thing due to lack of necessary materials. Some polling units have to start election beyond schedule due to untimely supply of necessary electoral facilities. In short, the conduct of electoral officers, the level of patrician display, and the commitment toward achieving successful election are always seen as achievements in every election cycle which could be affected by lack of necessary facilities.

In another dimension, the electoral umpire needs to be fair about their roles in election from beginning to the end of the electoral process. Achieving elections that are free from fraud is a pride of the electoral umpire, the winning candidates, and the entire nation. One of the dimensions to measure election performances in terms of fairness and credibility is how best the election could be judged to be free from fraudulent acts or malpractices. To ascertain election or electoral process that are free from fraud, the umpire has to have an internal control system that will serve as a mechanism to detect foul play from any actors, the officer, political officers, party candidates, party loyalists, any other individual, or even opposition. Internal control systems sustain the functionality of every strategy put in place by the electoral umpire, and further guide the body against unprofessional practices. However, lack of an internal control system might influence fraudulent activities or election that is full of avoidable errors such as miscounting of votes, poor resources allocation, wrong results recording, using inappropriate forms, and even missing out records. The internal control system allows for immediate detection of possible errors and

prompt correction. Lack of an internal control system could give room for errors which will further breed different electoral malpractices.

In all, efforts to ensure success in every election cycle demands that INEC as the electoral umpire should define strategies to map every aspect of elections ranging from electoral education, identification of potential violent areas, appointment of electoral officers, releasing of election results, resource allocation, and internal control systems. All these have to be done to ensure hitch-free elections. Thus, strategic mapping indicates efforts through which the primary strategic goals of an organization could be pursued. It is an element of the documentation associated with a balanced scorecard (Elekwa, 2019). In today's world of business, strategic mapping implies ability to set out strategies to manage an organization's events to achieve the objectives of such establishment. Thus, a reputable organization like INEC requires not just ordinary strategies but strategies that can identify issues and map out the solutions in an anticipating manner. It is on this note that the current study intends to examine the effect of strategic mapping on the performance of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which is statutorily assigned as the electoral umpire in Nigeria.

### **Strategic Mapping**

Strategy maps can be described as efforts put in place by an organization to create value, and such efforts have to be built on strategic themes such as 'growth' or 'productivity'. Wu (2017) expressed that strategy mapping is a special tool created by organizations to guide all the stakeholders towards performance. Therefore, the strategy mapping implies all efforts such as statements, documentations, pictorial representations, and other tools that can guide the employees, as well as top and middle management staff toward achieving the set objectives without deviating from routes even without supervisors. Mustafa (2018) noted that firms and standard organizations used strategy mapping to communicate their plans to their employees and members of society. The strategy maps can also serve as an appropriate measure to monitor strategy execution and performance in any organization.

A strategy map can be used as a standalone tool to depict an organization's strategy. However, their real value is when they are used as part of a systematic management process that aligns organizational and individual targets and initiatives with a defined mission and desired outcomes. Strategy maps can be created for nonprofit and public service entities, and also for-profit enterprises (Cheng & Humphreys, 2012). INEC as an electoral umpire has its branches in each state of the federation as well as federal capital territory. Other layers of agencies work hand-in-hands with INEC, so there is a need to design a unique strategy mapping that is capable of uniquely guiding the activities of INEC irrespective of their place of assignment. Ayanda and Odunayo (2015) observed that it could be a huge failure on the part of INEC if it neglects to put in place a unique strategy map, considering the fact that Nigeria is large and INEC need to conduct elections in over 120,000 polling units across the country. Thus, without guidelines which are supposed to serve as points of reference for many workers while in the field, the

conduct of INEC as electoral umpire across the states during election will be inconsistent and questionable.

Efforts to have unique performance across states of Nigeria irrespective of location of polling units imply that INEC needs to define a strategy map that will serve as scoreboard for others. Such strategy maps are supposed to cover aspects of election activities such as electoral education, prompt identification of conflict-prone areas, appointment of election officials, mode of releasing election results, resource allocations, and internal control systems. Ayanda and Odunayo (2015) expressed that the initial formulation of the strategy map was based on the 'five perspectives' i.e. Financial, customer, internal, learning, and growth. In its simple form, it can be argued that the strategy maps describe how organizations create value. It provides ways for organizations to tell the story of their strategy to their employees and other corporate stakeholders, thereby increasing engagement in the process. The strategy maps force organizations to place the onus first on their strategy, then on measuring implementation, thus removing the problem of numerous unfocused measures. Having strategy maps is an appropriate basis for balanced scorecard performance measures, links to appropriate management and validation techniques, and allocating resources to initiatives and strategies that support an organization's value propositions and overriding objectives.

Therefore, INEC like every other electoral umpire saddled with the responsibility of conducting free, fair, and credible elections could adopt strategic mapping to define its desired performances such as roles expected of INEC officers to play during elections, strategy for distribution of electoral resources, or means of disbursement of funds. Also, INEC could adopt strategy mapping to identify conflict prone areas or regions, mode of appointing electoral officials, and positioning internal control systems.

Strategic mapping comes in various dimensions. However, as the electoral umpire in Nigeria, the dimensions of strategic mapping could include aspects such as: electoral education, identification of conflict areas, appointment of electoral officers, strategy to release election results, and how to checkmate process through internal control systems amongst others.

### **Performance of the Electoral Umpires**

In this study the performance of the electoral umpire is measured with the overall level of electorate participation (voter turnout), transparency of the process as well as rate of post-election agitations. Electorate participation or voter turnout is the percentage of eligible voters who participated in an election. According to *Rainer and Pernille (2014)*, voter turnout is the number of eligible voters that cast a ballot during a voting period. Eligibility varies by country therefore the voting-eligible population should not be confused with the total adult population. Different factors have been identified as being responsible for variations in electorate participation. *Olorunmola (2016)* noted that low turnout among the electorate could be attributed to disillusionment, indifference, or a sense of futility that could result from the fact that voters think their votes will not make any difference. There is a general consensus among political scientists that democracies perform better when

more people vote (De Kadt, 2017) therefore, low turnout is usually considered to be undesirable. As a result, it becomes necessary that the electoral body engages in various voters' education that can enhance the electorate participation. Fauvelle-Aymar and François (2018) pointed at various factors that fall under philosophical, moral, and practical reasons which some people cite for not voting in elections. High voter turnout is often considered to be most desirable. A high turnout is generally seen as evidence of the legitimacy and integrity of the electoral system, which boil down to roles played by the electoral umpire. *Alexander and Mironova (2017)* argued that in some countries where there are threats of violence against those who vote, such threats automatically create voter suppression. Idowu and Adedokun (2013) expressed that low turnout could be a reflection of disenchantment or indifference. Thus, a poll with very low turnout may not be an accurate reflection of the will of the people. On the other hand, if low turnout is a reflection of contentment of voters about likely winners or parties, then low turnout is as legitimate as high turnout, as long as the right to vote exists. Still, low turnouts can lead to unequal representation among various parts of the population.

Also, transparency is the term for a clear and open process which is understandable and accountable to the electorate. Transparent procedures encourage participation in support of the electoral system (Rueda, 2017). Transparency is essential to the electoral process because it eliminates the appearance of impropriety and limits the possibility of electoral fraud. Transparent procedures promote public confidence and trust in the electoral system (Piccolino, 2019). Thus, in order for elections to be considered "free and fair", transparent procedures should ensure a participatory government where persons have the right to elect their representatives, and that persons are allowed to vote by secret ballot. To attain electoral transparency, the electoral process must accommodate persons to have the opportunity to become a candidate without favoritism of the electoral umpire. Also, persons have to be provided with impartial election information irrespective of party affiliations or candidate of choice.

Transparency of electoral process is enhanced once every citizen of voting age has the right to vote on a nondiscriminatory basis, or gain access to effective and impartial procedures for voter registration. Electorates need to have equal access to a polling station in order to vote, along with the right to exercise their vote equally with others and to have their votes accorded equivalent weight to all others. *Daniel (2015)* argued that electoral transparency requires giving people the right to join with others to establish a political party or organization, and to compete in an election. People can express political opinions without interference or intimidation, Candidates can move freely within the country in order to campaign. The ability of political parties and candidates to campaign on an equal basis with other parties and candidates – including the incumbent access to the media for all candidates to put forth their political views (*Biswas & Arup, 2017*) must be maintained. Transparent procedures contribute to a "free and fair" electoral process, a goal of governments, the electorate, political parties, and non-governmental organizations.

Transparent rules of administration should ideally include the holding of open meetings with published agendas and meeting minutes (*Smith & de-Mesquita, 2018*). Allowing for public comments and open discussions on matters before the commission also fosters transparency, although most countries consult political stakeholders only prior to the final decision but not during the deliberative stages. A transparent election process does not simply depend on voter registration, free campaigning, monitors, transparent procedures, and secret ballots; it must also be able to deal promptly and effectively with the different types of complaints that will inevitable arise - everything from the denial of voter registration to an individual who attempts to suppress voter turnout (*Alberda, Alvarez, Beaulieu & Wronski, 2020*).

Likewise, performance electoral umpires can be measured on how they plan for as well as manage post-election agitations. According to Oshiomhole (2011), electoral agitation or violence is any violence that is calculated and orchestrated due to outcome of elections. Election violence could include use of thugs, ballot snatching, or harassment of voters or opponents. In agreeing with the elements of all the definitions, the Electoral Reform Committee Report states that electoral violence refers to the use of, or threat of force against an opponent within the context of electoral competition for state power. Electoral violence is inhibitive of democratic transitions and consolidation. Violence has been a feature of the country's electoral processes since the colonial era (Omotola, 2017). During this period, violence was easily curtailed due to the nature and scope of participation, characteristics of politicians and electorates, and the nature of colonial domination. After independence up to the 3rd republic, electoral violence has remained an instrument for intense struggle for power among politicians (Olakunle, et al., 2019), with the Nigerian youths intensively involved in electoral violence manifesting in thuggery and hijacking of materials. Electoral violence manifests in three electoral stages namely: pre-election, during election, and post-election. To Oshiomhole (2011), electoral violence has three forms namely: violence unleashed by individuals or at instance of individuals to forcefully ensure that the electoral process is in their favor or in the favor of their parties, their godfathers, or their cronies. This may take a variety of forms, including assassination, and the use of thugs for ballot snatching.

There is also the structural dimension in which the state through its custodians applies violence to tilt the political balance in their favor, or simply to overwhelm the electorate into accepting a predetermined outcome. The third form of violence is popular resistance to the manipulation of the electoral process, or illegitimate protest of election rigging. Electoral violence in Nigeria is primarily due to the perception of politics and political offices as investments and as avenues for the acquisition of extraordinary wealth through corruption, which is otherwise not possible through any form of legitimate vocation and enterprise. As a result of this perception and reality, Alemika (2011) posits that Nigerian politicians turn electioneering and elections into warfare in which violence and ethnic, religious, and other forms of primordial sentiments and prejudices are employed. Similarly, *Ibrahim and Aturu (2012)* observed that the shortest cut to affluence and influence is through politics. Politics means money and money means politics, and to be



a member of a governing party means an avenue to government patronage, contract deals and the likes. Once the politicians recognize or know the profitability of having power, the party (and their individual members) naturally uses the same governmental machinery to stay in power. The leadership becomes self-recruiting oligarchy and no self-recruiting oligarchy has been known to tolerate opposition to itself. Under such circumstance, violence becomes a ready instrument for seeking, gaining, and retaining political power.

Nigerian political parties and politicians often employ fraudulent and violent means to win elections. The Political Bureau 20 in 1987 reported that Nigerian politicians and parties rigged elections “in most blatant fashion where violence, corruption, arson and brigandage were employed in the mad desire to win and retain power both in the region and at the center”. Similarly, the Constitution Drafting Committee 21 observed that the country’s politics is primarily geared towards securing “the opportunity to acquire wealth and prestige, to be able to distribute benefits in the form of jobs, contracts, scholarships, and gifts of money and so on to one’s relatives and political allies and cronies”.

## **Hypotheses Development**

### **Electoral Education and Electoral Participation**

Basic voter education typically needs to address voters' motivation and preparedness to participate fully in elections. It pertains to relatively complex types of information about voting and the electoral process, and is concerned with concepts such as the link between basic human rights and voting rights; the role, responsibilities and rights of voters; the relationship between elections and democracy and the conditions necessary for democratic elections; secrecy of the ballot; why each vote is important and its impact on public accountability; and how votes translate into seats (*Abatudu & Obakhedo, 2009*). Such concepts involve explanations, not just a statement of facts. Voter education requires more lead time for implementation than voter information and ideally, should be undertaken on an on-going basis. This type of information is most often provided by election authorities and civil society organizations. At its core, voter or electoral education is an enterprise designed to ensure that voters are ready, willing, and able to fully participate in electoral politics. It has been assumed that this entails election literacy and confidence that the electoral process is appropriate and effective in selecting governments and promoting policies that will benefit the individual voter.

As indicated by many authors (*Andrew, 2021; Wehr, 2019; Rya, 2019; Abatudu & Obakhedo, 2009*), voter education is essential in ensuring that voters can effectively exercise their voting rights, and express their political will through the electoral process. If voters are not prepared or motivated to participate in the electoral process, then questions may arise about the legitimacy, representativeness, and responsiveness of elected leaders and institutions. At the same time, voter education is a much-focused undertaking. It is targeted at eligible voters and addresses specific electoral events as well as the general electoral process. While voter education is a necessary component of the democratic electoral process, it is not sufficient for democracy. It should be noted

also that participation in elections and the status of 'voter' have a special weight in transitional countries holding founding elections and where the right to vote has been obtained through social struggle. As the democratic world moves toward a universal franchise however, voting is viewed as one of the many ways in which citizens participate in and support democracy.

The need to educate people to take part in elections is not an issue. Whether these people are children or adults, there are many educational needs that relate to the conduct of elections. There are also the needs related to active participation in competitive politics. One educational activity involves the use of mock or parallel elections. In Chile, for example, children accompany their parents to the polls on Election Days, and actually cast ballots in a parallel election. In other cases, mock election activities may either be narrowly focused on voting behavior, or incorporate the entire electoral campaign. Having children run for election or campaign for others provides important lessons that cannot be learned through an approach that focuses solely on Election Day activities (*Andrew, 2021*). If conducted through the school system, a voter education short course may also be incorporated as part of a broader civic education curriculum. This course might be offered to children of various ages, or only to those approaching voting ages (*Paul, 2020*). The amount of time spent on voter education in this case may also depend upon the depth and breadth of the course in question. Role playing, mock campaigns and elections, and learning exercises both inside and out of the classroom may be included. Activities might be limited to a particular class, or include all classes and a number of grades. There might even be competition between schools. Helping citizens understand and participate in elections other than as a contestant or supporter of a contestant, requires concentration on a few key concerns. These seem to have somewhat universal significance, although each election may have its own special features. Thus, this study proposes that:

**H<sub>1</sub>: Electoral education significantly influences high rate of electorates' participation during elections in Nigeria.**

### **Release of Electoral Results, and Post-Election Agitations**

Releasing of election result is always something unique in every election cycle. As noted by *Radomska (2020)*, the mode of releasing election results is something that can define its credibility and affects overall transparency of elections. The activities involved in releasing election results has to be consistent across all polling units. *Aghara et al. (2015)* aptly described wrongful release of election results as deliberate election malpractices which are palpable illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent, or sinister intention to influence an election in favor of a candidate. In most cases, the objective of rigging or fraud is to frustrate the democratic aspirations of citizens who have voted, or would have voted into office someone other than the rigged-in individual. The consistence of electoral officers in their mode of releasing election result could affect how people will accept the results, and prevent chances that people will become agitated after elections which could lead to violence.

In some cases, violence could erupt as early as possible after the results of the first round of voting are declared, even at primaries, party conventions, or off-season elections. Such rejections could impact on the safety of society as some individuals could begin taking laws into their hands (*Hutagalung, 2019*). *Adekeye (2017)* argued that lack of internal party systems affects every electoral system even at party level such that release of results of intra-party election could be wrongly done and lead to problems even among party officials. In the general elections, lack of patriotism among political officers and the electoral umpire could affect the mode of releasing election results as well as the reaction that such efforts could get from people – acceptance or rejection. The rejection of released results of elections could further lead to chaos and in some cases where such chaos is not promptly managed as is the usual case in Nigeria, the consequences could lead to huge loss of lives and properties. Therefore we proposed that:

**H<sub>2</sub>: The strategic releasing of election results by INEC significantly minimizes post-election agitations in Nigeria.**

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design/Participants

This study adopted the survey research design. *Onwumere (2009)* states that survey design is one in which the researcher does not aim to control or manipulate any of the variables under investigation. The choice of this method is based on the fact that the population and sample of this study are scattered in different states of the south-east region of Nigeria. Therefore, the only way to reach the subjects is through the survey method. Surveys enable a researcher to study objects in their scattered locations. The method was considered for the study because *Jen (2010)* argues that the survey method involves gathering data about a target population from a focused analysis of samples, and generalizing the findings obtained from analysis of samples to an entire population.

The population of the study comprised INEC Staff and political party officials. A total 405 copies of questionnaire were administered to participants. Of which 291 were to INEC and 114 to political officials. However, 392 were completed and used for analyses.

#### Description of the Research Instrument

The research instrument that was used for data gathering for this study is the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was formulated based on the research questions that were raised in the first chapter of this study. The questionnaire had two sections; 'A' and 'B'. Specifically, all the questions in section 'A' were general information on the respondents, while section 'B' comprised of all the constructs and their items in line with the objectives of the study. The items for each construct was structured to directly address the research questions. In the design of the questionnaire, the five (5) point Likert scale method was adopted and in the course of the analysis, it was collapsed to the two (2) point Likert scale method (Strongly agreed and Strongly disagreed).

## Method of Data Analyses

Data that was collected for the study was presented and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools which are simple percentage and average, while inferential statistics was used for testing research hypotheses at 0.05 significant confidence level. All analyses for the data will be parsed with SPSS version 20.0 software. In testing the hypotheses, the calculated value of the test statistics was compared with critical or table value of the statistics. The critical or table value serves as a benchmark for rejecting or not rejecting a null hypothesis. Therefore, the decision rule that was applied in this research work is to reject the null hypothesis if the calculated value at 5% significance level with respective degrees of freedom is greater than the table value.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results on table 1 present the demographic distribution of respondents (INEC staff and Party Officers) across the six geopolitical zones and FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The study shows that overall, 11.48% of respondents were those with either OND or NCE, while 52.55% were those with either HND or BSc, and the remaining 35.97% were those with MBA or MSc educational qualification. This shows that all sampled respondents were fairly well educated.

**Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents**

Variable	INEC Staff	Party Officer	Overall
<b>Educational Qualification</b>			
OND/NCE	0(0.00)	45(42.06)	45(11.48)
HND/BSC	149(52.28)	57(53.27)	206(52.55)
MBA/MSC	136(47.72)	5(4.67)	141(35.97)
<b>Years in Services</b>			
1 – 5 year	54(18.9)	24(22.4)	78(19.90)
6 – 10 years	94(33)	51(47.7)	145(36.99)
11 – 15 years	83(29.1)	21(19.6)	104(26.53)
15 years+	54(18.9)	11(10.3)	65(16.58)

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The distribution of respondents according to years in services shows that 19.90% of respondents were those who had between 1 – 5 years of experience as either INEC staff or political party members. Also, 36.99% were those who spent between 6 – 10 years in serving INEC as electoral umpire or working with political parties, while 26.53% were those who had worked with INEC between 11 – 15 years, and the remaining 16.58% were those spent more than 15 years as either INEC staff or political party officers across the six geopolitical zones and FCT Abuja. Thus, the results show that overall, the sampled employees of INEC and officers of two major national political parties (APC and PDP) from the six geopolitical zones and FCT Abuja were fairly or well-educated, and had spent some years in their respective roles which made them qualified to offer valid observations regarding the mapping strategy of INEC as electoral umpire in Nigeria.

### Analysis of Items in the study scale

The combined variable distribution responses to items in the research instrument is presented below:

**Table 2: Respond Distribution on Rate of Electoral Education (EE) by INEC**

S/n	Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ± SD
1.	INEC usually engages in audience targeting electoral education approach	Strongly Disagree	23	5.87	4.03 ± 1.6
		Disagree	41	10.46	
		Undecided	35	8.93	
		Agree	95	24.23	
		Strongly Agree	198	50.51	
2.	In most case mobile phones are used to send message on voting procedure across the electorate ahead of election	Strongly Disagree	43	10.97	3.91 ± 0.38
		Disagree	54	13.78	
		Undecided	14	3.57	
		Agree	67	17.09	
		Strongly Agree	214	54.59	
3.	The content of INEC message about election for the electorate are usually precise and promising	Strongly Disagree	43	10.97	3.77 ± 0.46
		Disagree	53	13.52	
		Undecided	33	8.42	
		Agree	87	22.19	
		Strongly Agree	176	44.90	
4.	Leaders in the society are also incorporated by INEC to encourage electorates to participate in voting	Strongly Disagree	32	8.16	4.03 ± 0.03
		Disagree	46	11.73	
		Undecided	23	5.87	
		Agree	67	17.09	
		Strongly Agree	224	57.14	
5.	The content of electoral education by INEC is usually simple and easy to understand	Strongly Disagree	46	11.73	3.56 ± 0.82
		Disagree	31	7.91	
		Undecided	43	10.97	
		Agree	201	51.28	
		Strongly Agree	71	18.11	
<b>Grand Mean ± SD</b>		3.86±0.66			

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Table 2 reports the response distribution on the rate of electoral education by INEC as part of strategic mapping. The results showed across the items weighted mean values of 4.03; 3.91; 3.77; 4.03 and 3.56 for the items 1 to 5, which indicated the agreement view of respondents to the high rate of electoral education by INEC. Also, the overall weighted mean value of 3.86 suggested that respondents agreed that INEC's strategic mapping of electoral education is high.

**Table 3: Respond Distribution on Effectiveness of Mode of Releasing Electoral Result by INEC**

S/n	Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ± SD
1	It is part of the strategy map by INEC to ensure that stakeholders partake in election counting	Strongly Disagree	63	16.07	3.15 ± 0.71
		Disagree	79	20.15	
		Undecided	12	3.06	
		Agree	211	53.83	
		Strongly Agree	27	6.89	
2	The vote counting procedure is strategically mapped to ensure transparency	Strongly Disagree	45	11.48	3.39 ± 0.45
		Disagree	71	18.11	
		Undecided	25	6.38	
		Agree	187	47.70	
		Strongly Agree	64	16.33	
3	INEC has dedicated avenues for complains and observations during results collation to ensure satisfaction	Strongly Disagree	23	5.87	3.89 ± 1.61
		Disagree	21	5.36	
		Undecided	24	6.12	
		Agree	231	58.93	
		Strongly Agree	93	23.72	
4	INEC has a strategy map to produce defendable facts and figures for backing release of results	Strongly Disagree	13	3.32	4.05 ± 1.66
		Disagree	32	8.16	
		Undecided	13	3.32	
		Agree	198	50.51	
		Strongly Agree	136	34.69	
5	It is part of election planning that INEC recruits ad-hoc officers from both Federal and state offices for easy identification	Strongly Disagree	31	7.91	4.03 ± 0.13
		Disagree	42	10.71	
		Undecided	21	5.36	
		Agree	89	22.70	
		Strongly Agree	209	53.32	
<b>Grand Mean ± SD</b>		3.7±0.91			

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The results on Table 3 revealed the respond distribution of respondents on effectiveness of mode of releasing electoral result (RER) by INEC as part of their strategy mapping. The results reveal weighted mean values of 3.15; 3.39; 3.89; 4.05 and 4.03 for the respective items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. This shows that respondents rated the mode of releasing electoral results by INEC as effective. Furthermore, the overall weighted mean value of 3.70 showed that in all, INEC's process of releasing electoral results is effective.

**Table 4: Respondents' Perspective on Rate of Electoral Participation by People**

S/n	Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ± SD
1	In every voting period, peoples' readiness to come out for voting is highly encouraging	Strongly Disagree	12	3.06	3.95 ± 1.46
		Disagree	67	17.09	
		Undecided	21	5.36	
		Agree	120	30.61	
		Strongly Agree	172	43.88	
2	It is noticeable among electorates that there are words of motivation among them encouraging others to participate in voting	Strongly Disagree	21	5.36	4.16 ± 0.46
		Disagree	37	9.44	
		Undecided	11	2.81	
		Agree	111	28.32	
		Strongly Agree	212	54.08	
3	Peoples are not only voting; they always stay back to ensure that their voting count	Strongly Disagree	34	8.67	4.02 ± 0.87
		Disagree	45	11.48	
		Undecided	17	4.34	
		Agree	78	19.90	
		Strongly Agree	218	55.61	
4	Electorates in their numbers do guide others on how to vote ahead of voting days	Strongly Disagree	41	10.46	3.89 ± 0.54
		Disagree	49	12.50	
		Undecided	17	4.34	
		Agree	89	22.70	
		Strongly Agree	196	50.00	
5	Electorates do voluntarily support security agents and electoral officers to ensure orderliness during voting	Strongly Disagree	56	14.29	3.55 ± 1.37
		Disagree	34	8.67	
		Undecided	23	5.87	
		Agree	198	50.51	
		Strongly Agree	81	20.66	
<b>Grand Mean ± SD</b>		3.87±0.57			

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

Results on Table 4 present the respondents' perspective on the rate of electoral participation by people during election cycles in Nigeria. The results showed across the items the weighted mean values of 3.95; 4.16; 4.02; 3.89 and 3.55 for the respective items 1 – 5, which indicated the agreement view of respondents to the fact that rate of electoral participation among people is high. Also, the overall weighted mean value of 3.87 further showed that overall, respondents agreed that peoples' participation in the electoral process is improving.

**Table 5: Respondents' Perspective on Management of Post-Election Agitations (PEA)**

S/n	Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ± SD
1	The rate of agitations ahead of voting periods is less now	Strongly Disagree	178	45.41	2.28 ± 0.16
		Disagree	62	15.82	
		Undecided	52	13.27	
		Agree	65	16.58	
		Strongly Agree	35	8.93	
2	The election violence during voting is now common unlike before	Strongly Disagree	54	13.78	3.03 ± 0.66
		Disagree	87	22.19	
		Undecided	65	16.58	
		Agree	167	42.60	
		Strongly Agree	19	4.85	
3	Political parties and candidates are usually encouraged to approach court for redressing conflicting aspects of elections	Strongly Disagree	21	5.36	3.75 ± 1.6
		Disagree	46	11.73	
		Undecided	23	5.87	
		Agree	223	56.89	
		Strongly Agree	79	20.15	
4	Electorates, candidates and loyalists of political parties are not so much engaging in violent reactions after elections	Strongly Disagree	51	13.01	3.31 ± 0.81
		Disagree	66	16.84	
		Undecided	41	10.46	
		Agree	178	45.41	
		Strongly Agree	56	14.29	
5	Peoples' trust in electoral outcomes is no longer attracting unwanted violence	Strongly Disagree	41	10.46	3.28 ± 0.57
		Disagree	76	19.39	
		Undecided	41	10.46	
		Agree	199	50.77	
		Strongly Agree	35	8.93	
<b>Grand Mean ± SD</b>		3.13±0.76			

Source: Fieldwork, 2025.

The results on Table 5 revealed the respondents' perspective on the management of post-election agitations in Nigeria. The results reveal weighted mean values of 3.03; 3.75; 3.31 and 3.28, for the respective items 2, 3, 4 and 5, while item 1 has a mean value of 2.28 which is less than 3.0, indicating that respondents disagreed with the assertion that the rate of agitations ahead of voting periods is less now. Meanwhile, the overall weighted mean value of 3.13, suggested that respondents agreed that election agitations in Nigeria is moderately managed.

**Test of Hypotheses One:** Electoral education significantly influences high rate of electorates' participation during elections in Nigeria



**Table 6a: Consolidated Responses to Questions Related to Hypothesis One**

Responses	Electoral Education	Electorates' Participation
Strongly Disagree	187(9.54)	164(8.37)
Disagree	225(11.48)	232(11.84)
Undecided	148(7.55)	89(4.54)
Agree	517(26.38)	596(30.41)
Strongly Agree	883(45.05)	879(44.85)

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

**Table 6b: Influence of Electoral Education on Electorates' Participation in Nigeria**

$r = 0.590$ $R^2 = 0.348$						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.685	0.102		6.716	.000
	Electoral Education	0.612	0.057	0.59	10.737	.000

a. **Dependent Variable:** Electorates' Participation

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The results on table 6a shows the consolidated responses to questions related to the first objective of the study which sought to establish the effect of electoral education on participation of electorates during elections in Nigeria. The results showed that 45.5% of respondents strongly agreed that electoral education as an INEC mapping strategy is high, while 44.8% indicated strongly that electorate participation in election in Nigeria is high. Moreso, the outcome of regression analysis on table 6b revealed R-value of 0.590,  $R^2$  value of 0.348, which showed some moderate relationship between the dependent variable (electorate participation) and independent variable (electoral education). Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficient  $\beta$  0.612, t-value 10.377 at p-value 0.000 which is less than hypothetical p-value 0.05, showed that the independent variable (electoral education) can predict about 61.2% of variations in the dependent variable (electorate participation). Therefore, the study sustained the alternative hypothesis which stated that electoral education significantly influences high rate of electorates' participation during election in Nigeria.

**Test of Hypothesis Two:** The strategic releasing of election results by INEC significantly minimizes post-election agitations in Nigeria

**Table 7a: Consolidated Responses to Questions Related to the Hypothesis Two**

Responses	Release of Electoral Result (RER)	Post-Election Agitations (PEA)
Strongly Disagree	175(8.93)	345(17.6)
Disagree	245(12.5)	337(17.19)
Undecided	95(4.85)	222(11.33)
Agree	916(46.73)	832(42.45)
Strongly Agree	529(26.99)	224(11.43)

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

**Table 7b: Influence of Strategic Releasing of Election Results on Minimization of Post-Election Agitations in Nigeria**

$r = 0.638$ $R^2 = 0.408$						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.025	.138		7.406	.000
	Release of Election Results	.718	.056	.638	12.821	.000

a. **Dependent Variable:** Post-Election Agitations

Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The results on table 7a shows the consolidated responses to questions related to the fourth objective in this study, which meant to examine the contribution of the mode taking by INEC to release election results toward minimization of post-election agitations in Nigeria. The results showed that 46.73% of respondents agreed that mode of releasing election result by INEC is effective and 42.45% indicated that post-election agitation is moderately minimized.

Also, the outcome of regression analysis on table 7b revealed R-value of 0.638,  $R^2$  value of 0.408, which showed moderate relationship between dependent variable (post-election agitations) and independent variable (mode of releasing the election results). Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficient  $\beta$  0.718, t-value 12.821 at p-value 0.000 which is less than hypothetical p-value 0.05, showed that independent variable (mode of releasing the election results) can explain about 72.0% of variations in dependent variable (post-election agitations). Thus, the calculated p-value (0.000) is less than hypothetical p-value (0.05) and the study sustained the alternative hypothesis which stated that strategic releasing of election results by INEC significantly minimizes post-election agitations in Nigeria.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study showed that electoral education by INEC significantly promotes the electorates' participation during elections in Nigeria. Specifically, the study established moderate effect of electoral education on peoples' participation during elections. This shows that electoral education activities such as audience targeting approach, mobile phone electoral messages, usage of precise wording in SMS, incorporation of community leaders, and usage of simple language of communication all have direct effects on the rate at which people are showing their readiness to be part of electoral process, especially during election periods. This finding concurs with earlier finding made by Neggers (2020) and Radomska (2020) that electoral education strategically repositions public participation in elections. Also, Piccolino (2019) argued that in every society, electoral education targeted aspects not clear to member of society about voting, what to do before, during, and after voting, and what makes their vote count.

In a developing society like Nigeria where the democratic system of government is just gaining ground, the electorate needs to be guided on timely basis especially prior to the general elections. The earlier submission made by *Radomska* (2020) showed that it is only in a few societies in advanced parts of the world that electoral education is minimal due to high level of awareness among the populace, as well as a functional electoral system. In Nigeria, the experiences at every electoral cycle are usually different and unique, along with having teeming young Nigerians become eligible to vote, therefore there is always a need to provide necessary guidance through electoral education. *Yiaga* (2019) submitted that in the Nigeria society, some people even adults are just understanding the electoral processes before, during, and after elections. Therefore, continuous electoral education is highly necessary.

The earlier study by *Mustafa* (2018) found that electoral education through the electoral body in Nigeria (INEC) significantly encouraged voters' participation in the electoral process. The earlier submission made by *Tokaji* (2020) indicated that the only justification for minimal voter education in advanced nations is due to civic education that every citizen must have passed through. In Nigeria, the civic education has just been restored into our educational system, therefore, it will require time to pass its message across our society. *Tokaji* (2020) submitted in his work which focused on "reasons for vote denial" that discussing voting right, voting process, voting education, and general election processes are mainly a responsibility of authorized bodies, which has direct impact on peoples' conduct during elections. The current finding concurs with a study by *Yiaga* (2019) which showed that efforts by electoral bodies are meant to share facts about the election and do not require the explanation of concepts or align voters to particular candidate or parties, but directly motivate the electorate to participate in voting and general electoral activities. Though, *Akgun* (2018) warned that the only way the electoral body could convince the members of society is by ensuring they are sending clear messages, and avoiding being involved in systematic campaign for any candidate or party. The achievement being recorded by INEC regarding people awareness, readiness and participation in election could be attributed to strategic mapping through electoral education, which is usually carried out during each new election cycle and implemented timely within the period for people to be fully aware ahead of general elections. *Theodore et al.* (2020) found that electorates are becoming much aware and improve in voting participation through voter education by INEC along with efforts from community leaders, religious bodies, and organized civil society.

The findings from the second research question and hypothesis shows that the mode of releasing election results significantly minimized post-election agitations in Nigeria. Thus, the strategy map by INEC to ensure that stakeholders partake in election counting is reducing the extents of people disputing outcome of electoral processes. Also, vote counting procedure by INEC requires the presence of party agents, observers, and even voters, and this reduce doubts about outcome of elections amidst political parties. Having political actors around while counting votes could encourage overall acceptance, and minimize post-election agitation. This stand was reaffirmed by the earlier studies by

*Alberda et al. (2020), Aspinall (2019); and Gould-Williams and Mohamed (2019) showing that allowing all political parties as well as voters to participate in vote counting enhanced overall transparency of electoral processes. Though, Alberda et al. (2020) found that in Israel, the public believes e-voting denies them rights to participate in counting and creates room for some level of manipulation through software applications. The electoral process of 2016 that brought in Donald Trump as USA present was accused of manipulation by IT experts from Russia and China, with such interference being blamed on online processing. However, in Nigeria and some other countries, the counting processes are done manually and the member of society are allowed to witness the counting, if there is assurance that they will not interfere or hinder the counting process. The findings by Iyengar et al. (2019) established that one of the significant factors telling members of society about the credibility of elections is the mode through which election results are been collated, transmitted, and released to the members of society.*

Also, the current finding concurs with the conclusions drawn by *Sule et al. (2019)* stating that despite the fact that electoral umpires are responsible for the compilation of election results from the field, the participation of people from voting units, to wards, local governments, and central results collation centers define overall transparency, and limits the possibility of post-election agitations. The submission made by *Mustafa (2018)* indicated that the mode chosen to release results is imperative to minimization of post-election unrests and agitation from various corners. *Malik (2019)* maintained that any unnecessary or unexplained delay in releasing election results could lead to suspicions concerning the integrity of results processing and may bring about agitations after such results is released. Findings by *Harris and Posner (2020)* reiterated that whether real or perceived, biased processing of election results significantly increased the likelihood of outbreaks of post-election violence. *Sule et al. (2020) concluded that once an election result is not convincing, people have no option than to reject the election result.* Findings by *Neggars (2020)* established that stage-wise collation of results from polling units to state collation centers allow for easy means of tracing every vote to its voting unit, which enhances transparency of electoral processes and reduces post-electoral agitations.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Strategic mapping implies efforts put in place by an organization to create value, and ensure integrity. Thus, the adoption of strategic mapping by INEC was meant to make electoral processes reliable and generally accepted both by political parties and electorates. This study through its findings has reiterated the importance of strategic mapping in relation to activities of INEC as Nigeria's electoral umpire. The study has shown through its findings that adoption of electoral education as a mapping strategy to enlighten members of society about electoral processes influences the electorates' participation in elections on a moderate level. This further shows that strategic voting education remains highly relevant toward peoples' participation in electoral processes in Nigeria.

Also, it has been reiterated in this study that prompt identification of conflict-prone areas as one of INEC's strategic mapping approaches significantly influences election security in Nigeria. The likes of creating red, yellow, and blue markers of voting areas in respect to electoral violence has helped INEC to achieve moderate electoral security in Nigeria. Likewise, recruitment strategies such as careful shopping for officers, direct approaches to seek the service of individuals with integrity, as well as working on recommendations on the neutrality of an individual to political parties has enhanced the overall transparency of electoral processes in Nigeria

It has also been shown by this study through its findings that the modes of releasing election results by Nigeria's electoral umpire (INEC), has significantly minimized post-election agitations in Nigeria, such that candidates and political parties are showing belief and willingness to approach courts for redress on electoral cases. Likewise, the strategy used to allocate resources by INEC during electoral processes promotes workers' commitment to the conduct of elections in Nigeria. The usage of internal control system as a strategy to map activities of INEC staff during electoral processes significantly promotes fraud-free elections in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

In line with findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following are the recommendations:

- i. INEC should improve on electoral education especially in remote areas where awareness and levels of voter understanding could be below expectations, and participations on grassroots level could be well improved.
- ii. INEC as electoral umpire in Nigeria needs to improve on the mode of releasing election results to further minimize post-election agitations in the country.

### **Implications of the Study**

The study on strategic mapping and performance of election umpires in Nigeria has far-reaching implications. It can contribute to enhancing electoral integrity, improving the capacity and structure of election management bodies, fostering stakeholder collaboration, building election officials' capacity, boosting public confidence, and guiding policy reforms. By implementing the study's recommendations, Nigeria can strive towards more transparent, credible, and inclusive elections, ultimately strengthening its democratic processes.

Likewise, the study's implications contributes to improving public confidence in the electoral process and enhancing the legitimacy of election outcomes. By addressing the identified gaps and challenges in the performance of election umpires, Nigeria can build a more credible and trusted electoral system. This, in turn, fosters public trust, encourages citizen participation, and strengthens the overall democratic fabric of the country.

In addition, the study's findings and recommendations can serve as a foundation for policy reforms related to election management in Nigeria. Policymakers and electoral stakeholders can utilize the insights to develop and implement strategic plans, regulatory frameworks, and legal provisions that address the challenges faced by election umpires. Evidence-based policy reforms can contribute to long-term improvements in the conduct of elections and the overall democratic governance of the country.

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