

Mass Media, Election Campaigns and Electoral Corruption in Nigeria: Evidence from 2019 General Elections

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ABSTRACT

This study is essentially anchored on mass media, election campaigns and electoral corruption in Nigeria with special attention on the 2019 general elections. The cardinal aim of the study is to ascertain whether mass media influences election campaigns and electoral corruption in Nigeria. Guided by information processing theory as the theoretical framework of analysis, and documentary design method, the study among other things discovered that despite media support for the conduct of credible, free and fair elections, there were election corruptive messaging and unfiltered coverage by the media. It further revealed that the voyeuristic tendency of the corruption news coverage of the media coverage failed to engender investigative reportage with a view to enthroning free, fair, credible, violence-free and acceptable election in the polity. The study concludes that the inability of the mass media to adhere strictly to the tenets of investigative reportage significantly influenced electoral corruption in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Keywords: Mass Media, Election Campaigns, Electoral Corruption, Democracy, Electoral Process and Governance.

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I. Introduction

Contemporary scholars all over the world have through elaborate research discovered the essentiality of mass media in the political process (Schudson, 2002; McNair, 2003). Unarguably, mass media provide members of the public with adequate information that enables them to be abreast with the political activities and also constitute informed choices during elections and within the election period. Abubakre (2017) maintains that election campaigns in Nigeria could be likened to a fountain which provides the citizenry with rich sources of political knowledge and information and news reports about political parties and their candidates, inundate them with political advertisements, predictions, opinion polls, among others which in turn enable the voters to make informed decisions in their preferences.

Apparently, mass media is referred to as the fourth estate and purveyors of information in a democratic setting (Aleyomi and Ajakaiye, 2014). This suggests that there is always a role for the mass media to play in any aspect of human endeavours, particularly in political governance. Democracy serves as the most widely acceptable systems and platforms worldwide which has ostensibly, come to cement its place in Nigeria. Thus, democracy is the world's most acknowledged form of government irrespective of their history and socio-economic systems (Odeyemi and Mosumola, 2015).

Contemporaneously, electioneering campaign is done where candidates via their respective political parties continuously intimate the electorates of their manifestoes, ideologies, plans for the welfare and progress of the polity (Aleyomi, Ajakaiye, and Otu, 2018). Essentially, it is highly required for candidates in an election to ventilate for vote through campaign and to that extent; candidates deeply rely on the power of the mass media made up of print and electronic in order to reach out to the electorates. Undoubtedly, mass media are seen as the most effectual and more preferable above other conventional campaign media due to the wide reach and the ability, as an instrument, to mold and influence the minds of the electorate (Meyers, 2016).

Against this backdrop, this study therefore seeks to examine mass media, election campaigns and electoral corruption with particular attention to the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria. The specific objective of the study is to ascertain whether mass media influences election campaigns and electoral corruption in Nigeria.

II. DELINEATION OF CONCEPTS

Mass Media

Several attempts have been made by scholars to conceptualize the meaning of mass media in line with their perceptions and orientations. This is virtually occasioned by the fact that the concept “mass media” to a large extent, provokes a response of interest at mention. Apparently, some scholars have argued that mass media cannot be easily conceptualized. However, attempt would be made in this study to pin down its meaning and relevance.

Nwabueze (2005) posits that mass media serves as a potent tool for community mobilization. This suggests that mass media are very vital to the mobilization of a large, heterogeneous people for any activity of interest to them and the society at large. People contribute and participate in any activity only when they are adequately informed about the nature of such activity. It is a truism that mass media have been identified as potent channels for mobilizing the public for participatory community in any political programmes to constantly keep them abreast with strategies to adopt in the exercise of their rights.

Tejumaiye (2005) emphasizes the importance of mass media when he submits thus:
... I know that all is well if I switch off my radio and television at bedtime and wake up the following morning with the early morning news. But, I know that all is not well, if at bedtime I switch off my radio and television and switch on the following morning without hearing anything from either my radio or television, or that I cannot even see the newspapers at the news stand. I will continue to be worried and ask myself, if the world is not being troubled with the absence of the mass media.

The above statement by Tejumaiye succinctly captured the significant role of the mass media in any body polity especially in the election campaigns and electoral processes.

Furthermore, Izuogu (2009) observes that:
Considerable evidence has accumulated that editors and broadcasters play an important part in shaping our social reality as they go about their day-to-day task of choosing and displaying news... In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.

Implicitly, the above is an eloquent testimony that the mass media through its news selection establish not only issues of public importance, but also determine how much importance to attach to a given issue. This, no doubt, is the role of the media, to bring to the attention of the public issues that are of tremendous importance, thereby eliciting some degree of sympathy or empathy from the masses or appealing to their intellect in order to win favourable advantages in their mind concerning topical issues (Anorue, Obayi and Onyebuchi, 2012).

In this context, the logic and the sacrosanctity of mass media is that the media can pick the issue of election campaigns and break it down in the minds of the people with the sole aim of highlighting the merits and demerits, with a view to winning the minds of the people towards a particular candidate and sound political system. Of course, this action can either be through comprehensive editorial writing, feature writing or interpretative news stories. Even in television, it can come in form of documentary, panel discussion, phone in programmes and events coverage. In essence, there are countless dimensions through which the media can pass the message across to the people.

In this regard, people’s political awareness is crucial to the success of a political system. The major way of ensuring adequate awareness is through political socialization via the mass media which is the learning, accepting and approving of customs, rules, structures and environmental factors governing political life. It must be stated that the political institution, being the most important in any society, defines and regulates the operation of other societal institutions and must of necessity, be well projected, analyzed and understood by the people for its own success as a vital societal institution. Without the media process, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the people to develop the appropriate relationship with the political institution. This fact is well noted by scholars like Graber (1989), Adeseye and Ibagere (1999) and Ibagere (2009) respectively. The importance of the mass media is however reflected by the undue attention governments, across the globe, pay to their operations.

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Election campaigns have undergone major transformations in the last few decades viz the changes in party loyalty, the rapid development of the mass media and the rise of political marketing (Nkwede, Nwankwo, Nworie and Nwodom, 2019). Thus, election campaign is to inform voters about those choices before them and to mobilize citizen participation (Curtice, Sanders, Scammell, Semetko, 1999). Giving all credit to the accounts

of civil disenchantment with politics, it would be argued that campaigns remain the platform for citizens to acquire relevant information to evaluate government's performance and learn about political options.

As argued by Swanson and Mancini (1996), the process of modernization characterized by increasing social complexity and growing fragmentation, led to a break with traditional social ties. This is so because party affiliation, which was hitherto related to class, became a matter of personal preference and in many democracies, voting seems to have been transformed from an expression of solidarity with one's group and its institution to an expression of one's opinions and convictions. Kirchheimer (1966) argues that transformed parties had to turn to an individual voter abandoning their strong ideological positions and becoming "Catch-all" parties today.

For Kotler and Kotler (1999), the first rule of effective campaigning is for the campaigning to reflect the interest of the voters. Adding his voice, Newman (1994) suggests that the old concept of parties pursuing their ideologies has now been replaced by the marketing concept that segments the electorate, creates the candidates' image accordingly and targets voters with specific, finely brushed messages.

Aware of the fact that all the general concerns about public skepticism and disenchantment with politics, Grbesa (2005) argues that campaigns still enhance the knowledge of the voters about political choices they have, provide a forum to evaluate government's performance, introduce new options into political arena and bring political information to broad segments of public.

As democratic society has undergone one evolution driven by the increasing social complexity, so have campaigns. Party derangement, the emergence of the new media and the rise of political marketing have changed the structure and the course of election campaigns. Election campaigns, therefore, should not be assessed as a socially isolated and intermittent phenomenon. The only proper way to look at them is within the macro and micro context of modernization and specific national settings (Nkwede, Nwankwo, Nworie and Nwodom, 2019).

ELECTORAL CORRUPTION

Electoral corruption in this study involves illegal interference with the process of an election, either by increasing the vote share of a favoured candidate, depressing the vote share of rival candidates, or both. What actually constitutes electoral corruption varies from country to country. However, to corrupt a system means to introduce or allow anything that could hamper the proper functioning of that system and ultimately influence such system negatively such that the expected outcome would not be achieved (Udu and Nkwede, 2019).

A system can be corrupted by introducing bugs or virus that affects its proper functioning for optimal performance. The traditional role of elections in choosing credible candidates into elective positions through the instrumentality of legitimate processes can only be realized where the electoral system is just, fair, and provides level playing ground for political actors. The electoral system so referred to here, are the institutionalized process of determining popular choice in direct and popular representation in indirect or representative democracies, the latter being dictated by the size and complexity of modern state system (Igwe, 2002 in Okoli, 2005).

Indeed, for many democratic elections to take place, Igwe (2002) asserts that an independent electoral body must be established to supervise the exercise, political parties must be freely organized and citizens must have the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and association, with provisions for independent or non-party candidates. Electoral corruption would be bred if any of the above ingredients or electoral process in its entirety is perverted.

Electoral corruption in this regard encompasses all forms of electoral malpractices, irregularities and rigging and other related unruly electoral activities. Any electoral act that tends to sway victory to unpopular candidates by interest driven actors within the entire environment of electoral processes came under the umbrella of electoral corruption.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is information processing theory. This theory has its root from the works of Miller (1956), Atkison and Shiffrin (1977), Baddeley and Graham (1974) and Rogers, Miller and William (1999). Information processing theory is primarily concerned in the comparison of the human brain to a computer or basic processor. The major emphasis is that the brain works in a set sequence, as does a computer. The sequence goes as follows, "receives input, processes the information and delivers as output".

Apparently, the theory suggests that we as humans, will process information in a similar way. Just like a computer receives input the mind will receive information through the senses. If the information is focused on, it will move to the short-term memory, while in the short-term memory or working memory, the mind is able to use the information to address its surroundings. The information is then coded to the long-term memory where the information is then stored.

The major components of information processing theory are information stores, cognitive processes and executive cognition (Erisen and Mehmet, 2019). Information stores are the different places that information can be stored in the mind. Cognitive processes are the way humans transfer information from the different memory stores while executive cognition is the idea that someone is aware of the way they process information.

Information processing theory can be applied in a political system, with sensing, attending, and encoding of stimuli occurring either within individuals or within groups in a political environment. The information processing theory develops individual and mutual schemes influence what and how information is attended to and processed.

The methodological implication of this theory is that special attention must be paid to the information received and indeed, it must be used as an output in the political milieu. Ipso facto, the propositions of this framework shall be instrumental in guiding this study in analyzing and understanding the nexus between mass media, election campaigns and electoral corruption in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

III. Methodology

Documentary design was employed in the study. Data were elicited from documentary instruments especially from secondary sources through the review of relevant texts, journals, newspapers, official publications, direct observation, media commentaries and scholarly writings on mass media, election campaigns and electoral corruption in Nigeria and internet materials. The study employed content analytical methods wherein data collected through secondary sources were analyzed. This approach was germane because it ensures gaining insight from the analysis of mass media, election campaigns and electoral corruption in Nigeria in recent times. Ipso facto, the content analytical technique was relied upon to evaluate the data generated in the course of this study. For all intent and purposes, content analysis is a research technique adopted primarily for objectivity, systematization and qualitative analysis and interpretation of information.

IV. FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

Elections in Nigeria since 1999 when the military relinquished political power have been bedeviled with corruption of varying magnitude and dimension. It is germane to point out that electoral corruption constitutes one of the major problems confronting democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Previous studies on electoral corruption reveal their intensity, pervasiveness and the various dimensions with which they occur. Some of these dimensions include issues that relate to infringement of Electoral Law; those that pertain to improper and unethical infringement and those that border on conduct, management/election administration by the Election Management Body known as Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria.

Obviously, there is no gain saying the fact that Nigeria is a democratic state today but its electoral system is faulty (Sule, Sani, and Mat, 2008). The corrupt political process has indeed, affected the political and socio-economic aspects of the country including elections and electoral process in Nigeria (Ackerman, 2000). It can safely be argued that the corruption in the political system includes the demand for electoral politics, the extensive use of clientelism in political appointments and distribution of societal resources and the use of dubious electoral malpractices. More so, the Nigerian elite is parasitic and exploitative feasting fat on national treasury which made them to form a criminal syndicate who manipulates the process of consolidating themselves into power through maneuvering the electoral process including vote buying and rigging of election results.

Apparently, there are evidences of electoral corruption in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria despite an elaborate media orientation and awareness on the citizenry regarding the conduct and behavior of the electorate coupled with enormity of election campaigns designed to market credible candidates for various electoral positions. There were evidences of online circulation of false election results and the use of paid advertising on online platforms by major contending political parties. For instance, a smear video tagged “Atiku Abubakar’s wed of corruption; Stop Atiku 2019” and “well Atikulated” targeted against Buhari, to mention but a few. Unfortunately, all such videos and facebook, twitter accounts were faceless, the aim of which was to discredit one candidate in favour of the other and this is not a strategy that can promote electoral fairness.

It should be mentioned here that serial medial awareness was made on Voter’s Registration Exercise for 8 years, and it was expected that a cleaning process should have been undertaken by INEC to ensure that deceased people were deleted from the Voter’s Register aware of the fact that Nigeria has a very high mortality rate: 9.6 death/1000 population/years implying that they estimates that up to 8 million deceased persons are still on the register in addition to the problem of duplicate entries across different states since the cleansing process was only undertaken at state level and duplication across state is more complex and difficult to contend.

Similarly, after the registration period, Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) were available for collection at the 774 LGA offices as INEC decentralized collection points from 16th -21st January, 2019 to all 8,809 ward offices and extended deadline from 8-11 February, 2019. This step was however marred by poor logistics and the fact that procedures for distribution of Voters Card were not sufficiently adhered to; sometimes, PVCs were

delivered to incorrect offices while some were not available due to late printing which resulted to voter frustration and disenfranchisement (EUEOM, 2019).

Importantly, the INEC failed to provide regular updates on numbers of uncollected cards with final number announced on 21st February, 2019, five days after the original election date. If disaggregating of data were by polling units, there would have been extra integrity check as parties would have known the maximum possible turn out in election date, thereby reducing concerns of multiple voting and related fraudulent activities.

As argued by Nkwede and Udu (2019), the law was also flawed on the account that it failed to provide for an effective administrative check as INEC lacked the powers to uphold the law, but was only obliged to register all candidates fielded by the parties after primary elections. INEC had no legal right to disqualify any candidate brought to it after party primaries as reported by the media (EUEOM, 2019). For instance, when the APC candidate for Zamfara state was disqualified by INEC on grounds of lack of evidence of primary election in the state, the courts over-ruled in favour of the party. In this wise, there were non-inclusive and acrimonious primaries as reported by the media and EU observers. It should be noted that all these spell doom to electoral transparency or credibility in the country and of course inimical to democratic process and consolidation.

MANIFESTATIONS OF ELECTORAL CORRUPTION IN THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria were competitive with a large number of contenders for all seats. Evidently, there were 91 registered political parties; each having a candidate vying for specific position; 73 presidential candidates, 1,899 for the 109 senatorial seats, 4680 for the 360 House of Representative seats and 1,046 candidates for the 29 governorships as well as 14,609 candidates for the 991 state Assembly seats (Ojo, 2019).

Emphatically, the 2019 general elections like the previous one were characterized by incidents of violence, including/against electoral staff, damaged the process; parties and security agencies did not sufficiently protect citizens right to vote safely from intimidation (EO-EOM, 2019). Approximately, 145 people were killed, 84 of which in the south zone of the country. Again, about 64 deaths were reported before the 23rd February elections, 21 of these attributed to the postponement of the elections; about 35 deaths were reported on 23rd February and 24 and on 8th March.

There were reports of intimidation of election officials in 29 LGAs in 20 state of the federation during result collations, while some states were largely inaudible due to electoral violence. In some state like Rivers, collation centres were invaded by some soldiers and armed gangs resulting in the intimidation and unlawful arrest of election officials.

Equally, in the vast majority of these cases, there were theft and destruction of sensitive election materials in addition to INEC announcing results under duress in state like Imo leading to the election being declared inconclusive (Nkwede, Emordi and Nwelom, 2019). Also, a similar scenario happened in some other state leading to supplementary elections thereafter. The level of electoral corruption in the face of all these was quite obvious, enormous and glaring. The outcome/result of the elections is showcased in tables 1-4 below:

Table 1: Results of the 2019 Presidential Election, 23rd February, 2019.

S/N	Name of Candidate	Party	Votes Received
	Ositelu Isaac Babatunde	A	19,219
	Abulrashid Hassan Baba	AA	14,380
	Omoyele Sowore	AAC	33,953
	Chike Ukaegbu	AAP	8,902
	Shipi Moses Godia	ABP	4,523
	Nwokeafor Ikechukwu Ndubuisi	ACD	11,325
	Ezekwesili Obiageli Katryn	ACPN	7,223
	Mailafia Obadiah	ADC	97,874
	Yabagi Sani Yusuf	ADP	54,930
	Nwachukwu Chuks Nwabuikwu	AGA	4,689
	Chief Umenwa Godwin	AGAP	3,071
	Obaje Yusuf Ameh	ANDP	3,104
	Durotoye Adetokunbo Olufela	ANN	16,779
	Shittu Moshood Adiwaju	ANP	3,586
	Fasua Tope Kolade	ANRP	4,340
	Ibrahim Aliyu Hassan	APA	36,866
	Buhari Muhammadu	APC	15,191,847
	Shitu Mohammed Kabir	APDA	26,851
	Gbor John Wilson Terwase	APGA	66,851

	Yusuf Mamman Dantalle	APM	26,039
	Obinna Uchechukwu Ikeagwuonu	APP	3,585
	Dara John	ASD	2,146
	Angela Johnson	AUN	1,092
	David Esosa Ize-Iyamu	BNPP	1,649
	Aba Lewis Elaigwu	CAP	1,111
	Ojinika Geff Chizee	CC	2,391
	Etim Emmanuel Ishie	CNP	1,874
	Ukonga Frank	DA	2,769
	Awosola Williams Olusola	DPC	5,242
	Osakwe Felix Johnson	DPP	14,483
	Okotie Christopher Oghenebrorie	FRESH	4,554
	Rev. (Rd) Onwubuya	FJP	4,174
	Akhimien Davidson Isibor	GDPN	41,852
	Eke Samuel Chukwuma	GPN	4,924
	Albert Owuru Ambrose	HDP	1,663
	Madu Nnamdi Edozie	ID	1,845
	Chukwu-Eguzolugo Sunday Chikendu	JMPP	1,854
	Fabenro-Byron Samuel Adesina	KP	1,911
	Kriz David	LM	1,438
	Muhammed Usman Zaki	LP	5,074

Source: INEC Official Website

Table 2: Presidential Election Result (APC and PDP)

S/N	State	APC	PDP
	Abia	85,058	219,698
	Adamawa	378,078	410,266
	Anambra	33,298	524,738
	Bauchi	798,428	209,313
	Benue	347,668	358,817
	Ekiti	219,231	154,032
	Edo	267,842	275,691
	Enugu	54,423	355,553
	Ebonyi	90,726	258,573
	FCT	152,224	259
	Gombe	402,961	138,484
	Imo	140,463	334,923
	Jigawa	794,738	289,895
	Kogi	285,738	289,895
	Kwara	308,984	138,184
	Kano	1,464,768	391,593
	Kaduna	993,445	649,612
	Katsina	1,232,133	308,506
	Lagos	589,825	448,015
	Nasarawa	289,903	283,847
	Niger	612,371	218,052
	Osun	347,634	337,377
	Ondo	241,769	275,901
	Oyo	365,769	275,690
	Ogun	281,762	194,655
	Plateau	468,555	548,665
	Taraba	324,906	374,743
	Yobe	497,914	50,762
	Cross River	117,302	295,737
	Borno	836,296	71,788
	A'lbom	175,429	395,832
	Delta	221,292	594,068

	Bayelsa	118,821	197,933
	Sokoto	490,333	361,604
	Rivers	150,710	473,971
	Kebbi	581,552	154,282
	Zamfara	438,682	125,423
	Total	15,191,647	11,264,971

Source: (Daily Sun, Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2019:01)

Table 3: Governorship Election Held on 9th March, 2019

List of Governors and Deputy Governors Elect

S/N	State	Candidate	Party
	Abia	Okezie Victor Ikpeazu	PDP
		Ude Oko Chukwu	PDP
	Adamawa		-
	Akwa Ibom	Udom Emmanuel	PDP
		Moses Frank Ekpo	PDP
	Bauchi		-
	Benue		-
	Borno	Baba Gana Umara	APC
		Umaru Usman Kadafur	APC
	Cross River	Ayede Benedict Bengiushuye	PDP
		Ivara Ejemot Esu	PDP
	Delta	Ifeanyi Arthur Okowa	PDP
	Ebonyi	David Nweze Umahi	PDP
		Igwe Kelechi Eric	PDP
	Enugu	Ifeanyi Lawrence Ugwuanyi	PDP
		Ezeilo Cecilia Obioma	PDP
	Gombe	Mohammed Inuwa Yahaya	APC
		Manassah Daniel Jatayu	APC
	Imo	Ihedioha Emeka	PDP
		Irona Alphonsus	PDP
	Jigawa	Mohammed Badaru Abubakar	APC
		Umar Alhaji Nnamdi	APC
	Kaduna	Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai	APC
		Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe	APC
	Kano		-
		Aminu Bello Masari	APC
		Mannir Yakubu	APC
	Kebbi	Abubakar Atiku Bagudu	APC
		Samaila Dabai Yombe	APC
	Kwara	Abulrhman Abbulrazaq	APC
		Kayode Alabi	APC
	Lagos	Babajide Olusola Samwolu	APC
		Kadri Obafemi Hamzat	APC
	Nasarawa	Audu Alhaji Sule	APC
		Emmanuel Agbadu Akabe	APC
	Niger	Sani Abubakar Bello	APC
		Ahmed Muhammad Ketso	APC
	Ogun	Adedapo Abiodun	APC
		Salako-Oyedele Niomot Olurotimi	APC
	Oyo	Oluseyi Makinde	PDP

Source: INEC Official Website

Table 4: Senatorial Election Held on 23rd February, 2019 and Supplementary Election held on 9th March, 2019.

List of Elected Candidates

State	S/N	District	Candidate	Party
Abia		North	Kalu Orji Uzor	APC
		Central	Orji Theodore Ahamefule	PDP
		South	Abaribe Enyinnaya Harcourt	PDP
Adamawa		North	Ishaku Elisha Cliff	PDP
		South	Yaroe Binos Dauda	PDP
		Central	Dahiru Aishatu Ahmed	APC
Akwa Ibom		North East	Akpan Bassey Albert	PDP
		North West	Christopher Stephen Ekenyong	PDP
		South	Eyakenyi Akon Etim	PDP
Anambra		North	Oduah Stella Adaeze Pricess	PDP
		Central	Uche Lilian Ekunife	PDP
		South	Patrick Ifeanyi Ubah	YPP
Bauchi		South	Party to submit Name	APC
		Central	Jika Dauda Halliru	APC
		North	Bulkachuwa Adamu Muhammad	APC
Bayelsa		East	Degi Eremienyo Biobaraku Wangagra	APC
		Central	Diri Douye	APC
		West	Ewhrujakpo Lawrence O.	PDP
Benue		North East	Gabriel Torwua Suswam	PDP
		North West	Emmanuel Yisa Orker-Jev	PDP
		South	Patric Abba Moro	PDP
Borno		North	Kyari Abubaka Shaib	APC
		Central	Shettima Kashim	APC
		South	Ndume Mohammed Ali	APC
Cross River		North	Oko Rose Okoji	PDP
		Central	Onor Sandy Ojang	PDP
		South	Bassey Gershom Henry	PAD
Delta		Central	Omo-Agege Ovie Augustine	APC
		North	Nwaoboshi Peter Onyeluka	PDP
		South	Manager James Ebiowou	PDP
Ebonyi		North	Egwu Sunday Ominyi	PDP
		Central	Ogba Joseph Obinna	PDP
		South	Michael Ama Nnachi	PDP
Edo		Central	Ordia Akhimienmona Clifford	PDP
		North	Alimikhena Francis Asekhame	APC
		South	Urhoghide Mathew Aisagbonriodion	PDP
Ekiti		North	Adetunmbi Olubunmi Ayodeji	APC
		Central	Bamidele Michael Opeyemi	APC
		South	Adeyeye Clement Adebayo	APC
Enugu		East	Nnamani Chimaroke Ogbonnia	PDP

Source: INEC Official Website

From tables one to four above, it is crystal clear that the mass media played a vital role in highlighting electoral corruption in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. This is because such coverage raised public awareness and expanded the discourse and made electoral corruption a central issue during the election cycle. The study found that despite media support for the conduct of credible, free and fair elections, there were election corruptive messaging and almost unfiltered coverage of the APC's criticism of the PDP during the 2019 general elections and this seems to have marred the reputation of that election.

Evidently, there were reported cases of overall low turnout with wide variation between states as recorded/reported by the EU election observers. For instance, there was a large discrepancy of 1.66 million more registered voters as announced by INEC on 14th January, compared to those announced by the state Returning Officers during collation of presidential results. In effect, INEC could not provide convincing explanation, but alluded general mathematical errors and mistakes during lower level collation.

Furthermore, there was also a sizable discrepancy between accredited voters in the voters register and the actual votes cast. Evidence abounds that while 750,000 were marked as accredited, but did not cast a vote at a presidential ballot; on average the margin of disparity was below 2% in eight states, it exceeded 3% (EU-EOM, 2019). In like manner, before the election, INEC had clearly published that 84,004, 084 were registered and went ahead to publicize the state by state breakdowns of this figure. In net, the actual figure announced by states Returning Officers at collation centre were 86,344, 125 showing a short fall of 1,659,959 voters. In all these, the media publicized the election results with reckless abandon and even INEC did not provide any explanation for the discrepancy.

Instead of affecting corrupt-free election, the study discovered that the voyeuristic tendency of the corruption news coverage of the media did not go down well with Nigerians and the electoral process. The media coverage failed to engender investigative reportage with a view to enthroning free, fair, credible, violence free and acceptable election in the system.

V. CONCLUSION

We have indeed carried out a critical investigation on the mass media, election campaigns and electoral corruption with a focus on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. We however arrived at the finding that the inability of the mass media to adhere to investigative reportage essentially and significantly contributed to the electoral corruption in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It is obvious that Nigeria's enduring struggle with electoral corruption has not lessened as evidenced in this study.

Electoral corruption deprives election of its inherent character of competition, a platform where contestants can equally aspire to win. Where the contestants have unequal capacity to rig because an opponent has greater capacity to influence the electoral process and the media to his advantage or is positioned to coerce the law enforcement agents to his advantage, it became obvious that other contestants have no chance of emerging victorious in the contest. Under such circumstance, election loses its meaning as a competitive platform; hence, politics lose its essence as elections are not free, fair and conducted on a level playing ground for all contestants.

The futuristic implications of this is that the electorate would become apathetic to political issues leading often to boycott and/low turnout of voters during elections when it becomes clear that votes would not count. Indeed, this was the case in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria as revealed by this study.

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