

Election Rigging and Political Instability in Relation to Democratization Process in South-West, Nigeria

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Adetunji, Idris Babatunde

Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

Alabi, Mojeed Olujinmi A.

Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

Irhue, Kenneth Y.

Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

Oderinde, Segun Lakin

Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria

Abstract

Nigeria's democratic transition has been hampered by a number of issues, such as political instability and election rigging. The paper examines the causes of election rigging in south-west Nigeria, investigating how election rigging and political instability contributed to the collapse of the democratisation process in south-west Nigeria, and examines the extent to which a well-organised electoral system can affect political stability in south-west Nigeria. The study adopts a survey research design. The population of the study comprises students from Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, and the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State. A sample size of one hundred and twenty political science students was purposively selected from the two universities. Sixty students were randomly selected from each of the two universities. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistical tools. Findings of the study revealed that political instability and election rigging can have a detrimental effect on south-west Nigeria's democratisation efforts. The finding also shows that a well-organised electoral system in south-west Nigeria can bring about political stability by promoting transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. The study therefore concludes that elections in the future must be seen as being more orderly, less violent, and a truer reflection of the choices made by voters than those in the past.

Keywords

Election, election rigging, political instability, democratisation, South-West

Corresponding author:

Adetunji Idris Babatunde, Department of Political Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria
Email: Adetunjiidris001@gmail.com

Introduction

Global governance critically depends on the formation of stable political systems and the shift to democracy. Due to the conviction that free and fair elections, participatory governance, and respect for human rights are essential, democratisation processes have received a lot of attention globally in the last few years (Ayanleye, 2013). A turning point in the political history of the African continent was the post-Cold War wave of democratisation that swept through the continent. According to Ayanleye (2013), African nations started the process of democratisation with the goal of eschewing authoritarian rule in favour of more inclusive and representative political systems. Nevertheless, Ayanleye (2013) contended that despite these initiatives, the initial excitement around this democratic wave soon gave way to hopelessness as numerous African nations demonstrated once more that enthroning democracy requires more than just elections. In addition to being marred by a flawed electoral process, violations of human rights, corruption, and poor governance, many of these third-wave democracies in Africa also tended towards one-party dominance.

Furthermore, Ayanleye (2013) pointed out that both foreign and internal causes aided in Africa's democratic transition. Internally, it was prompted by the 1980s development setbacks for many African states, and the desire for better governance gave rise to pro-democracy movements in those states, which in turn sparked an organised public outcry for reform. Regarding the external environment, donor countries and international organisations expressed grave worries about the authoritarian regimes prevalent in numerous African governments. The push for democratisation in Africa was fueled by the demand from the world community for universal human rights and the right to live with dignity, as well as promises of better bilateral relations for non-dictatorial regimes. However, despite the fact that many African states continue to experience civil war, genocide, poverty, corruption, and insecurity, among other issues, the democratisation trend that is taking shape in these regions has curiously not yet resulted in the anticipated social revolution (Fayemi, 2009).

A significant landmark in Nigeria's democratic history was the country's 1999 transition from military to civilian control. Nonetheless, Nigeria has had a number of challenges in maintaining democratic governance, such as problems with election integrity and political stability. Nigerian scholars continue to be more than passingly interested in Nigerian elections because, as they recognise, only legitimate elections can strengthen and maintain the nation's fledgling democracy. Nigeria has experienced increasing disappointments and anxiety over the course of the year regarding the conduct of peaceful, free, and fair elections whose outcomes are widely acknowledged and respected throughout the nation (Igbuzor, 2010; Osumah & Aghemelo, 2011; Ekwere-madu, 2011). A democratic regime cannot exist without elections and there is currently a genuine risk that holding regular, fairly competitive,

and transparent elections will be mistaken for democracy (Hounkpe & Gueye, 2010).

Elections are a fundamental component of democracy. Indeed, in the direct democracies of ancient Greece, elections were used to take decisions in various fields. For example, elections were used to nominate people to the most important positions for which a minimum level of competence is considered vital. In the same manner, election rigging was thought to have been successfully used in previous years by political parties or politicians to stay in power and, as a result, to maintain the status quo. This practice has been proven and has become ingrained in their political culture. Political parties began to seriously compete as a result of this conflict. Therefore, election rigging includes ballot box theft, voter fraud, control over phantom votes, voting by unregistered voters using political thugs to create voting pools, intimidation of opposition parties by the dominant party through bribery of electoral officials, and manipulation of the results through the electoral body. There is proof that these electoral vices have always been a part of the Nigerian electoral process.

However, it has been noted that political instability may arise from election rigging. Dzacka (2021) defines political instability as a situation in which a state's capacity to rule is adversely affected by a civil war or a significant breakdown in communication between divergent political parties. He went on to say that the quest for political power is one of the main causes of political instability. For instance, on January 15, 1966, there was military intervention in Nigerian politics as a result of electoral manipulation in the western area under the First Republic (1960). Anti-democratic principles were thus also followed in the second republic, where the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which was in power, won every general election. Compared to the 1979 elections, the general trend of the election process's circulation during the 1983 general election had a larger scope.

The previously mentioned research highlights the extent to which numerous political parties and individuals in Nigeria have flouted the principles of democratic society by allowing individuals to exercise their right to vote and have their votes tallied. Political instability and election rigging have been identified as contributing elements to the downfall of the democratisation movement in southwest Nigeria. A democratic system also helps to create an atmosphere that is conducive to the expansion of a free press that has a long history of activity and advocacy for peaceful cohabitation as well as an intellectual culture. The ideal setting for economic growth, the creation of new jobs, and a friendly atmosphere for individuals to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations should all be provided by a democracy.

Fundamentally, the health of democracy depends on free, fair, and trustworthy elections (Thorpe, 2007).

The fact that earlier attempts at democracy in Nigeria following the country's independence failed due to election manipulation is not coincidental (Jega, 2007). In summary, political turmoil and electoral fraud are just two of the problems that have impeded Nigeria's democratic transition. In south-west Nigeria, states like Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, and Ekiti have experienced both positive and negative outcomes from the process of democratisation. Thus, this paper investigates the relationship between election tampering, political instability, and the process of democratisation in southwest Nigeria. The persistent issue of election rigging in south-west Nigeria and the resulting political turmoil has impeded the development of democratisation. This study aims to address the persistent incapacity of our nation to conduct free and fair national and local elections, as well as the causes and consequences of election rigging on our political system.

Empirical Studies

With the end of colonial rule in the late 1950s and 1960s, came the hope that independent African countries would adopt some form of democracy, whether liberal, democratic or socialist. Most of the first generation of African leaders after independence were actually voted into power in elections supervised by the departing colonialists (Ellis). Instead of democracy however various forms of autocracy appeared. The political frameworks bequeathed to the African continent at the beginning of the contemporary independence era embodied in what Schraeder (2004) described as “authoritarian-democratic paradox” in which African leaders, educated in authoritarianism during the colonial era, were expected to perform like seasoned experts in democracy. Despite their almost complete disregard for the promotion of democratic values during the colonial era, departing colonial administrators hastily constructed political arrangements that purported to embody Western democratic ideals, such as systems of checks-and-balances, in which offices of the president, legislatures, and judiciaries would balance each other's power and prevent the emergence of authoritarianism.

The relatively decentralised “Westminster model” of parliamentary governance was grafted onto the authoritarian structures of colonial rule in the former British colonies, and the more centralised “Elysee model” was similarly introduced into France's former colonies (Schraeder, 2004 p. 223). However, the so-called democracies left behind by the departing colonial powers represented largely untested and ill-suited political practices and procedures that were not grounded in African traditions or political cultures. The resultant effect was the multiple coup d'états that took place across Africa. In fact, the period between 1960 and 1970 and slightly beyond has generally been called the decade of coups in Africa. Once coups started, they became like a wild bushfire and swept through the entire continent at an alarmingly high speed.

By 1975, approximately half of the continent's states were led by military or civil-military governments.

Politically, the liberal construct of the independence constitutions gave way to authoritarian structures mimicking in many ways the despotism of the colonial state. At the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, as many African economies entered the deep economic crisis, it was abundantly clear that the promises of independence had run sour – there was neither sustainable development nor credible democracy (Shivji, 2011). Very few of the first generation heads of state eventually handed over power to elected successors. However, the current global wave of democratization that spread to Africa and since the early 1990s has been increasingly spreading across Africa. When elections are credible, free and fair, they can help promote democracy, human rights and security. But when elections are fraudulent, they can trigger political instability and even violence (Annan, 2012). This means that for democracy to fulfill its potential as a means of peacefully resolving social and political conflict, the integrity of elections is crucial. For Allen (2005), elections are considered important aspects of democracy, not only because of their role in determining succession but as a basis for legitimacy and ensuring accountability and good governance from political parties that form government.

Despite the vital place that election holds in democracy in this 21st century, the organization of free and fair elections remains a real challenge for new democracies in West Africa, particularly Nigeria (Reynolds, 2009; Humkpe & Gueye, 2010). In Africa, years of economic exploitation, mal-development and bad governance have continued to fan the ember of conflicts and crises in the continent. From Togo to democratic republic of Congo, Nigeria to Kenya and Zimbabwe to Ivory Coast, and Gambia general elections have been widely disputed and the recent annulled presidential election in Kenya by the supreme court which could have course civil unrest in the country further confirmed the fraudulent activities of politicians towards elections in Africa. Evidence has shown that in the whole of African continent, only few states could lay claim to have genuinely conducted free and fair elections that were universally accepted.

In Nigeria, the elections conducted since independence have been played in a do or die affair, the campaigns proceeding elections are in variably marked by pettiness, intolerance and violence (Fagbohun, 2013). With particular reference to the political crisis of 1964-1966, Ojo (2012 p. 6) identified electioneering as one of the critically culpable factors. In his words, “pre and post-election violence in the defunct western Region created unprecedented political instability” in Nigeria. Violence has become synonymous with Nigeria's political culture such that virtually all elections held so far in the

country are violence ridden. Between 1960 and 2019, Nigeria had conducted nine general elections and several other elections at regional and state levels. The general elections were held in 1964, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. A survey of the political history of post-independence Nigeria shows that none of these elections was conducted in an atmosphere of appreciable electoral security, which partly informed the collapse of the previous three Republics and subsequent intervention of the military in Nigeria's political life. Empirical evidence has shown that in elections conducted to public offices, all contesting parties are involved in one form of electoral malpractices or other (Joseph, 1987; Iwu, 2008).

Elections are a way for the polity to choose representatives of the people for various public offices. Elections may have a ratifying effect since they are intended to provide the current government an air of popularity and to inspire public involvement in development. However, in a liberal democracy, elections serve broader purposes, such as tools for accountability, populace mobilisation, and legitimacy enhancement. For the liberal form of democracy to survive, competitive political elections are essential. Regretfully, in liberal democracies, terms like "competitive struggle" are often highlighted more than a cooperative approach to politics. Playing by the rules is therefore essential to the sustainability of this democratic method and continuous transfer of power from one government to the next is made possible by adherence to this declared need (Ighodalo, 2012). The long struggle for democracy in Africa began to show results, as the continent started to overcome a legacy of authoritarianism and indifference to democratic culture.

These results, according to Claude Ake (1996 p. 33) are too impressive and too widespread to be ignored: the popular rejection of military rule in Nigeria; the demise of apartheid in South Africa; the down fall of Samuel Doe in Liberia and Kerekou in Benin; the gains of pluralism and multi-partyism in Niger, Madagascar, Cameroon, Zambia, Algeria, Gabon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe; the growing democratisation processes in Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Zimbabwe (Fayemi, 2009). Internal and external factors contributed to the democratisation process in Africa. Internally, it was occasioned by the development failures of many African states in the 1980s and the demand for improved governance led to the rise of pro-democracy movements in African states, which resulted in concerted popular agitation for change.

On the external front, there were serious concerns from international agencies and donor nations on the autocratic regimes in many African states. The pressure from the international scene for universal human freedom and life with dignity, coupled with promises of improved bilateral relations for non-dictatorial states, stimulated the drive for democratisation in Africa. However, this democratisation trend taking shape in many states of Africa has paradoxically not yet produced the expected result of societal transformation,

as cases of civil war, genocide, poverty, corruption, insecurity among others still dot the path of many African states (Fayemi, 2009).

Nigeria is like a nation at war every election cycle due to the pervasive political and electoral violence that the ruling class continues to promote in an attempt to seize control of the state. For example, the Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa regime conducted regional and general elections in 1964 and 1965, respectively. According to Deinibiteim and Samuel (2023), Osaghae (1998) noted that despite claims of widespread fraud, violence, and intimidation, the polls allowed the NPC government to win a second term in office. Furthermore, it was revealed by Deinibiteim and Samuel (2023), and Anifowose (1982) that the regional elections were marked by violence brought on by "competitive rigging," which resulted in the deaths of over 200 people. They claim that during this time, there was an increase in political and electoral violence in the Yoruba heartland, the South West (then known as the Western Region).

It's interesting to note that the Western Region experienced a state of emergency in 1962 as a result of the previous political unrest that followed (Harry, 2008). This, along with numerous other incidents of political and electoral violence across the nation, resulted in the coup d'état on January 15, 1966, placing the nation under military rule until October 1, 1979, when Alhaji Shehu Shagari was elected as Nigeria's first executive president. Major General Muhammadu Buhari overthrew the Shagari government on December 31, 1983, after it had been in power for four years and had become entangled in political turmoil and widespread electoral violence, among other shortcomings (Harry, 2008). Elections and the electoral process are characterised by irregularities, fraud, and a lack of credibility in Nigeria (Tsuwa, Agaigbe & Shaibume (n.d.) cited in Nachana'a *et al.*, 2014). Unusual or rigged elections have not resulted in a government that the people will accept. This is due to the fact that some of the leaders who won her elections have used all kinds of manipulation to get into the realm of power, which has limited the opportunities for genuine candidates to win, even though they are the candidates that the electorate chose. People will be hesitant to support this unpopular candidate's administration if he is elected because they believe that the government was given a stolen mandate.

Omoleke and Olaiya (2013), opined that the massive election rigging, violence, bribery, corruption, self-imposed political parties, self-imposed candidates, haughty security personnel, biased and partial election administrators, disdain for the rule of law, party politics' supremacy over the law, financial influence, unethical and illegal behavior by political employees, and the persistence of office have all tainted the conduct of elections. The most distressing issue and concerning problem is that those who violate election

integrity are shielded rather than facing legal action, which should serve as a warning to others who might be inclined in the same direction. Politicisation of these matters tends to prevent politics from superseding law. As a result, the circumstance implies that the highly politicized laws and regulations (the Electoral Act and the Constitution) appear to be like weak bulldozers (Omoleke and Olaiya, 2013).

According to Oddih (2007), a rigged election always results in the annulment of the electorate's choices, and the resulting government is unable to reflect, defend, or advance the interests and ambitions of the populace. This has inevitably resulted in almost every social, political, economic, and cultural issue that Nigerians face to this day. Economic production is still very low, and the value of the naira has never increased in relation to other major international currencies like the US dollar or the British pound sterling. Due to the persistently high unemployment rate, there are numerous ethnic and religious conflicts. Contemporary democracy is characterised by widespread cultism, armed robberies, assassinations, labour union and pressure group strikes, and more (Oddih, 2007; Jega and Ibeanu, 2007 p. 180). From the Bakassi/MASSOB, Afenifere, OPC, Ijaw/Isekeri, Odi, Umuleri/Aguleri, to Benue/Taraba, Kaduna, Kano, and Plateau crises, almost every state in the federation has seen mass violence at some point (Oddih, 2007 in Jega and Ibeanu, 2007 p. 180).

In addition to undermining democracy, this frequently results in political instability, insecurity, and violence during elections. While violence has always been a part of the post-colonial Nigerian democratisation process, it has taken on an unprecedented size in recent times, particularly since the establishment of the Fourth Republic, posing a serious threat to the country's political stability. Omodia (2009), in Alfa and Otaida (2012 p. 47), asserts that the democratic process is legitimately threatened by the absence of free and fair elections. Additionally, it leads to unheard-of levels of violence (Abimbola and Adesote, 2014 p. 13). More significantly, high levels of conflict or consistent electoral violence can impede development and the sustenance and consolidation of democracy by causing political unrest and instability (Abimbola and Adesote, 2014 p. 13).

Chris (2016) points out that because of the enormous salaries associated with both legislative and executive elective positions in Nigeria, people who aspire to hold these positions in public life find it very difficult to give up their positions of authority as they grow accustomed to the benefits of their positions, both materially and otherwise. To start, the salary of a council member in the local government is ridiculous, not to mention that of state senators and representatives. He further maintained that politicians find it difficult to let go of their high salaries and other forms of compensation that make them extremely wealthy in the event that they lose an election. This is the reason Nigerian elections have turned into a "do or die" situation. It has

been maintained that the survival of democracy in Africa depends on free, fair, and credible elections (The Nation, Sunday, July 22, 2007 p. 12).

According to Adeyeri (2013), opined that there are many different manifestations of political instability, including civil wars, coups d'état, urban riots, rural insurgencies, and community violence. When the government and society at large are unable to effectively address the complaints of the populace or a specific segment of the populace, political instability results. Depending on the situation, the source of complaints may be political, external, or internal (Adeyeri, 2013). Political instability needs to be better understood and broken down into its different forms. While discontent by itself does not always lead to political instability, it does require the presence of individuals and mechanisms that can articulate grievances and mobilize the harmed to demand action from the government when tensions rise within a society. Unconstitutional changes in government, whether they are frequent or sporadic, constitute political instability. It is a state of affairs in which a nation is experiencing political unrest (Adeyeri, 2013).

Adeyeri (2013) noted that the problem of money and politics in Nigeria is one of the causes of political instability. Money is not a deciding factor for an elected office in a civilized society. It makes sense that former US President Bill Clinton once remarked that Americans go into business to make money when they want to, but Nigerians go into politics when they want money. According to Krieger, political instability linked to ethnic parochialism is Nigeria's main political issue, as evidenced by the military's repeated meddling in the country's affairs. He says it is not unexpected that Nigeria, with its abundance of natural resources, substantial human capital, and sizable home market, has not been able to fulfill its promise as an African power. It has been too erratic to fulfill the significant role that the "Giant of Africa" is expected to play in Africa and beyond the world. In spite of Nigeria's strong economic progress over the past ten years, political instability continues to be a risk for the country's future development. Even if it is challenging to forecast Nigeria's future, it is possible to spot medium and long-term patterns that could pose a threat to the country's political stability, which is a clear sign of its economic success.

The previous thesis is supported by Okafor (2003) in Orban (2008 p. 10) and Akuul (2013), who claimed that socioeconomic factors, particularly poverty, are to blame for Nigeria's political instability. Because poverty inherently endangers life, people are pushed to make decisions that are harmful to a stable government. In order to control and shape the actions of the majority, the wealthy minority in society also takes advantage of their circumstances (Akuul, 2013). Because of the persistently high unemployment rate, there are numerous armed robberies, cults, assassinations, and ethnic and

religious conflicts. A vast army of jobless youths willing to pay a fee to be cured gives political violence a boost. These young people have banded together into cults and thugs as a result of the politicians' favouritism (Akuul, 2013).

Akinola and Onibon's (2018) study examines the connection between political instability and election rigging, concentrating on south-west Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach, the authors combine quantitative analysis of election data with qualitative interviews. Results show a strong link between election rigging and the ensuing political unrest, which impedes the democratisation process. In the same manner, Oluwaniyi (2020) investigates the particular circumstances surrounding election rigging in Lagos State, south-west Nigeria. Using a case study approach, the author examines historical trends, electoral data, and interviews important stakeholders. The study shows how election rigging undermines the consolidation of democracy and causes political instability in the area.

Ojo (2016) investigates the wider links between political instability in south-west Nigeria and the process of democratisation. Using a comparative analysis approach, the author looks at regional patterns and trends. According to the research, election rigging impedes the consolidation of democratic institutions and values while undermining the democratic process and causing political instability. Bello and Bappi's (2015) study indicate that there has been a rise in the number of these electoral irregularities in Nigeria. This tendency was caused by a number of factors, including the electoral body's members' accountability and the political class's and its allies' ongoing refinement of their methods for manipulating elections. Bello and Bappi (2015) went further in their paper that the government ought to launch intensive programmes of awareness and sensitization to protect the populace from politicians attempting to sway their votes. Politicians ought to honor the choices made by the public and honestly accept the results of the election.

Methodology

The study adopts a survey research method where a representative proportion of the whole study was drawn. The assessment of the representative of the entire population through samples drawn from the same enables the study to generalise on the state of performance in electoral rigging and political instability in the democratisation process in south-west, Nigeria. The study covers Osun and Oyo states; both states are located in south-west, Nigeria and share a boundary with each other. The study was carried out in the state capitals of Osun and Oyo. The study population utilised in this study were students of Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, and the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State. The purpose for selecting these two universities is because they provided a convenient and accessible pool of participants, enabling the study to collect data efficiently. Political science students were purposively selected; this is because their selection was premised on invaluable

contributions that could be of help to this study as a result of their vast knowledge of political behaviour. A sample size of sixty students was randomly selected from Osun State University and sixty students from the University of Ibadan, respectively, making a total of one hundred and twenty students. A questionnaire was used to collect data.

The study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary data was sourced using a questionnaire, while the secondary data was sourced from text books, journals, newspapers, and other published and unpublished materials. The data collected from this study was coded, scored, and graded appropriately. Data collected from questions 1, 2, and 3 was analysed using descriptive statistical tools (percentages).

Table I: Analysis from the Responses on the Causes of Election Rigging in South-West, Nigeria

Items description	SA	A	SD	D	U
Political parties or individuals may use threats or coercion to influence voters' choices or discourage them from voting	55(45.8%)	41(34.2%)	7(5.8%)	13(10.8%)	4(3.3%)
Actions like ballot stuffing, multiple voting, altering results, or tampering with voting materials can result to election rigging	100(83.3%)	16(13.3%)	-	-	4(3.3%)
Parties might try to manipulate the system through gerrymandering, vote buying, or using their influence to suppress opposition parties	98(81.2%)	15(12.5%)	-	2(1.7%)	5(4.2%)
Inadequate enforcement of laws, corruption, or lack of independence within electoral institutions can create an environment conducive to rigging	95(79.2%)	17(14.2%)	-	5(4.2%)	3(2.5%)
Deep-rooted tribal, ethnic, or religious divisions can influence voting patterns and create opportunities for rigging	50(41.7%)	40(33.3%)	10(8.3%)	13(10.8%)	7(5.8%)

Source: Field work (2023)

The table above presents the cause analysis of election rigging in south-west, Nigeria. 55(45.8%) and 41(34.2%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that political parties or individuals may use threats or coercion to influence voters' choices or discourage them from voting; 7(5.8%) and 13(10.8%) of the respondents strongly disagree and disagree on the subject matter, while 4(3.3%) did not decide at all. The majority of the respondents agree that actions like ballot stuffing, multiple voting, altering results, or tampering with

voting materials can result in election rigging; 100(83.3%) and 16(13.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, none of the respondents strongly disagree nor disagree, and 4(3.3%) fail to decide. 98(81.2%) and 15(12.5%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that parties might try to manipulate the system through gerrymandering, vote buying, or using their influence to suppress opposition parties, while 2(1.7%) and 5(4.2%) of respondents disagree and are undecided on the statement. The finding shows that inadequate enforcement of laws, corruption, or lack of independence within electoral institutions can create an environment conducive to rigging; 95(79.2%) and 17(14.2%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, 5(4.2%) and 3(2.5%) of respondents disagree and are undecided on the statement. The finding also reveals that deep-rooted tribal, ethnic, or religious divisions can influence voting patterns and create opportunities for rigging; 50(41.7%) and 40(33.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, 10(8.3%) and 13(10.8%) of the respondents strongly disagree and disagree, and 7(5.8%) of the respondents fail to decide.

Table II: Analysis of the Responses on how Election Rigging and Political Instability contributed to the collapse of Democratization Process in South-West, Nigeria

Items descriptions	SA	A	SD	D	U
Elections rigging erode public trust in the electoral process and political institutions, leading to a decreased belief in democracy as a legitimate system.	100(83.3%)	20(16.7%)	-	-	-
When elections are rigged, it undermines the functioning and credibility of democratic institutions such as political parties, electoral commissions, and the judiciary	95(79.2%)	20(16.7%)	-	-	5(4.2%)
Rigged elections can spark political unrest and protests, leading to potential violence and instability within the region	110(91.7%)	4(3.3%)	-	-	6(5%)
Election rigging can suppress political opposition and limit the political space for diverse viewpoints, undermining the foundations of a democratic society	80(66.7%)	21(17.5%)	5(4.2%)	10(8.3%)	4(3.3%)
Election rigging has hindered the effectiveness of democratization in Nigeria	75(62.5%)	25(20.8%)	-	20(17.7%)	-
Election rigging has undermined democratic survival in Nigeria	78(65%)	40(33.3%)	-	-	2(1.7%)

Source: Field work (2023)

From the table above, 100(83.3%) and 20(16.7%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that election rigging erodes public trust in the electoral process and political institutions, leading to a decreased belief in democracy as a legitimate system, while none of the respondents strongly disagree, disagree, or

are undecided on the statement. The findings of the study reveal that 95(79.2%) and 20(16.7%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that, when elections are rigged, it undermines the functioning and credibility of democratic institutions such as political parties, electoral commissions, and the judiciary, while 5(4.2%) of the respondents did not decide. On whether rigging of elections can spark political unrest and protests, leading to potential violence and instability within the region, 110(91.7%) and 4(3.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, while 6(5%) of the respondents were undecided. The findings of the study show that election rigging can suppress political opposition and limit the political space for diverse viewpoints, undermining the foundations of a democratic society; 80(66.7%) and 21(17.5%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, 5(4.2%) and 10(8.3%) of the respondents strongly disagree and disagree, and 4(3.3%) of the respondents fail to decide. The study also indicates that election rigging has hindered the effectiveness of democratisation in Nigeria; 75(62.5%) and 25(20.8%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, while 20(17.7%) of them disagree. The findings emanating from the study also show that election rigging has undermined democratic survival in Nigeria; 78(65%) and 40(33.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, while 2(1.7%) of the respondents fail to decide.

Table III: Analysis of the Responses on the Extent to which a Well-Organized Electoral System can affect Political Stability in South-West, Nigeria

Items Description	SA	A	SD	D	U
Fair and transparent elections build confidence among citizens and political actors, reducing the likelihood of disputes and unrest	100(83.3%)	11(9.2%)	-	5(4.2%)	4(3.3%)
A strong electoral system ensures that elected officials are held accountable to the electorate, reducing corruption and promoting good governance	82(68.3%)	33(27.5%)	-	-	5(4.2%)
When elections are conducted in a free and fair manner, it becomes easier for different political parties to transition in and out of power peacefully	95(79.2%)	22(18.3%)	-	-	3(2.5%)
A well-functioning electoral system legitimizes political processes and outcomes, making them more acceptable to the diverse groups within society	71(59.2%)	40(33.3%)	-	5(4.2%)	4(3.3%)

Source: Field work (2023)

The findings from Table III above show that 100(83.3%) and 11(9.2%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that fair and transparent elections build confidence among citizens and political actors, reducing the likelihood of disputes and unrest. 5(4.2%) of the respondents disagree, while 4(3.3%) of the respondents could not decide. The finding of the study also reveals that a strong electoral system ensures that elected officials are held accountable to the electorate, reducing corruption and promoting good governance; 82(68.3%) and 33(27.5%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, while 5(4.2%) of the respondents could not decide. 95(79.2%) and 22(18.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree that, when elections are conducted in a free and fair manner, it becomes easier for different political parties to transition in and out of power peacefully, while 3(2.5%) of them could not decide. The finding finally shows that a well-functioning electoral system legitimises political processes and outcomes, making them more acceptable to the diverse groups within society; 71(59.2%) and 40(33.3%) of the respondents strongly agree and agree, 5(4.2%) of the respondents disagree, and 4(3.3%) of the respondents could not decide.

Discussion of Findings

This discussion focuses on the findings from the data collected during the administration of the questionnaires as they relate to the objectives of the study on election rigging, political instability, and the democratisation process in south-west, Nigeria. The following are the causes of election rigging in south-west Nigeria, according to the findings shown in Table I: Threats or coercion are two tactics used by political parties and individuals to sway voters' decisions or keep them from casting a ballot. Ballot stuffing, multiple voting, tampering with voting materials, and changing results are examples of such actions. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of study, which looked at different facets of the electoral process prior to, during, and following elections. Voter intimidation, ballot stuffing and snatching, vote-buying, underage voting, multiple voting, ballot stuffing and snatching, false winner announcements, and other practices are examples of electoral fraud. Parties may try to rig the election results, buy votes, or stifle opposition parties with their influence. A lack of independence within electoral institutions, corruption, or lax law enforcement can all contribute to an environment that is conducive to election rigging. Deeply ingrained prejudices based on race, religion, or tribe can influence voting patterns and provide room for election manipulation.

The findings from the respondents about how political unrest and election tampering can harm South-West's efforts to democratise are displayed in Table

II. The majority of respondents think that manipulating elections weakens public confidence in political institutions and the electoral process, which lowers support for democracy as a legitimate system. The study also shows that rigged elections damage democratic institutions like the judiciary, political parties, and electoral commissions' credibility and ability to operate. The findings of the study are in line with those of Oluwaniyi (2020), Ojo (2016), Akinola, and Onibon (2018), who found that election tampering undermines the growth of democracy and fuels political unrest. The study also shows that election manipulation can cause political disturbances and demonstrations, which could result in regional instability and violence. The study supports the findings of Abimbola and Adesote (2014), who point out that political instability and unrest brought on by high levels of conflict can obstruct development as well as the maintenance and consolidation of democracy. According to the study's findings, election rigging can undermine the foundations of a democratic society by suppressing political opposition and limiting the political space available for different points of view.

Similarly, the results indicate the degree to which political stability can be impacted by an efficient electoral system. Based on the results, it was determined that the majority of respondents thought that free and fair elections increase public trust in political actors and citizens alike, lowering the possibility of conflict and disturbance. Additionally, the study demonstrates how a robust electoral system guarantees that public servants are answerable to the people, which lowers corruption and fosters good governance. It should be mentioned that peaceful power transitions between political parties are made easier when elections are held in a free and fair manner. Research also shows that a functional electoral system gives political procedures and results legitimacy, increasing their acceptability among society's varied factions.

Conclusion

The study finds that election manipulation and political instability remain persistent issues in southwest, Nigeria, which will unavoidably impede the democratisation process. The study shows that political instability and election rigging can have a detrimental effect on south-west Nigeria's democratisation efforts. In south-west Nigeria, an efficient electoral system can have a big impact on political stability by fostering legitimacy, accountability, and transparency. If Nigeria is to develop into a sustainable democracy, its government must be able to ensure that citizens can exercise their civic rights in free and fair elections and hold their leaders accountable through democratic channels. Elections into political office should be less dependent on the deliberate use of violence and corruption. Elections in the future must be seen as being more orderly, less violent, and a truer reflection of the choices made by voters than those in the past.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

A democracy must be built on a political commitment to reform free and fair elections in south-west, Nigeria. The first step is for political leaders from all branches of government and all political parties to declare their commitment to fundamental ideals for future elections that are fair, free, and devoid of violence. Successful electoral reform requires high-level political commitment, and the main candidates for office must come together behind common moral principles and the rule of law.

For south-west region to survive and promote political consolidation, the maintenance of law and order is crucial for any given government to strictly embrace. This is to further curb the atrocities in the arena of electoral systems. In other words, the security system in the region must be improved. The police should be properly and adequately equipped with the necessary technology to enable them to carry out their duties effectively in ensuring sanity at polling booths across the country. In light of this, a proper training programme should be organised to acquaint them with how to maintain law and order in the region and the country at large. Anyone caught involved in election rigging should face the wrath of the law. Moreover, there is a need for political leaders and public officials to be exposed to continuous training and massive reorientation, which will enhance their efficiency. This has become obvious in view of the conduct of the various public officers involved in the crisis. It is important to note that the conditions of service among public officers should be enhanced to reduce temptation and pervert justice.

Finally, south-west region should support the Nigerian government in collaborating with international security that will seek assistance from the international community on how to bring lasting solutions to this ugly menace that has trod the south-west political system for so long. With this, security should be sent for professional training so that they could use their expertise to improve the security of not only the international community but also their immediate environment.

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