
SOCIO-CULTURAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AFFECTING FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Nsidibe A. Usoro and Victor E. Ben
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Uyo, Uyo
Ussh0074@gmail.com,

Abstract

One of the challenges facing political gladiators and other stakeholders in Nigeria's political space is the management of 2019 post-elections crisis and the adoption of appropriate strategy to put up with the next one in 2023. Always, Nigerians at home and in the diaspora clamour for free, fair and credible, and transparent elections. This is because if Nigeria gets it right in her general elections, it will deepen her democracy and embolden collective faith in one Nigeria. The study thus, investigated the socio-cultural and demographic factors that affect free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria. It was guided by the theoretical ideas of differential association and structural functionalism. The data used in the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. In-depth interviews, key informants investigation, and focus group discussion were used for primary data collection. Extant literature from books, secondary elaboration technique and other secondary sources provided the secondary data. Findings showed a burly effect of a wide range of socio-cultural and demographic factors on a free, fair and credible, and transparent elections in Nigeria. It also found that consistent insecurity, looming threat of violence in elections, difficulties in the distribution of permanent voters card, voter education and illiteracy that characterize electioneering processes in Nigeria are always driven by social (how the electorate organize themselves for the candidates and elections), cultural (community beliefs and values for elections) and demographic (age sex and affiliation) factors. The paper recommends among other things, an electoral bill that will accommodate ethical considerations in electoral matters.

Key Words: *Socio-cultural, demographic factors, free and fair elections*

Introduction

The concern about solving the numerous problems that characterize the Nigerian State has inspired the desire to investigate the issue of free and fair elections in the country. Luckily, Nigeria returned fully to a democratic system of government in 1999 after several aborted efforts since independence in 1960, with all hopes to having a free and fair elections that would always produce people with acceptable qualities and conducts to lead the country and represent the electorates in government. The hope and expectation was borne out of the terrible experiences of the military era associated with high corruption, human rights abuse, distortion of the constitution and civil unrests. However, upon the enthronement of the democratic system in 1999, nothing seemed to have really changed.

Nigeria as the most populated African country and the 7th most populated in the world (Akpan, 2020) which has claims over unquantifiable material resources, continues to lag behind many other countries in terms of human development, rate of unemployment and underemployment, poverty, health infrastructure and services, among others (Ben, 2020). A cursory study of the Nigerian society indicates that corruption has skyrocketed and the country is inundated with numerous problems such as youth restiveness, women and child rights violation, pollution, improper wastes disposal and ethno-religious sentiment. The resulting crisis include various crimes such as stealing, advanced fee fraud (419) and cyber fraud (yahoo yahoo business), kidnapping, child and drug trafficking, illegal migration, oil bunkering, and arm trading, environmental degradation and climate change (Ben, 2020). The enumerated problem as explained in many literature are products of a dysfunctional political and economic system.

It is common in Nigeria as in many other developing countries that victory in every election is challenged at

the election petition tribunal and the courts. Some public office holders that emerge from contestable and even non-contestable election results in these countries most often are accused of corrupt practices during their tenure in office. Apparently, in Nigeria the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Offences Commission (ICPC) to handle issues related to corruption, fraud and public accountability signifies the awareness of the inevitability of corrupt practices among government functionaries and the attempt to check the rate using legal processes. This observation apparently does not only call to question the degree of freeness and fairness of the electoral processes that brought some leaders into power but inspired an investigation of the social, cultural and demographic factors that affect free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Overview of Elections in Nigeria

Politics in Nigeria as in Africa is majorly a means of wealth distribution and a critical vehicle for distribution of power and control of governance. According to Adibe (2018), political power is not only a major instrument of wealth accumulation but it also places one in a vantage position to take decisions. As the American political scientist. Lasswell (1936) puts it, the question of who gets what, when and how, is effectively answered by prevailing political arrangements. Because of the centrality of power in fragile and polarized states like Nigeria, the struggle for it, could be anarchic, with the constituent nationalities often believing that winning power is a prerequisite for redressing their perceived injustices while fearing that if another nationality is allowed to win it, that nationality will use it to privilege its own primordial groups or to punish and disadvantage the others.

Election is the process of voting candidates into political offices by electorates. Elections are central features of true democracy. For elections to express the will of the electorate, they must be free and fair. The process by which the votes of the people are gathered and counted is critical to the government's claims of legitimacy, and to the continued faith of the people in their government. While vote counting sounds simple, ensuring the accurate counting of votes in the whole country has in many cases been a serious problem. Many obstacles can obstruct the democratic process including inadequate access to the voting process, inaccurate counting, late results, and results that are not convincing to the electorate. Some of these obstacles are in part due to structural factors, human error while others result from intentional manipulation and intimidation. The computer technology which seems to offer the promise of increased speed and accuracy of collation and counting votes accompanied by the possibility of decreased costs, offer new challenges to the legitimacy of the voting process, including high-tech fraud (Anonymous, No date) in elections.

The elective principles embedded in the Clifford Constitution of 1922 set the pace for future elections in Nigeria. This constitution provided the legal framework for the conduct of the first elections which took place in September 1923, with Herbert Macaulay's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) winning the three seats for the Lagos Legislative Council and the Calabar Improvement League winning the lone seat for Calabar (Adibe, 2018). The Richards Constitution of 1946 widened the political space and expanded the electoral map of the country when it established a central legislature for the country, with four of the 24 members to be elected into the central legislature and three from Lagos and one from Calabar (Sklar, 2004). The political space was further widened with the introduction of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 and the Oliver Lyttleton Constitution of 1954.

In 1958, the Nigerian electoral provisions order-in-council- one of the outcomes of the 1957/58

Constitutional Conference, provided for the appointment of an electoral commission by the Governor General from amongst persons of neutral views. The task of the commission was defined as 'the general supervision of the preparation of a register of voters and the conduct of an election (Kurfi, 2005.)'. The 1959 election, was very significant in the democratic history of Nigeria, as it played a critical role of ushering the country into independence in 1960. This election was supervised by an electoral commission headed by a Briton, R.E. Wraith and another Briton, J.J Warren as the Executive Secretary. Four Nigerians who served in the commission included: Alhaji Mohammed Bello, Anthony Aniagolu, Prof Oritsejolomi and M. A. Shosilva representing the north, east, west and Lagos, respectively (Adibe, 2018).

History reveals that eight major political parties dominated the political space at that time. They include the Northern People's Congress (NPC), which was the dominant party in the Northern region, Action Group (AG) which was dominant in the Western region and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) in the Eastern region. Other parties were Democratic Party of Nigeria and the Cameroon (DPNC), Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Borno Youth Movement (BYM) and the United National Independence Party, UNIP.

Despite allegations of electoral malpractices against the 1959 elections, that election was still regarded as free and fair. Orji and Uzodi (2012) have in fact theorized that transition elections are relatively more peaceful than consolidation elections. On the heels of the above thesis Adibe (2018), asserts that the perception of the election as relatively 'free and fair' could be attributed mainly to a desire on the part of the Nigerian political class not to truncate the transition process, a pattern we also see in all the military to civilian transitions after independence (apart from the 1979 elections). In 1964, Nigeria conducted the first post-colonial elections nation-wide. It was largely a contest between two main political alliances –the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Grand Alliance. This was a litmus test for our integrity and capacity to prosecute and manage election matters. But as it turned out, there were several allegations of agencies of regional government conniving with the electoral officers to prevent opposition candidates from complying with the nomination process (Adibe, 2018). Permits for party meetings or processions were often denied opposition parties and assassination of opponents was not uncommon (Vanguard Editorial, October 18, 2013).

Following the crises and allegations of manipulation of the process, the 1964 elections were boycotted in several places on the polling day. The boycott of the elections was total in the eastern region and nearly so in Lagos. There were partial boycotts in both the West and Mid-West. However in the North voting went ahead; the only evidence of boycott was observed in two northern progressive fronts strongholds - Kano and Jos Sabon - Gari (Kurfi, 2005; Sklar, 2004). In the end, after serious horse trading, the 1964 elections returned the government of Tafawa Balewa and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) to a second term in office. The protests that followed the elections particularly in the western region degenerated into a violent exercise in competitive rigging (Kurfi, 2005; Sklar, 2004). The military regime led by General Obasanjo, supervised the 1979 election. The then, Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), registered five political parties. These were Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP).

Though Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the NPN was declared the winner, the outcome of the elections was

strongly disputed by the other parties, especially the UPN which felt it was a deliberate ploy by the military regime, FEDECO and the judiciary to enthrone the NPN in power (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985). In 1983, six political parties contested the general elections that took place that year. The 1983 elections threw up many contending issues and generated controversies, causing serious crises which led the military under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari to truncate the Second Republic and seize power from President Shehu Shagari.

Yet, in 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida did not only topple General Muhammadu Buhari's government but set up what was called 'Political Bureau' to articulate public opinions and advise it accordingly on measures to take to return the country to a civilian rule (Adibe, 2018). The Babangida's transition programme was very elaborate and was characteristically truncated several times by the same regime on flimsy excuses, leading to what many described as 'a transition to nowhere' (Agbese, 2012). Again, the Babangida government adopted a two party system for the country. These parties were the Social Democratic Party, which had Moshood Abiola as its presidential candidate and the National Republican Convention which had Alhaji Bashir Tofa as its flag bearer. The parties were known to have equal founders and equal joiners, with one a little to the left and the other a little to the right.

Both parties were funded by the government to checkmate undue political hegemony and influence by certain individuals or groups. Despite this, government still cancelled the election regarded as the fairest and freest in the history of country (Agbese, 2012). One of the innovations introduced by the Babangida regime was the adoption of the open ballot system, which replaced the secret ballot system in which voters were asked to simply queue behind the candidates of their choice or their posters or party symbols to signify their support for the candidate (Adibe, 2018). The innovation was called option. It implies a system for example in a presidential election where a presidential aspirant has to contest election from the ward, local government and state levels before getting to contest at the national level. Despite this attempt at transparency, the open ballot system created problems, especially in the rural areas where people were intimidated and harassed for openly supporting one candidate or the other. The system was consequently abandoned in favour of a return to the secret ballot system. It appeared that the innovations were not enough to guarantee the success of the 1993 elections as it was insufficient to forestall the annulment of the election (Kurfi, 2005).

When General Sani Abacha vacated office in June 1998 and General Abdulsalami Abubakar became the military head of state, he announced a transition programme with a promise to hand over power to a democratically elected government in May 29, 1999. Three political parties - the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission to contest the elections into every category of elective positions. The APP and AD contested the presidential elections on a joint ticket with Olu Falae of the AD and Umaru Shinkafi of APP as candidate and running mate, respectively while the PDP sponsored Olusegun Obasanjo with Atiku Abubakar as vice presidential running mate. Although there were hitches and complaints, the elections were generally described as free and fair in line with the trend in the country's transitions from military to civilian regimes (Ihonvbere, 1999).

The 2003 general elections, the first civilian-to-civilian transition since 1999, were condemned by local

and international observers. The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) for instance, held that the presidential and gubernatorial elections in some states fell short of international and regional standards and did not reflect the voting pattern of the Nigerian people (TMG, 2003). Their opinions however did not prevent the inauguration of Olusegun Obasanjo for a second term in office, thus, raising questions about whether the opinions of international observers really matter. In short, the 2003 elections were condemned for falling below international standards while those of 2007 were described as the worst in the history of elections in Nigeria. According to Human Rights Watch:

The polls marked a dramatic step backwards, even when measured against the dismal standard set by the 2003 election. Electoral officials alongside the very government agencies charged with ensuring the credibility of the polls were accused of reducing the elections to a violent and fraud ridden farce (Human Rights Watch: 2007).

Having admitted that the elections that brought him to power were less than perfect, the Umar Musa Yar'Adua administration set up an Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) as soon as it came to power in 2007 to examine the entire electoral process and recommend ways of reforming it. Though the 2011 presidential election was regarded as an improvement over that of 2007, it was not without problems with some questioning whether it was seen as free and fair because of the low bar of expectations set by Professor Maurice Iwu in 2007 (Adibe, 2015). Nonetheless, the outcome of the elections was challenged by Obasanjo's main rival General Muhammadu Buhari who insisted INEC colluded with the ruling PDP to rig him out (The Nation Editorial, May 9, 2011). The 2015 general election was the first time that political parties had to merge even though not in the form of a coalition, as a way of strengthening their chances of winning power. The two main parties were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which had a sitting President, Goodluck Jonathan as its candidate and the All Progressives Congress Mohammed Buhari, a former military dictator, as candidate. Another distinguishing feature of the election was that it was the first time in the country's democratic history that a sitting president would be defeated and he conceded defeat.

In the foregoing discussions, rigging has been cited as a major factor or hindrance to a free, fair and credible, transparent and clean elections in Nigeria. A prominent complement of this factor has been a collusion between elections conducting institution, the security operatives and the judiciary. Nothing of course, was mentioned about the interplay or roles of social, cultural and demographic variables on a free and fair election in the country. This constitutes the gap in knowledge which our study intends to fill.

Free and Fair Elections

In any state or country, the government can only derive from the will of the people as expressed in free and fair elections held at regular intervals under a total guarantee of universal and unrestricted suffrage. In this circumstance, every adult citizen has the right to vote in elections, on a non-discriminatory basis. Adibe (2018), poses a crucial question bordering on when we can objectively say that elections are 'free and fair' in a polarized and fragile state like Nigeria, especially given that the phrase is often subjectively determined based on the vantage position of the speaker (Goodwin-Gill, 2006). However, the term 'free' means the tendency that all those entitled to vote have the right to be registered and to vote, and must be free to make their choice. An election is considered free when one can decide whether or not to vote and vote freely for the candidate of the party of his choice without fear or intimidation. A free election is also one where one is confident of who he votes, and such vote counts. Fair means that all registered political parties have an equal right to contest the elections, campaign for voter support and hold meetings and rallies. This gives them a fair chance to convince voters to vote for their candidates. A fair election also means a type of

election in which all voters have equal opportunity to register, where all votes are counted, and where the announced results reflect the actual total votes cast.

Apart from this, Article 21 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights made it an entitlement for people to participate in the government of their country through an election that should reflect the will of the people. However, Goodwin-Gill (2006) identified ten broad criteria and activities as markers or indices for measuring a free and fair election'. These are Electoral law and system; Constituency delimitation; Election management; The right to vote; Voter registration; Civic education and voter information; Candidates, political parties and political organization, including funding; Electoral campaigns, including protection and respect for fundamental human rights, political meetings, media access and coverage; Balloting, monitoring and results; and Complaints and dispute resolution. The extent to which these indices interface with the cultural, social and demographic factors in the country is of concern in this study.

Theoretical Discussion

This study was guided by the theoretical ideas of differential association and structural functionalism. The theory of differential association was developed by [Edwin Sutherland](#) in 1966 ([Schmallegger, 1999](#)). It assumes that through interaction with others, individuals learn the values, attitudes, techniques, and motives for criminal [behavior](#). The differential association theory is the most referred to of the learning theories of [deviance](#). Learning theories focus on how individuals acquire certain behaviours and attitude by learning from others, but does not concern itself with why they learn the behaviour and attitude.

On the contrary, the structural functionalist perspective is associated with Talcott Parsons. The structural functionalist lays emphasis on many things including consensus on common values as the integrating force in social life and engine of goal realization. According to Charles (2014), values were moral or ethical issues while goals engendered social cooperation. Certainly, for a free and fair election, the election stakeholders, namely, institution vested with the powers to organize elections, civil society, security operatives, the judiciary, and the electorates who are social actors must reach a consensus on the value expected of any election. Such values may be taught or learned from others, mostly through interaction with others as assumed by the differential association. However, what is learnt and the behaviour or attitude displays, could be explained by what Talcott Parsons called pattern variables which are critical components of the functionalist theory.

The two theories are apt in explaining elections situations in Nigeria, normally characterized by bandwagon principle: a tendency in which the result (a win) in one election determines other elections results because of the effect of interaction with other members of the party; the values, attitudes and techniques used, and motives about certain elections. It is important to note that the value placed on a phenomenon, type of attitude towards it as well as the techniques adopted to consummate it, are products of social and cultural forces. Similarly, such are moderated by demographic variables particularly age, sex, income and location of residence. Thus, the emphasis in both Talcott Parson's theory of structural functionalism and [Edwin Sutherland's](#) differential association theory on interaction and integration which are created based on values, attitudes and motives justifies their appropriateness in elucidating this study.

Methods and Data

We employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection techniques. The study conveniently surveyed opinions of election stakeholders across the six geographical zones in Nigeria with the help of research assistants recruited for this purpose. All research assistants had training on basic research approaches, ethics and objectives, using semi-structured interview guide, focus group discussions and personal observations. A convenient sample of 300 participants provided data for the study. The interview guide was worded in English language and interviewers were to interpret to participants in their local dialect where necessary. All audio-recorded data were translated and transcribed by language specialists. The respondents were selected from people 18 years and above. With the help of grounded theory, we identified key themes emanating from focus group discussions, interviews and personal observations conducted in the course of this study to guide data analysis. Similarly, using inductive-based method, the qualitative analysis paid specific attention to the various levels of election fraud or malpractices that manifest before, during and after elections in Nigeria. Extant literature from text books, secondary elaboration technique and other secondary sources provided the secondary data.

RESULTS

Participants views about Elections in Nigeria

Discussants during FGDs unanimously agreed that:

Election is a democratic means of selecting people into elective political offices through the process of casting votes for any candidate of choice.

A participant aged 25 said:

Elections provide the citizens with opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for whenever political offices are vacant in a democratic setting. Election is a serious matter in Nigeria.

Participants views on Free and Fair Elections in Nigeria

According to a participant aged 57:

Elections in Nigeria is anything but free and fair no matter whether it is really election or selection. Most of time elections do not reflect the will of electorates. The winners are usually appointees of the ruling party and political godfathers.

Another participant aged 43 stated:

Nigerians are so corrupt to contemplate having free and fair elections. Victories always go to the highest bidder in terms of cash or political connections. There are instances where candidates win at polling booths but their opponents were finally announced as winners.

Another participant aged 37 stated:

Very often the courts play role on who finally emerge the winner of an election. The courts turn down the decision of the electorates in favour of the opponent on technical grounds only known to the Justices

Perceptions on Socio-cultural Factors affecting Elections in Nigeria

1. Irregular registration: This is the tendency of registering illegitimate voters in the voters register. Some of these, could be under age or foreigners. According to a participant aged 65:

One major factor is irregular registration perpetuated before elections; the registration of underaged voters is another factor; and cultural belief about election. This fraudulent act is very common in the northern part of the country. The malpractice is alleged to have been committed with active connivance with politicians and INEC staff.

2. Unfair campaign: Untoward behaviours by election campaign managers, supporters and even

candidates themselves to their opponents have been the bane of free and fair elections in Nigeria. In many instances, election campaigns have resulted in loss of lives, wanton destruction of property and unwarranted character assassination. Discussants during focus group discussions unanimously stated:

Unfair party campaigns have become the order of the day. The use of youth who are tugs and violent in behaviour. Tearing down of candidates' bill boards and outright destruction of campaign materials is dominating our news headlines every day.

3. **Intimidation by elites:** Prominent elites are significant others who command enormous influence and respect in their communities. This influence is sometimes used to compel their loyalists to vote for their anointed candidates during elections. A participant aged 35 said:

Sometimes prospective voters are intimidated by elites and other political stalwarts to pledge loyalty to parties and vote candidates they do not like. Because failure to comply may result in castigation, suppression, marginalization in the community. The influence of rotation and expectation from certain preferred candidates.

4. **Funding:** The planning and execution of elections in Nigeria and other nations of the world is a capital intensive venture. Poor funding and untimely release of such funds constitute serious set-backs to free and fair elections. According to a participant aged 40:

Untimely release of funds for election planning and execution is a major challenge to free and fair elections in Nigeria. Sometimes voters are sufficiently educated on the manner of voting and other issues.

5. **Vote buying:** The exchange of vote for money or any other forms of inducements has become a tradition in Nigeria's political space. A participant aged 25, said:

Vote buying has become a serious threat to credible elections in Nigeria. Voters snapped pictures of ballot box showing the candidates they voted for, and present the pictures thereafter for payment. Sometimes politicians and their agents pay some money to electorates as inducements for votes. Inducement can also come in form of material gifts like wrapper, T-shirts, Bag of rice, Salt, and other stomach infrastructures.

Participants during focus group discussions said unanimously:

Illiteracy, snatching of ballot box and malfunctioning of smart card readers and inability to activate the registration area centers greatly challenged the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

Findings and Discussions

This study examined the social, cultural and demographic factors that influence free and fair elections in Nigeria. It found in part, that the manner in which the electorates in the country organize themselves in readiness for an election or to participate in a certain election or to support certain candidates; community beliefs and values for elections as well as the age, sex and degree of affiliation of candidate(s) to the electorates, play a strong role in the outcome of an election. It also found that the consistent insecurity, looming threat of violence in elections, difficulties in the distribution of permanent voters card, voter education and illiteracy that characterize electioneering processes in Nigeria are always driven by the social (how the electorate organize themselves for the candidates and elections), cultural (community beliefs and values for elections) and demographic (age sex and affiliation). Apparently, the dichotomy between the north and south in Nigeria and the corresponding victories of APC and PDP in the 2015 and 2019 elections confirmed this finding, even as it is substantiated by Edwin Sutherland and Talcott Parsons

in their theories using the concepts of interaction, integration and consensus.

To Fedorak (2007), there are numerous consequences of human social interactions, ideas, values, belief system and shared ideals on how a people interpret experience and generate behaviour. Adamu, Ocheni and Ibrahim (2016), list the social factors that influence or generate behaviour to include race, religion, region and social class, arguing that the factors are determinants of voting behaviour. In the findings of their study on money politics and analysis of voting behaviour in Nigeria: challenges and prospects for free and fair elections, Adamu, Ocheni and Ibrahim (2016) agreed that social, cultural and demographic factors (race, religion, region, social class, age and sex) have serious effects on many things including attitude and behaviour about elections.

The argument by former President Shehu Aliyu Shagari corroborated with the findings of this study that corruption abetted by debilitating poverty, ethnicity and intolerance are the factors hindering free and fair elections in Nigeria. Unlike corruption and intolerance which are social factors, poverty and ethnicity are demographic factors. The registration of underaged voters, vote buying, deployment of youths as thugs, victories to the highest bidder, and connivance between the politicians, election umpire, security operatives and the judiciary that are found in this study to hinder chances of free and fair elections have been supported by Adamu, Ocheni and Ibrahim (2016) and NOIPolls (2014). Apart from being social in nature, these practices are promoted by predisposed social and cultural factors. NOIPolls (2014) reports particularly that in Nigeria there are internal and external factors that affect the voting decisions of citizens which in turn have implications on the overall outcome of elections, and that almost 4 in 10 Nigerians, about 38% are willing to accept a gift (any form of inducement) from a political party or aspirant if offered, and the majority (62%) would like to receive money as a gift; about 65% of these persons are 18-21 years of age.

The study findings also argues with Ovwasa (2013) who argued that politicians were known to distribute T-Shirts, Caps and badges with party emblems, some food stuff and sundry items, to voters at political rallies, as a strategy to lobby for votes or outright persuasion to the electorate to allow the parties and candidates rig elections. Again, the findings were confirmed by Dudley (1982) who noted that often candidates in elections are less important as the parties take the centre stage, appealed to ethnicity played alliance politics and used highly emotive terms which in most cases invited people to violence. Moreover, the findings are justified by the remark credited to Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, cited in Ovwasa (2013) that with so much resources being deployed to capture elective offices, it is not difficult to see the correlation between money politics and the potential for high level corruption. The greatest losers are the ordinary people, those voters whose faith and investments in the system are hijacked and subverted because money, not their will, is made the determining factor in elections.

It terms of affiliation as a demographic factor that influence free and fair election in Nigeria, NOIPolls (2014), confirms from its opinion survey that more female than male respondents are influenced by "political aspirants" (46% compared with 37%), particularly if the aspirant is female, in which case, the female electorates are willing to lobby all the qualified women voters to vote for and even rig to win election for the female aspirant or candidate. Similarly, the NOIPolls (2014) survey results agrees that age is an influential factor that determines the degree of freeness and fairness of an election. According to survey, young Nigerians are mostly influenced by the actual candidates while older Nigerians are mostly influenced by the political parties. Since the young people always dominate the political campaign train and voting booth, possess the strength and energy to cause violence at any time if their preferred candidate

loses the election, they unequivocally carry the day, subduing both the older people and chasing away the women, hence, rig and win every election.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A fair, free and credible election anywhere in the world is contingent on the social and political culture of a country and the legal framework guiding the management of electoral processes. While the electorates and major stakeholders in elections must cooperate and create a conducive election atmosphere before, during and after elections, the election umpire must not be an appendage of the Government in power or any political party. It should be independent in truth. A high level of integrity on the part of the electoral umpire will justify public confidence and minimize the tendency for election malpractice. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that:

- I) There should be in the electoral bill a clause that provides for peculiar social and cultural characteristics of the different societies and states in the country.
- ii) The electoral bill should spell out succinctly ethical considerations in electoral matters. This must include but not limited to socio-demographic factors related to the electorates.
- iii) The excessiveness of election umpire that create opportunity for connivance between the political stakeholders and the security operatives to a free and fair elections should be criminalized and checked using appropriate and proactive laws
- iv) Experience over the years has shown that the authority and function of Election Tribunals are limited by restricted jurisdiction, that is, only to actual election matters. This barrier should be removed through adequate legislation to allow the Election Tribunals powers to also hear and decide on both pre and post-election matters that arise from idiosyncrasy of the parties candidates and their supporters.

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