Impact Incumbency on Electoral Process in Nigeria: A Case Study of Local Government Elections in Edo State

By

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of incumbent on electoral process in Nigeria: A case study of Edo State Local Government Election. The study adopted the survey research design which was administration of questionnaire, the data was analysed using Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result showed that there is significant relationship between political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State. This goes to say that electorates have just limited ability to influence government policy with respect to an election. Most elections do not directly establish public policy, but rather confer authority on a limited group of officials to enact policy (by legislation and other means) on behalf of the people as a whole. There is significant relationship between the incumbent and influence of electoral process in Edo State. Similarly, the incumbent has the authority and influence the electoral process towards their benefit undermining their performance. There is significant relationship between manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent's influence and elected individuals in Edo State in Nigeria. Particularly Edo State the incumbents uses the office to control the direction of elected official into public office by various means that contradict electoral process and law. The study recommends the national and state electoral commission should wakeup to their responsibility as to checkmate political will of incumbents as it can have negative influence in the choice of elected public office. The federal government should set body that could monitor the excesses the incumbent effect on electoral process in Edo State. Similarly, the incumbents have the authority and influence the electoral process towards their benefit undermining their performance. The government should bring to book anyone who serve as

obstacle or find manipulating the electoral process by face the wrath of the law, no matter the position of such persons.

Keywords: Incumbency, political will, public office, electoral Process, elected individuals.

Introduction

Politics is undoubtedly Nigeria's most gratifying career today, which has made many politicians to stay on politics as bee stays on Horney. The country must devise a strategy to make political office less enticing in compared to other occupations. This may ensure that politicians offer the services that the public expects (Rickard, 2022). There is no doubt that the international community's pressure on Nigeria and its leaders to democratize has benefited the country's acceptance of democracy, if only to appear to meet international standards of civilized political leadership (Fiva & Røhr, 2018). Democratic leadership is critical to improving government functioning, and good leaders are needed at all levels of society, including the presidency, the level of state, military and security agencies, public service, the business sector, and within families. Reduce corruption and primitive accumulation in Nigeria needs re-emphasizing good core society values as the primary norm of effective government.

As a result, incumbents enjoy an edge in elections. This has been demonstrated by a significant body of literature, and it is concerning since it may prevent the best candidate from winning. When we say 'best,' we mean a wide definition of candidate quality that includes both personal traits (such as how qualified they are and how resistant to corruption they are) and how well their positions coincide with their constituents. In an ideal world, democratic institutions would allow the greatest candidate to win regardless of whether they already occupy office or have voter recognition. Democratic systems suffer when incumbents have advantages that allow them to be re-elected regardless of their performance (Dano et al., 2023). Election turns are less likely when incumbents are more difficult to remove, which is also a concern. Marx et al. (2022 and 2023) find that turnovers contribute to gains in governance, economic performance, and other metrics of national health using data from national elections held worldwide since 1945. As a result, if the incumbency advantage prevents rotations from occurring, democracy and

governance may suffer further (Rickard, 2022). Democratic leadership is vital to enhancing government functioning, and good leaders are required at all levels of society, including the presidency, the level of state, military and security agencies, public service, the economic sector, and within families. Reduced corruption and primitive accumulation in Nigeria require re-emphasizing good core societal values as the basic rule of functional government.

There are incumbents who manage to survive reelection. The incumbency advantage enjoyed by members of Congress translates into large margins of victory, thus providing them with a buffer at the polls (Jacobson 2009). This allows some tainted incumbents to withstand a loss of support at the polls and still retain their seats. In some instances, the initial wave of disapproval by a candidate's supporters dissipates by the time they cast their ballots, such that the electoral effect is dampened (Vonnahme 2014). However, surviving one election cycle does not mean that the member is off the hook. Praino et al. (2013) found that incumbents recover much of their lost margins in their first post-scandal election, but it is not until four to six years after the scandal that their predicted vote share approaches the level one would expect had they never been involved in a scandal in the first place. This study fill gap in extant literature by examining the impact of incumbent on electoral process in Nigeria: A case study of Edo State Local Government Election.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the course of the paper

1) Does the incumbent have strong political will for election of public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State?
2) How does the incumbent influence in electoral process in Edo State?
3) Will manipulation of electoral process by the incumbent influence elected individuals in Edo State?

Objectives of the Study

Based on the aim of this study, the following specific objectives were to guide the study.

1) To examine political will for election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State.

2) To find out whether the incumbent can influence electoral process in Edo State.
3) To evaluate the manipulation of electoral process by the incumbent influence on elected individuals in Edo State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were listed to addresses main idea of the study.

1) There is no significant relationship between political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State.
2) There is no significant relationship between the incumbent and influence of electoral process in Edo State.
3) There is no significant relationship between manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent influence on elected individuals in Edo State.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

According to Greene (2018), the incumbent has an effect on the electoral process that is dependent on the parties' government status. This may include a wide range of subjects that allow incumbent parties to appeal to a large coalition of followers, giving them an advantage in being voted into public office at the expense of the opposition. However, incumbent policy reputations and the broader information known about governing parties' priorities limit the problems that parties can use to generate voter support.

Van Baalen (2023) established that voting incentives throughout violence-affected localities can be affected by the incumbent's current electoral support in the communities surrounding power rule, and that voters are less resilient to electoral violence in districts where the incumbent is stronger than in districts where the opposition is stronger.

Rauschenbach and Paula (2019) find that voters have fewer strategic incentives to vote in areas where the incumbent have stronger influence. In unincorporated electoral democracies, incumbents benefit from centralized state control and thus control the economic, coercive, and institutional means to stack the electoral cards in a direction that is beneficial to them. Incumbents can therefore be confident that

their electoral success will translate into political power. The higher probability of the incumbent's preferential victory in constituencies dominated by the incumbent means that a single vote is unlikely to change the outcome of local elections. Voters – both opposition and government supporters – should therefore be less resilient in the face of electoral violence and more likely to abstain to avoid voting in ways that are dangerous and ultimately meaningless.

Thus, Greene (2020) contends that while incumbent agencies may diversify their platforms in response to adverse economic conditions with respect to elections, the results point to a more centralized policy platform for the majority. Even after accounting for the economy's endogenous impacts, it appears that incumbents always profit. A hazy political message reduces the effectiveness of party campaigns and reduces voter support for incumbent parties.

Electoral Process

Elections across the globe perform the key function of choosing representatives or leaders based on the choice of the electorates and therefore an important element of democratic governance (Boix & Stokes, 2003). Nkwede (2016) posits that the Electoral process is the method by which elections are conducted and persons are elected into public office. Reynolds, et al (2005) note that an electoral system must translate the votes cast in a general election into seats won by parties and candidates. The above therefore underscores the centrality of the electoral process in democratic governance.

Elekwa (2008) argues that the electoral process relates to the entire cycle ranging from the provision of voter education to the dissolution of the National Assembly. It refers to all the pre and post-election activities without which an election is meaningless. The process includes the registration of political parties, review of voters' register, delineation of constituencies, resolution of electoral disputes, return of elected representatives, swearing elected representatives. The electoral process also includes the rules that guide the conduct of election, and important activities that make up an electoral process.

The electoral process therefore is central to democratic governance. This implies that when these processes are rebranded by making them more credible and less

cumbersome to the masses and other stakeholders by the electoral management bodies, the negative perceptions of the masses about the methods or procedures adopted in conducting elections will reduce (Ayo et al, 2015). Further, acceptance of the final outcome of elections which the masses had hitherto believed is not reflective of their mandate will be on the increase. The effect of this will be improved participation in the electoral process and the restoration of the confidence of the people in the sanctity and credibility of elections thereby reducing the incidences of vote buying and political apathy (Gberevbie, 2014; Agbu, 2016).

Political Will of the Incumbent

According to Anagol & Fujiwara (2016) incumbents may have the power to influence the electoral process due to more resources at his/her disposal to run better campaigns. It is reflected in campaign spending, and no convincing evidence; and second, use text analytics to review and compare the content of the digitized two-page candidate manifesto sent by the state to all registered voters. During electoral process the incumbent candidates' programs are more original, with program originality defined in relation to other candidates in the same party. This will power of the incumbent displays effective communication strategies which are more personalized and more aligned with voters' preferences than other contesting candidate.

According to Granzier et al. (2022), incumbents are 33 percentage points more likely than their nearest challenger to run again in the next election, and they face (on average) 0.43 less opponents, competitors that match their inclination. The victory of a candidate increases his chances of winning the next election by 25.1%, during the election. After assessing the incumbent president's credentials and achievements, the people will determine whether to re-elect him in the next election (Duch & Stevenson, 2008). Elections, according to this thesis, are an excellent approach to support the process of selecting competent leaders (Ashworth, 2005; Padró et al., 2006).

A campaign in which the incumbent spent all of the money received a score of 1.00; complete parity between the two candidates received a score of 0.00; and a campaign in which the challenger spent all of the money received a score of 1.00

(Long, 2018). To put it another way, the smaller the number, the less of a spending advantage of the incumbents, according to statistics, the incumbent spending advantage in elections without a controversy was 0.50, but it was 0.30 in elections (Long, 2018). This difference was statistically significant, according to an independent-incumbent when affirmed that there is scandals which is directed towards the spending in favor of challengers.

Stone et al., (2019) found a bivariate relationship between the mean informant rating of incumbent prospects and the vote share the incumbent's party received in the fall election. It is clear from their study that prospects are far from perfectly related to vote share. Indeed, only about 32% of the variance in vote share is accounted for by prospects incumbent. One possible explanation for the error is that prospects is measured as well in advance of the election itself, and much can change between the point in the cycle that may not be inclusive informant judgments and Election.

The Incumbent Governor's Influence on Political Process

Street clashes that have characterized elections in Nigeria are connected with retention of incumbent seats. With state in turmoil, lives are wasted and the country's stability jeopardized. Too much influence of the incumbent governor makes elections to be incredible and unfair. Thus, elections that incumbent governor is interested in turn out to be chaotic. Incumbent governor create crisis, if his anointed candidate or his party is defeated with a very narrow margin. According to Oguntoye (2018), the idea of inconclusive election during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun state indirectly was a reflection of the desperation of incumbent governor to retain his party of the state control after his tenure. Also, it was reported that the Osun state former Governor, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola deployed the state apparatus to give more voting chance to the APC during the bye-election. It was alleged that those that were allowed entry into the seven polling centers, where the by-election was held either came in with "a specified hand band or handkerchief tied to their heads", which were ostensibly given out by the ruling All Progressive Congress. It was alleged that political thugs chased away any voter who came in to any of the seven polling centers for the bye election against the 'dress code', in the full glare of the state security agents ostensibly on the instruction of the then governor. On the long run, the APC won the bye-

election which was the deciding vote. In Rivers state, during the 2015 gubernatorial election, the state recorded significant fatalities related to retention of incumbent seat. According to the report of the Commission of Inquiry instituted by Governor there was an average of 19 killings per month between November 2014 and April 2015, the six-month period before the election. Too much desperation of the incumbent governor to win election for himself strains the state security. A serving governor might be reckless in spending the security votes against what it is originally meant for. Reckless use of security is possible since security votes of a governor are funds meant for discretionary spending on public safety measures at the state and local government.

Since nobody audits the expenditures of security votes, most incumbent governors embezzle the money by diverting it to fund second term election. When this is done, security in the state suffers. In most cases as well, some state governors put up, fund and control security organizations of their own to foment trouble, realize second term ambition or continuity of political party in the state. For instance, Sorkaa (2014) reported that the "state boys" were allegedly put in place by Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola in Osun state to support his second term. Also, Nyesom Wike of Rivers state also inaugurated "Rivers State Neighbourhood Safety Corps Agency" in March 2018, which federal government described as illegal security outfit and clamped down upon. It was alleged that Wike used the security outfit in mention to realize his second term ambition. The Independent National Electoral Commission had to suspend Rivers state gubernatorial bye-election in the state capital, Port Harcourt, indefinitely following widespread disruption by thugs. In addition, incumbent governor induces security forces in his favour. It also breeds impunity because troublemakers sponsored by incumbent governors are rarely punished. Incumbent governors sometimes feel threatened by the acceptance of their rivals. This accounts for why serving governors deploy security forces or thugs against their rivals. During voting, the governor's thugs invade polling centers to either snatch voting materials or intimidate voters. Desperation of incumbent governors to win election makes them to sabotage and disrupt security arrangements in opponent's strongholds.

Manipulation of Electoral Process by the Incumbent

Kolawole and Humanus (2021) argue that the assumption that incumbent political leaders act in ways that increase their chances of reelection and advance their political careers is central to the representative approach key to explaining the behavior of politicians and voters. Many economic assessments have focused on the many possible causes of this situation. To persuade voters to support their re-election bid, incumbents can, for example, influence tax and spending policy or monetary policy, using their office to sell benefits, political favors in exchange for campaign contributions or voting on legislation in a way that reflects their views, the ideological makeup or economic interests of their constituents. In turn, only the incumbent can choose the actions of an elected official; by definition, any non-incumbent candidate cannot. If the incumbent president's actions are partly aimed at winning voter support, then winning an election and thereby becoming the incumbent president will have a positive causal effect in the form of reduces the probability of being elected in the next election.

The outgoing governors were found guilty of illegally using public funds to bribe election officials and voters to achieve their ambitions of winning a second term. According to Ondotimi (2008), money helps win political elections. With this belief, incumbent state governors want to commit huge public resources to achieve their ambitions. From primaries to general elections, incumbent governors commit massive public resources to buy delegates/voters to their side. According to Mahmoud (2018), the incumbent governors used their power to manipulate the primaries in their favor. With enormous power and resources, executive and party leaders are manipulated by incumbent governors to also work for them.

Furthermore, to achieve their second-term ambitions, incumbent governors resort to thugs who threaten, injure and kill their real or perceived opponents. Although Senator Kola Balogun won the Oyo South senatorial seat against the incumbent Oyo State Governor, Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi, in the February 23, 2019 election, the victory was marred by violence. The force was ostensibly orchestrated by the outgoing governor at the time. The victory of the incumbent Imo State Governor, Senator Rochas Okorocha, in the Senate has sparked controversy. It is alleged that the senator cheated his way and his claim of victory was being forced. Allegations of massive electoral fraud were initially confirmed by the Independent

Electoral Commission and delayed the issuance of his return certificate and swearing-in ceremony by the electoral regulator.

Furthermore, the current governors are using the political party to achieve their selfish ambition of winning a second term. Taking advantage of every opportunity, incumbent governors seek to sabotage the election process to serve their personal interests. Most governors, at the end of their first term, often show undemocratic authoritarian tendencies in their internal party affairs. The failure of most political parties to ensure intra-party democracy and respect for their constitutional provisions is due, more than any other factor, to the undue influence of political parties, incumbent state governor. It is rare to see a sitting governor not interested in a second term. As a result, incumbent governors desire automatic re-election and thus influence the primary election process in their favor. Such desperate thinking often leads to internal party crises, political divisions and post-election disputes.

Overview of Elections in Nigeria: A Brief

Colonial Era (1900-1959)

The city of Lagos was first annexed by the British in 1861, and by 1900 the British had extended their control to the entire northern and southern protectorates. These protectorates were amalgamated to form Nigeria in 1914. The elective principle was first introduced in colonial Nigeria in May 1919, when the Township Ordinance introduced voting rights within the country. The first elections to the Lagos Town Council were held on 29 March 1920.

General elections were held in Nigeria for the first time on 20 September 1923 under the Clifford Constitution of 1922. The Constitution introduced the first elective rights in Nigeria, which allowed Nigerians who carried at least *E*100,had been resident in Lagos or Calabar for at least a year, and were above 21 to vote. The introduction of the elective principle led to the formation of the first political party in Nigeria called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), following the introduction of the elective principle in Nigeria, Africans were elected into the legislative council. "There were four elected seats -three for Lagos, and one for Calabar. Members of the legislative council served five-year terms, which means that legislative council elections occurred every five years from 1923.During the

first election in 1923. The NNDP won three of the four elected seats in the Legislative Council Five years later, general elections were held in Nigeria on 28 September 1928. These elections were held to elect members of the legislative council. The NNDP again won three of the four elected seats in the legislative council."

Another legislative council election was held in Nigeria in 1933.Four candidates contested the three Lagos seats, of which three were members of NNDP.

On 21 October 1938, the next Legislative Council election was held in Nigeria. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) won three of the four elected seats in the Legislative Council, defeating the NNDP, the dominant party at the time in 1940 and 1941, by-elections were held to fill the vacancies due to the death and resignation of two members of the council.

Partial general elections were held in Nigeria in 1943, with only two of the four elected seats available. Rather than conduct fresh elections into all the four seats, elections were held for the two seats whose members had served their full five-year terms since 1942.

Legislative council elections were held again in 1947 with a reduction in the income requirement to be eligible to vote. The 1947 elections were the first elections to be conducted under Richard's Constitution of 1946. The Constitution reduced the annual income qualification for voters from £100 to ESO.

The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 succeeded the Richard Constitution of 1946.The Macpherson Constitution extended the elective principle of the Clifford Constitution in its provisions for a House of Representatives and Regional House of Assembly for the northern, western, eastern regions. “It also removed the minimum income qualification for voting, allowing all those who had paid taxes somewhere in Nigeria within the year preceding the election to vote. The Western Region House of Assembly elections held in 1951 with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) winning a parliamentary majority in the Western House of Assembly (Gjuma, 1953).

General elections were held again between October and December 1954, under the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. The Lyttleton Constitution extended voting rights to women in the Eastern and Southern regions alone. The Norther People's Congress (NPC) emerged as the largest party, winning 84 of the 184 seats. However, the NPC only won seats in the Norther Region, while the NCNC won the most seats in the Eastern and Western Regions.

On 12 December 1959, the final elections in colonial Nigeria were held. The 1959 general elections were a major milestone in the independence of Nigeria from colonial rule." One significant clement in the 1959 election was the participation of key regional politicians, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, erstwhile premiers of the Eastern and Western regions respectively."

Post-Colonial Era: First Republic (1960-1966)

Following Nigeria's independence on 1 October 1960, the country became a republic in 1963.Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, who had been the Governor-General, became the country's first President. The 1964/1965 parliamentary elections were the first election held in Nigeran post-independence. The date for the election was 30 December 1964, although it was not held until 18 March 1965 in some constituencies in Lagos and the Eastern and Mid-Western Regions due to a boycott in December. In an attempt to gain political control. The election saw most political parties run as part of alliances. The boycott did not stop the conduct of the elections, and in March 1965 supplementary elections were held in those areas where the boycott had been honoured.

The result was a victory for the Northern People's Congress, which won 162 of the 312seats in the House of Representatives." Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was also re-elected prime Minister of Nigeria, a position he had retained since Nigeria's independence.

However, the military coup of January 1966 led by Major General Aguiyi Ironsi brought about the untimely of the First Republic. This coup triggered a series of further coups which led to the emergence of General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed. And Major General Olusegun Obasanjo as Heads of State at different time periods.

Second Republic (1979-1983)

Following thirteen years of military rule, Nigeria returned to democracy in 1979 under the Obasanjo administration. The first elections under the 1979 Constitution were held on schedule in July and August 1979.This Constitution granted universal suffrage in Nigeria. Reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 and extending voting rights to women across the country. The elections ushered in a democratically elected government and the military government handed over power to a new civilian government under President Shehu Shagari on October 1.1979,19 years after the country gained independence."

The 1979 general elections also included parliamentary elections, to elect a Senate and House of Representatives, Members of both houses were elected using the single-member plurality electoral system. Each State was divided into five districts, each of which elected a Senator. Each State was also allocated a number of seats in the House of Representatives used on its proportion of the population.25

The 1983 general elections were the second in the preceding 13 years of military rule ended in 1979." During the elections, the incumbent Shehu Shagari won a second term, while the National Party of Nigeria won majority seats in both houses of Assembly.?

However, the Second Republic was again brought to an end when a military coup led by Major General Muhammad Buhari in 1983 brought about the return of military rule in Nigeria, with General Ibrahim Babangida later becoming Head of State in 1985.

Third Republic (1992-1993)

The Babangida administration made an attempt to return to democracy. The1989 Constitution was drafted, and parliamentary elections held in 1992-these would be the first elections held since the military comp of 1983.Only two parties were allowed to contest the elections-the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the National Republican Convention (NRC). The elections resulted in a victory for the SDP, which won 52 of the 91 Senate seats and 314 of the 593 House seats, despite the NRC winning more votes".

Presidential elections were held in 12 June 1993.In a bid to hand over power to a civilian government, he Presidential Election (Basic Constitutional and Transitional) Decree No.13 of 1993 was promulgated to usher in a democratically elected President!" The SDP and the NRC were also the only two political parties that contested the 1993 presidential election. However, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) at that time refused to announce election results despite several court orders.2

The annulment of the elections resulted in series of protests and strikes in the South-Western region." In the aftermath of the election, the government shut down media houses and arrested journalists. The government issued decrees preventing court cases on the annulled election and NEC's activities were terminated. Notably, the June 1993 elections can be described as one of the most contentious elections in the history of Nigeria's democratic governance."

Following the annulment of the election, General Babangida resigned from office, and an Interim National Government led by Chief Ernest Shonekan came into power However, Shonekan was only in office for about three months, because mother military coup led by General Sani Abacha occurred in November 1993, thus truncating the Third Republic abruptly. The bicameral Parliament which had been elected in 1992 was dissolved," and Nigeria returned to military rule.

Under Abacha's administration, there were some elections. The 1997 local government council elections held on a party basis, which were intended to fill 774 council chairmanships and 8.184 ward council seats. However, the elections were marred with irregularities.

Parliamentary elections were held in Nigeria on 25 April 1998. All parties running in the election were affiliated with the military regime, with all opposition parties banned. Voter turnout was very low, the election results were again annulled by the government.

Following Abacha's death in 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar became Head of State and he ushered Nigeria's final return to democracy.

Fourth Republic (1999-date)

The 1999 election under the Fourth Republic was a major milestone in the democracy of Nigeria, as it led to the emergence of over two decades of civilian rule in the country. The elections were conducted under the newly enacted 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. The election was won by Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party, who defeated Olu Falae, who was running on a joint Alliance for Democracy-All People's Party ticket. Obasanjo was elected on a four-year term. Though the election was marred by irregularities, the election was relatively peaceful.

Four years later, presidential elections were held in Nigeria on 19 April 2003, with the incumbent Olusegun Obasanjo winning the elections. The outcome of the elections as described by both local and international observers was fraudulent. The election witnessed gross electoral malpractices and several incidents of violence.

The 1999 Constitution and the 2006 Electoral Act provided the legal framework for Nigeria's 2007 elections. These were the third general elections conducted since the end of military rule in 1999.Elections were conducted at both national and state level with the PDP candidate Umar Ya'Adua declared winner of the presidential election.27

In the build-up to the elections, the political environment was tense, with several incidents of violence such as assassinations of candidates for party nominations and for the general elections; armed attacks against campaign meetings and rallies; threats against potential voters to influence their choice at the ballot box; and attacks against polling stations polling officials and rival party agents. According to reports, the 2007 elections resulted in numerous casualties. Even the winner of the election, President Yar'adua, recognized that there were irregularities in the election. This led to the constitution of the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) led by Justice Uwais to provide recommendations to improve the electoral system of the country.

On the recommendation of the ERC, the 2006 Electoral Act was amended by the enactment of the 2010 Electoral Act. The Act was intended to address the lapses in

the 2006 Electoral Act, as well as to ensure transparency in the process and boost public confidence in INEC For instance, the Act reduced INEC's financial dependency on the executive branch and as a result, increased the institution's overall independence. Also, the 2010 Electoral Act placed a cap on how much money could be legally spent on individual campaigns.

Despite changes to the electoral framework, the 2011 general elections in Nigeria were held in a very tense environment. The election was originally scheduled to be held on 2 April; however elections were postponed due to logistical problems as stated by the INEC Chairman," The ruling party. People's Democratic Party, ran against the Action Congress of Nigeria and the Congress for Progressive Change, amongst others. The pre-election environment witnessed unprecedented forms of violence such as riots, bombings and assassinations resulting the loss of lives and properties." Human Right Watch report that the pre-election violence claimed at least 70 lives.

Although the actual election was alleged to be more credible and transparent compared to the previous elections held in 2007, the election was not without its flaws such as vote rigging, ballot stuffing snatching. "The declaration of the incumbent as the winner of the2011 presidential elections led to violent protests and riots especially in the northern parts of Nigeria who were ardent supports of the opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari.

The International Republican Institute explains that in Kano, Kaduna, and 10 other northern states, heavy violence broke out between supporters of the two candidates. And between Christians and Muslims. “According to Haman Rights Watch, the violence that occurred between the April 16 presidential election and the April 26 state elections resulted in more than 800 persons dead, thousands injured, about 65,000 persons dasplaced.as well as properties damaged and destroyed due to arson and vandalism."

Following the outcome of the 2011 elections, the increased activities of Boko Haram in the north, allegations of marginalization, high rate of unemployment, widespread corruption, fragmentation within the major parties among others, contributed to rising tensions in the country. This was the contest in which the

2015 elections were conducted in the country. "The election was described as the most highly competitive elections held in the history of elections in the country. Although 14 candidates contested the elections, the real contest was between the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC)."

Despite the threats of violence by the Boko Haram sect and the tease political environment in the build-up to the election, voting proceeded smoothly on Election Day with minimal violence or disruptions. In addition, the introduction of smart card readers by the electoral commission to a large extent impacted positively on the outcome of election to curb election rigging."

The 2015 election was arguably the most credible election in the history of elections in Nigeria. For the fast time, an opposition and date won the presidential election against the incumbent. This significant act guide Nigeria accolades from bath local and International communities. Despite the peaceful conduct of the elections and the introduction of technology, the elections were not without its hatches, such as the late arrival of election materials in some polling units across the country and failure of smart card readers."

General elections were again scheduled to take place in Nigeria on February 16,.2019,four years after the 2015 elections. These elections were held to elect the President, Vice-President, and members of the National Assembly. These elections were expected to be the sixth elections since the country's transition to democratic governance in 1999.

However, a few hours before the polls were scheduled to open. The elections were postponed from the original date to Saturday, February 23, 2019."This was the third time in a row that general elections were being postponed in the country. The Chairman of INEC stated logistical problems as the reason for the postponement of the elections, which raised a lot of questions in the minds of members of the public as to the independence and transparency of the Commission." The postponement of the elections resulted in several allegations that there was a ploy by the ruling party to rig the elections in their favour. The opposition candidate Atiku Abubakar, a former Vice President, posed strong

competition for the incumbent. Following the outcome of the 2015 elections and the significant Improvement in the electoral process, the 2019 elections had high expectations to be better than the previous elections.

However, going by public opinions and election observers' reports, the 201 general elections fell below expectations and Nigerians were dissatisfied with the management of the elections by INEC and the overall outcome of the election. The election was marred by low voter turnout, violence, electoral malpractice alleged party affiliations by security operatives, and rejection of election result by the opposition party.

The announcement of the election results declaring the incumbent President Buhari as the winner raised a lot of controversies causing political candidates including the apposition presidential candidate to challenge election results in the courts. The 2019 election recorded several cases of nullification of election results by the courts forcing the electoral commission in some instance conduct fresh palls or a rerun." Despite the contention of the presidential election result by the opposition on grounds of electoral malpractices, the victory of the incumbent was reaffirmed by the courts.

Having briefly discussed the history of elections in Nigeria from the colonial to the post-colonial era, the table below outlines the elections held in Nigeria since 1920 including the legislative frameworks regulating elections in each dispensation.

Theoretical Framework

The Governance Theory is prominent in the works of Rosenau, 1992, and Archer (1994),. Governance became a prominent policy tool in the early 1990s following the demise of the Cold War in 1989. Stoker (1998) has linked Governance to a call for a new way of governing by the key actors at the International Community, especially the donor agencies as a result of their dissatisfaction with the inefficiency and illegitimacy in resource allocation and utilization by many sovereign nations most of whom are in the developing democracies.

The inefficiency and illegitimacy have been linked with lack of inclusiveness of other critical stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation. Governance

is therefore opposed to the old bureaucratic way of government and recognises the importance of collaboration of all the stakeholders in the polity including the private sector, the Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, and other sectors in service delivery of government (Archer, 1994; Ikeanyibe, 2016). It blurs the boundaries within and between public and other sectors – profit and non-profit (Ikeanyibe, Ogbonna & Okoye, 2017), and reconfigures the role of the public sector through citizen participation and network governance.

The governance paradigm therefore envisages that the people be involved in driving the process of governance as a collective action and not just a policy emanating from the government and its agencies. For instance the theory envisages collaboration between INEC and the people in institutionalizing free and fair election and not for them to be divorced or alienated from the whole process. However, as Massuh (1998) has evidently argued, the quality of participation of the masses in governance as envisaged by the governance theorists depends on the level of political, social and economic empowerment of the citizenry as well as the information available to them. The governance theory could be effective in addressing and inspiring unhindered participation in governance in developed democracies of USA and Europe with high level of literacy and social welfare where majority of the citizenry are actively engaged in governance in terms of policy formulation and implementation.

However, in the Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria inclusive), where the level of literacy is low with poverty ravaging the greater percentage of the populace, governance theory will have limited applicability. Modern governance has assumed a lot of complexities and rationality both in terms of decision making and implementation. Accordingly only a well informed and educated citizenry can be trusted to play the active role in governance as expected of them under the governance paradigm (Gberevbie, et al, 2014; Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015).

However, in spite of the limitations of the Governance theory, it still remains a more benevolent theory compared to the Elites theory in so far as it considers the needs and expectations of the masses in policy formulation and implementation, even though this is accomplished through their elected representatives. Nigeria has for long been in constant search for effective electoral processes, as an integral

part of its transition to democracy (Jega, 2015). A long history of badly or poorly conducted elections has, until recently, created profound scepticism amongst ordinary Nigerians about the utility of electoral democracy (Jega, 2015).

In Nigeria since independence in 1960 the electoral process has been bedeviled by a culture of electoral malpractices and violence. Since Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999, the superintending EMB has been the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). INEC has conducted six elections viz 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections. The mission of INEC is to serve as an independent and effective electoral management body committed to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections for sustainable democracy in Nigeria (INEC, 2014). Its presence has been established in the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, as well as the 774 Local Government Areas of Nigeria.

Electoral processes in the developed democracies of the United States of America (USA) and Europe are not issues that revolve just around providing polling units and boxes where people can vote in an election. It is a process that offers the majority of the electorates the platform to determine through a transparent electoral process who governs those (Reynolds et al, 2005). Branding and rebranding of the electoral process in these nations have been elevated to an art where even such issues like voter education, voter perception of the candidates at election, Logos of Political parties and those of candidates during elections and the power to recall elected officials are issues considered serious and given due attention to within the electoral process (Arnon, 2008; Marland, 2013).

Methodology

A good research work should be carried out with well-defined method and this research work is not an exception. The methodology that will be employed for the research is a function of the research, purpose of the research and other variables. In other words, the method adopted for a particular research depends on the data and material available for accomplishing the research. This study adopts the survey research design which was employed in this study. The design was adopted because of the relative small sample size needed to effectively carryout this research. It entails studying the impact of incumbent on electoral process in Nigeria: A case study of Edo State Local Government Election: A case study of Edo

State with an examination of nine years democratic regime from 2010 – 2023, through the use of structured questionnaires to elicit information from the selected sample.

The study population covers all Edo Residents, particularly those in the three senatorial districts (Edo south (1,313,961), Edo Central (661810) and Edo north (955,791) in Edo State (NPC, 2023). The total population selected from three senatorial districts, was (1,930,804), the population covered 18 local government areas as represented in the senatorial distracts.

Given the population of 2,637,581 in Edo State, which is made up of three senatorial districts as selected in the above table: A sample of 250 is selected from the population. As a result, two hundred and fifty copies of questionnaires would be administered across the senatorial districts using purposive and simple random technique with emphasis local-state government relations and issues of local government autonomy in Nigeria: A case study of Edo State. Samples were drawn from three senatorial districts as mentioned above based on the sample 105 respondent in Edo south, 95 respondent' Edo Central and 50 respondent Edo north

The data collected, was analysed based on research questions in chapter one, using descriptive statistics such as the hypotheses was tested using Pearson correlation statistical tools. All the null hypotheses will be tested at $P<0.05$ level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

Using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation in Analyzing Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State.

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation on political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State.

Variables	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Political will Power	250	0.620	0.0029
Election in public office			

$\alpha = 0.05$

The table above revealed that Pearson's r value of 0.620 with p-value of 0.0029 at two tailed test. The result revealed that that there is no significant relationship between political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State. The coefficient, r = 0.620 implies that a unit political will power will bring about the election in public office by the incumbents. The coefficient, does not specify a causal relationship between variables, it could be the other way round.

However, the p-value of 0.0029 is less than the alpha level of significance of 0.05 and implies that there is a statistical significance relationship between variables under study. That is 0.0029 < 0.05 i.e. at 5% level of significance, we therefore accept the null hypothesis that there is significant relationship between political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State.

Using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation in Analyzing Hypothesis 2
Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the incumbent and influence of electoral process in Edo State.
Table 2: Pearson's Correlation on the incumbent and influence of electoral process

Variables	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
The incumbent Influence of electoral process	250	0.0234	0.562

$\alpha = 0.05$

The table above revealed that Pearson's r value of 0234 with p-value of 0.562 at two tailed test. The result revealed that that there is no significant relationship between the incumbent and influence of electoral process in Edo State. The coefficient, r = 0.0234 implies that a unit the incumbent will bring influence of electoral process. The coefficient, r, does not specify a causal relationship between variables, it could be the other way round.

However, the p-value of 0.0562 is less than the alpha level of significance of 0.05 and implies that there is no statistical significance relationship between variables under study. That 0.0562 < 0.05 i.e. at 5% level of significance, we therefore reject

the null hypothesis that states that there is significant relationship between the incumbent and influence of electoral process in Edo State.

Using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation in Analyzing Hypothesis 3
Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent influence and elected individuals in Edo State.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation on manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent influence and elected individuals

Variables	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Manipulation of electoral process Elected individuals	250	0.843	0.0002

$\alpha = 0.05$

The table above revealed that Pearson's r value of 0.843 with p-value of 0.0002 at two tailed test. The result revealed that that there is no significant relationship between manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent influence and elected individuals in Edo State. The coefficient, r = 0.843 implies that a unit increase in Manipulation of electoral process will promote elected individuals. The coefficient, r, does not specify a causal relationship between variables, it could be the other way round.

However, the p-value of 0.0002 is less than the alpha level of significance of 0.05 and implies that there is a statistical significance relationship between variables under study. That 0.0002 < 0.05 i.e. at 5% level of significance, we therefore accept the null hypothesis that states that there significant relationship between manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent influence and elected individuals in Edo State.

Conclusion

Based the findings of this paper, on the impact of incumbent on electoral process in Nigeria: A case study of Edo State Local Government Election, the following conclusions were made

1) There is significant relationship between political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State. This goes to say that electorates have just limited ability to influence government policy with respect to an election. Most elections do not directly establish public policy, but rather confer authority on a limited group of officials to enact policy (by legislation and other means) on behalf of the people as a whole.
2) There is significant relationship between the incumbent and influence of electoral process in Edo State. similarly, the incumbents has the authority and influence the electoral process towards their benefit undermining their performance
3) There is significant relationship between manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent influence and elected individuals in Edo State. in Nigeria and particularly Edo State the incumbents uses the office to control the direction of elected official into public office by various means that contradict electoral process and law.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were made;
The national and state electoral commission should wakeup to their responsibility as to checkmate political will of incumbents as it can have negative influence in the choice of elected public office. The federal government should set body that could monitor the excesses the incumbent effect on electoral process in Edo State. similarly, the incumbents has the authority and influence the electoral process towards their benefit undermining their performance

The government should bring to book anyone who serve as obstacle or find manipulating the electoral process by face the wrath of the law, no matter the position of such persons.

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APPENDIX

SECTION I

	IEMS	Responses			
	Does the incumbent have strong political will for election of public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State?	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**
1.	The incumbent uses political will for party interest to dominate electoral process				
2.	The incumbent uses political will for personal game at the expense of other candidate for election				
3.	The incumbent uses political will to set security on the interest of their party				
4.	The incumbent uses political will to organize materials and human instrument for the electoral process				
5.	The incumbent uses political will for convincing the electorate to vote the incumbent's candidate				

SECTION II

	ITEMS	Responses			
	How does the incumbent influence in electoral process in Edo State?	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**
1.	The incumbent influence in electoral process through delay in electoral material during election				
2.	The incumbent influence in electoral process through policy implication				
3.	The incumbent influence in electoral process can set some kind of hindrance to other party contestants				
4.	The incumbent influence in electoral process through the use of the media				
5.	The incumbent influence in electoral process through frequent adverts				

ECTION III

	ITEMS	**Responses**			
	Will manipulation of electoral process by the incumbent influence elected individuals in Edo State?	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**
1.	Through electoral malpractice				
2.	Use of dubious means to get electoral benefit				
3.	Display of greed and self-interest at the detriment of the populace				
4.	Financial inducement during electoral process				
5.	Disenfranchisement of some voters				

Appendix

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation on political will and election in public office within his jurisdiction in Edo State.

Variables	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
political will Power Election in public office	250	0.620	0.0029

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation on the incumbent and influence of electoral process

Variables	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
The incumbent Influence of electoral process	250	0.0234	0.562

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation on manipulation of electoral process and the incumbent influence and elected individuals

Variables	N	Pearson's r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Manipulation of electoral process Elected individuals	250	0.843	0.0002

$\alpha = 0.05$