

INVESTIGATING THE COST OF ELECTION IN NIGERIA: THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTION IN FOCUS

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Abstract

Political party funding is an important issue for all global key players in democratic accountability and transparency. One of the areas where the phenomenon is attracting interest is Nigeria. The 2019 General Election represents an important period for the study of party financing in Nigeria. This study critically examines the cost of an election in Nigeria from four perspectives: the cost of nominations, the cost of party primaries, the cost of the actual campaign, and the cost of running the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The study collected data using a qualitative research design that employed the tools of key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The data collected were analysed and interpreted using thematic descriptive qualitative discussions. The study uncovers that the cost of an election in Nigeria is exorbitant and unbearable and the most disturbing aspect is the illegality involved in terms of the violation of maximum spending limit, the use of state resources, and setting a price of nomination above the reach of the common and average man. Thus, it is recommended among others that a strict regulatory sanction and monitoring form compliance should be applied appropriately.

Keywords: 2019 general election, cost, election, investigating, Nigeria

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doi: 10.15405/ejsbs.334



1. Introduction

Nowadays, the active use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the educational process is the result of both the general trend to digitalize education and the forced transition to the implementation of many educational programs in a distance format due to the Covid19 pandemic.

Democracy is a form of governance that enables the governed to freely determine who will lead them in a presumably transparent manner (Achen & Bartels, 2016). For a democratic rule to prevail, certain processes and activities are vital. One of these processes is the campaign, which is the advertisement of contending candidates' manifestos, ideologies, and policies, as well as programmes if they are elected (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). A campaign requires massive expenditure, whether state-sponsored or privately pursued. The process of obtaining and using campaign expenditures is not left in a vacuum. Various democracies have designed regulations and conditions that demand strict compliance for the candidates and their parties in terms of sources of funds, procedures for accepting donations, spending, limits, disclosure, and auditing. All these processes are known as political party financing (Buttorff, 2019).

Nigeria's elections are considered one of the most expensive in the world. For instance, the 2019 General Election is believed to have cost nearly N200 billion for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the electoral body in the country, more than that of the Canada General Election in 2007, the United Kingdom in 2011, and Australia in 2015 (Abdallah, 2018). The cost of obtaining nomination forms for the major parties of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) ran into multi-millions of Naira for various elective offices beyond the reach of the financially weak contestants; regulations were advertently violated; and the electoral process was bastardized with vote buying, bribery, and, worst of all, primitive accumulation accompanied the outcome of the election because the politicians engaged in contract projects that would return their electoral expenses (Sule & Sambo, 2021). One neglected aspect of the issues of the cost of elections and party financing is the security implications of the process of electoral conduct. A huge sum of money was spent on illegal campaign activities such as sponsorship of thugs and violence, which affected the process in the 2019 General Election (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The election has never been that costly in Nigeria compared to 2015 and 2019. While there have been studies (Onyekpere, 2015; Nwangwu & Ononogbu, 2016; Sule et al., 2017a; Sule et al., 2017b; Sule et al., 2018a; Sule et al., 2018b; Sule et al., 2018c) on the cost of the election in 2015, the 2019 General Election received less or inadequate attention on the subject matter. The 2019 General Election marked the fifth uninterrupted democratic transition, signaling democratic stability in Nigeria for the first time in its history. 92 parties contested with thousands of contestants in various elective offices and over 80 million registered voters participated involving massive campaign spending.

2. Literature Review

The literature is reviewed thematically based on the following sub-headings: the 2019 General Election in Focus and the Cost of an Election in Nigeria. In addition, the concept of clientelism is also covered as an important construct in understanding this issue.

2.1. The 2019 General Election in Focus

In the 2019 General Election, a total of 84,004,084 (eighty-four million, four thousand, and eighty-four) registered voters were recorded across six geopolitical zones of the country and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (FCTA) (Budgit, 2019). A total of 23, 000 candidates contested for various elective offices, from the Presidency to the level of State Houses of Assemblies. With 91 total registered political parties, 73 candidates vied for the post of President; 73 contested for the office of Vice President; 1,064 battled for the gubernatorial election; 1,064 sought the post of Deputy Governorship; 1,903 contested for the Senate; 4703 contested for the House of Representatives; 14,643 sought the State House of Assemblies; 105 candidates contested for the Chairperson of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja; and 701 contested for FCTA Councillorship (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2019).

Several challenges were encountered in the build-up to the 2019 General Election, including but not limited to the outrageous number of registered parties, which made the electoral materials cumbersome and difficult in terms of legibility because of the small print and symbols; funding for the conduct of the election; postponement; violence; and money politics in terms of vote buying and excessive campaign expenditure (Sule, 2019). The result of the Presidential Election indicates that APC scored 15,191,847 votes (55.69%), PDP scored 11, 262,978 votes (41.28%), and the other 71 parties collectively secured 826,419 votes (3.03%). In the Senate, the APC secured 66 (61%) of the seats, the PDP 42 (39%), and the YPP 1 (1%). In the House of Representatives, APC secured 223 (61.94%), PDP 117 (32.50%), APGA 9 (2.50%), ADC 3 (0.83%), AA 2 (0.56%), PRP 2 (0.56%), SDP 1 (0.28%), LP 1 (0.28%), APM 1 (0.28%), and ADP 1 (0.28%). In the Governorship election, APC secured 17 states while PDP secured 14 states out of the 31 states that hold the Gubernatorial elections because some have a different periodic calendar owing to changes in transition and court litigations (INEC, 2019). In essence, the 2019 General Election is seen as a consolidation of democracy because the election was, to a certain extent, acceptable, but it was characterized by violence, manipulation, and excessive spending (Sule & Sambo, 2021). The results revealed that only parties and their candidates who possessed the huge financial resources with which to compete secured victory in the election. A large chunk of the parties' and candidates' expenditures was reported to have been spent illegally by "godfathers" of politicians and politicians themselves in sponsoring electoral violence, which directly affected the security of the elections in many parts of the country where violence of a large magnitude was reported, including the use of machetes, clubs, knives, guns, and even explosives in some states, especially during the Gubernatorial elections (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2019).

2.1.1. Regulations in Election Finance in Nigeria: Conduct and Process

The act that established the electoral body, INEC, in Nigeria specified that funding for the organization should come directly from the consolidated revenue of the Federal Government. It also specified that INEC is responsible for the preparation of the electoral budget to be submitted for scrutiny and approval by the National Assembly. From 1999 to 2010, funding for electoral expenditure was offered by INEC through grants to registered parties that were participating in the election, making the process partly public and partly private. The 2010 Electoral Act abrogated any public funding, making the cost of elections solely the responsibility of parties and politicians from private sources. Nigeria is one of the African countries with well-articulated regulations for party financing in the Nigerian 1999 Constitution as

Amended and in the Electoral Act 2010. Sections 225 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) and 226 (1, 2 and 3) of the Nigerian Constitution provide for detailed sources of finance, legal sources, disclosure, and auditing, as well as scrutiny of the party's campaign expenditure. Sections 88 (a and b) of the Electoral Act 2010 provide for campaign expenditure offenses and sanctions, and Sections 89 (1, 2, 3, and 4) provide for auditing and scrutiny of the party's and candidates' sources of finance and expenditure within a stipulated period of time after the election. Section 91 (1, 2, and 3) and Section 92 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) of the Electoral Act 2010 provide for the maximum spending limit of all electoral offices in Nigeria (Sule, 2018). There is a clear provision on what politicians are expected to spend as a maximum ceiling for campaign expenditure and the attendant sanctions for violations, as indicated in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Limitation on Election Expenses of Candidates and Sanction for Offenders

| Sections | Maximum Campaign Expenses | Sanctions for Offenders |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Section 91 | Election expenses shall not exceed the sum stipulated in Sub-Section (2-7) of this Act | |
| Section 91(2) | The maximum expenditure to be incurred for the Presidential election shall be one billion naira (N1, 000, 000, 000) . | A fine of N1, 000, 000 or imprisonment of 12 months or both. |
| Section 91(3) | The maximum election expenses to be incurred by a Governorship election shall be two hundred million naira (N200, 000, 000) . | A fine of N800, 000 or imprisonment for 9 months or both. |
| Section 92(4) | The maximum amount of election expenses to be incurred for a Senatorial seat shall be forty million naira (N40, 000, 000) . | A fine of N600, 000 or imprisonment for six months or both. |
| Section 92(4) | The maximum amount of election expenses to be incurred for a House of Representatives shall be forty million naira (N40, 000, 000) . | A fine of N500, 000 or imprisonment for five months or both. |
| Section 92(5) | In the case of the State Assembly election, the maximum of election expenses to be incurred shall be ten million naira (N10, 000, 000) . | A fine of N300, 000 or 3 months imprisonment or both. |
| Section 92(6) | In the case of a Chairmanship election, the maximum election expenses shall be ten million naira (N10, 000, 000) . | A fine of N300, 000 or 3 months imprisonment or both. |
| Section 92(7) | In the case of a councillorship election, the maximum amount of election expenses shall be one million naira (N1, 000, 000) . | A fine of N100, 000.00 or 1month imprisonment or both. |
| Section 92(8, a, b, c) | In determining the expenses, no account shall be taken of; any deposit made in compliance with the law, any expenditure made before the election date and party expenses in respect of candidates | Contravention of subsection (9) shall on conviction be liable to a maximum fine of N500, 000 or 9 months imprisonment or both. |
| Section 92(9) | No individual or other entity shall donate more than one million naira (N1, 000, 000) to any candidate. | |

Source: 2010 Electoral Act (Tabulation was made by the Researchers in 2021).

Despite all these sanctions, it has been established (CDD 2019 and Human Rights Watch 2020) that most politicians in the two major contending parties of APC and PDP abused the public trust by abusing the public treasury in financing their campaigns, and there is evidence of illicit spending where intoxicants,

weapons, and other proscribed items of the campaign were provided for supporters of the two major parties for intimidating voters and opposition. This is perhaps the major reason why the parties could not audit their accounts and submit them to INEC years after the election, according to an informant consulted in the study.

2.2. Cost of Election in Nigeria: A Critical Review

Elections are expensive in Nigeria because of several factors. The country is the biggest democracy in Africa considering that Nigeria is the most populous country on the continent and the sixth most populous country in the world, with a total estimated population of 216 million as of 2022 (Statista, 2022). Those contesting high political offices such as presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial, and House of Representatives incur huge campaign expenditures in posters, billboards, media ads, campaign tours, and other logistics (Adetula, 2008). However, the legal expenditures are not as costly as the hidden or forbidden expenses that parties and candidates incur during the electioneering process. Vote-buying dominates party primaries and the general elections (Adeyi, 2008). Adeyi (2008) further found that vote-buying cases between 1999 and the 2007 general elections were reported more than 100 times in various places across the country where a token is given to the electorate – albeit an insignificant one, sometimes in cash, and in other cases, in kind. Party primaries serve as a venture for money-making. For instance, in the 2019 presidential primaries in the PDP, delegates were bribed with \$5000 by a single candidate, while in the APC, the state governors were reported to have donated each a sum of N25 million to rally around and endorse the second candidature of President Muhammadu Buhari (Sule, 2022). All these are huge expenses that are secured allegedly from public treasury in most cases as identified by Ohman (2014).

The cost of elections in Nigeria is alarming to the extent that the former President Olusegun Obasanjo confessed that the 2003 General Election witnessed campaign expenditures that could finance a successful war (Aluigba, 2015). A major problem associated with the cost of elections in Nigeria is excessive spending, violation of regulations, and weak monitoring and enforcement. The 2010 Electoral Act stipulates that a presidential candidate should not spend more than N1 billion, while the donation limit is N1 million. However, a fundraising dinner for President Jonathan in the 2011 presidential campaign attracted around N22 billion, with many individuals, business ventures, and corporate associates donating beyond N1 billion (Nwangwu & Ononogbu, 2016). Likewise, in the build-up to the 2019 presidential election, the PDP spent approximately N7 billion in media ads alone, and the APC spent around N3 billion for the same expenditure (Onyekpere, 2015), despite the maximum spending limit of N1 billion. In another incident, an individual donated N250 million to President Jonathan in 2010, and he claimed that he had not committed any illegality even though he knew that he was not expected to donate beyond N1 million (Ohman, 2014). The sources of donations that cover the cost of the election are thus, not only suspected to be questionable, but they are often involved in illegality. For example, President Obasanjo's associate, General T.Y. Danjuma, confessed that although the money donated for his campaign far outstripped the ceiling limit, he never cared to question the sources or their legality, as the money was used for campaign expenditures (Aluigba, 2015).

The cost of elections in Nigeria is linked to corruption and abuse of public resources. A good example is the diversion of \$2.1 billion earmarked for the procurement of weapons to combat Boko Haram for the PDP campaign expenditure in 2015. The cost was estimated at nearly N1 trillion at the current

exchange rate (Sule et al. 2017) who also found that the money was shared among politicians, religious clerics, army generals and other paramilitary personnel, electoral workers, traditional rulers, media, civil societies, and other stakeholders. Even the INEC Chairman himself, Professor Mahmud Yakubu, lamented that money politics is threatening to hijack Nigeria's election to the highest bidder, and the scenario of the failure to account for the income and expenditure of major parties in the 2019 General Election affects the credibility and integrity of the Election (Sule, 2023). The INEC Chairman further warns that until money politics is eradicated, vulnerable and unprivileged groups will be forever excluded from political competition in Nigerian elections (Sule, 2023).

2.3. Clientelism and its repercussions

The crucial concept of clientelism needs to be understood in the context of this discussion on money politics and election campaigns. Debates and an early attempt at theorizing clientelism began in the 1970s and 1980s. Clientelism is a term that denotes a payoff in the struggles towards accessing state resources through a complex web of interrelationships between patron and client, or in other cases, patron-broker-client cycle (Roniger, 2004). Clientelism is a model that espouses the political economy of democracy, elections, and resource allocation (Darabont, 2010). The patrons and brokers involved in the mobilization of political support and victory through vote buying, bribery, and other possible means of excelling during the quest for an electoral office in return for a beneficial reward are often associated with abuse of office and violation of due process (Gans-Morse et al., 2014). Clientelism portrays how state resources are accessed and shared among the beneficiaries in certain ways that are enshrouded in corruption (Isaksson & Bigsten, 2013). However, unlike the above postulations by various scholars that clientelism is a mutual and beneficial relationship, Stocks et al. (2013) offered a different opinion that it can be achieved by threats and coercion from politicians in attaining their goal of acquiring political offices. Clientelism depicts serious setbacks in accountability and transparency in democratic ruling in terms of slowing down good governance and justice, leading to the emergence of weak candidates who can buy their way, and giving undue advantages to the partners of the clientele relationship (Muno, 2014). Schweizer (2013) stresses that clientelism leads to extortion because politicians recoup the resources that they have spent in the process of vote-buying. The quality of democracy and social policy is also affected by clientelism (Brun, 2014).

Clientelism has five major assumptions: that the relationship is dyadic between the patron and the client; that the relationship is asymmetrical; that the relationship is personal and enduring; that the relationship is reciprocal; and that the relationship is voluntary (Muno, 2014). Clientelism is observable in various forms across many democracies in the world, specifically weak or nascent democracies where political institutions are weak and sanctioning is still ineffective. However, even in strong democracies like the US, England, France, Italy, and others, Clientelism holds sway during the election and across the entire political tenures of the patrons and their clients, conducted in subterranean mode (Hagel, 2020). Hagel (2020) further added that global politics has been diverted and hijacked by the world's billionaires, who control politicians and economic sectors the world over, and clientelism has gained headway the world over through their influence.

The political distribution of goods is attributed to the emergence of Clientelism. Just like how the market distributes goods, politics distributes goods through the allocation of state resources. Individuals and interest groups strive hard to get the maximum. Poverty enables the seeds of clientelism to germinate in vote buying and selling, and the US and Britain killed vote buying through overcoming poverty (Stocks et al., 2013). However, Stocks et al.'s (2013) view that addressing the poverty menace killed clientelism in the US and Britain is not supported by what Kuo (2018) reported in his recent study of how the business cartels are further entrenching clientelism in countries as emphasized by Hagel (2020) above. In some instances, like Columbia, bureaucratic and political offices and material benefits are allocated based on the number of votes obtained in constituencies, which led to the creation of several clientelistic networks to accrue benefits (Cendales et al., 2019). In Southeast Asian politics, political parties are instrumental in clientelism in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Although the parties there are weak and not held in high esteem by the electorate, they used the undue advantage of poverty to supply T-shirts, caps, bikes, and even food items during elections to lure voters in return for voting them into power (Tomsa & Ufen, 2013). Aspinall and Sukmajati (2019) supported the above view in the Indonesian case, where the scourge of poverty subjected the voters at the grassroots election to money politics, patronage, and clientelism, where politicians utilized the poor condition of the rural people to buy their votes either in cash or kind. In another study, Aspinall and Berenschot (2019) submitted that clientelism permeated the state of Indonesia during the electoral process and was not only isolated to the grassroots poor.

A study reported that in the case of South America, with Brazil as the case study, ideology alone could not convince the voters to choose any party or candidate, opening the gateway for clientelism to take root (Muniz, 2015). In essence, clientelism is recognized as routine business in Latin American countries, not only during elections, as observed by Hilgers (2012). In the African context, businessmen play an important role in clientelism. El Tarouty (2015), using Egypt as the premise of his analysis, argued that businessmen sponsored politicians in return for a patron-client relationship. The businessmen help them win an election by spending lavishly on them during the electoral contests in return for juicy contracts, lucrative appointments to their cronies, and other state or official influence. In the case of Nigeria, the area of study, it is observed that "godfathers" are instrumental in the clientelism process (Sule et al. 2018c). They sponsor their anointed candidates with moneybags with the anticipation of payback in the form of contracts, kickbacks, and appointments to juicy positions of their own family members or cronies, all in direct contradiction of due process. In some unique instances, monopoly capitalism exists, as in the case of Dangote, who donated N200 million to Obasanjo during his 1999 Presidential campaign, and that eventually made Dangote almost a monopoly in Nigeria in various manufacturing sectors.

In other countries, the proceeds of war and insecurity hatched clientelism, like in Iraq. Abdullah (2017) hypothesized that clientelism, patronage, and rent-seeking intensified after the removal of Saddam Hussein from power by the invaders' forces. The country, left with a weak central authority and an oil-rich economy, became an avenue for the scramble towards self-enrichment through the clientele process.

From the above expositions, it can be deduced that clientelism is not a phenomenon that is peculiar to Nigerian politics, elections, or even the African context. It is a practice that is observable worldwide, even in advanced and so-called transparent democracies. Since the area of study is Nigeria, it is germane to narrow down the practical applicability in the Nigerian context. Clientelism in Nigeria, particularly in the Fourth Republic (1999-2021) became more pronounced, and it has taken the crude pattern of naked

vote buying, bribery, and payoff with impunity. Electoral laws on campaign expenditure are openly violated. The maximum spending limit of all electoral offices was exceeded by parties and their candidates, as reported by Sule et al. (2017b). Also, vote-buying and corruption were reported in another study (Sule et al., 2018b), indicating how the patron-client relationship intensified. The “godfathers” were also seen to be actively involved in the electoral process in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, as reported by Human Rights Watch (2007). These “godfathers” were not only involved in vote buying, bribery, patronage contracts, and kickbacks, and influencing top official appointments, but were also directly linked with violence sponsored by them to propel their anointed candidates into power at all costs. These “godfathers” are linked with violence and election insecurity in Nigeria in their bid to propel their anointed candidates into power at all costs and terrorize the opposition using weapons and other violent means. During the 2019 General Election, particularly the Gubernatorial election, some states recorded intensified violence in Benue, Kano, Kogi, the Plateau, the Rivers, and Zamfara. In some instances, the ruling party, having sensed defeat, intentionally dragged the election into a stalemate (Sule et al., 2021), in which the final election was marred by violence leading to shootings in Benue and Kogi, hacking to death in Kano, and massive vote buying in Plateau and Sokoto. All these evidence are perceived theoretically in this study as the use of elite gameplay, including violence, to win an election, which caused election insecurity.

3. Purpose of the Study

This study examines the cost of an election in an entirely different dimension that was not explored by previous studies. It investigates the electoral expenditure of the 2019 General Election on parties and contestants, INEC, the regulations, and the cost on electorates and governance; in essence, it is the first time giving the subject matter a holistic approach in the area of study.

4. Research Methodology

The research design is qualitative in nature. It is a qualitative, particularistic case study because it investigates a particular case of the cost of an election and electoral financing within a particular period, which is the 2019 General Election. Data were generated from two major sources: primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are specialized, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and unobtrusive participant observations. The specialized, in-depth interviews targeted five different groups as follows: major political parties, INEC senior officials, academics, a number of politician monitoring groups, and civil society. In category A (party executives), two senior national executive members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were selected. In category B, two senior officials at the INEC headquarters were interviewed. In category C, two senior Professors of Political Science from reputable universities who are experts in the area of Nigerian elections were consulted. In category D, four politicians were selected based on the elective offices of Gubernatorial, Senatorial, House of Representatives, and State House of Assembly. The other positions of the presidency were skipped because of inaccessibility, while the Chairmanship and Councillorship were omitted because they are selected and imposed by the state governors without much financing. In category E, three members from different civil societies were contacted.

The primary source of data was generated through the focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with a number of electorates in Abuja, where a center was chosen to reflect national representation. In this

category, seven were selected to showcase a representation of the six geopolitical zones in the country and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja. The other source is unobtrusive participant observation because the researchers were directly involved in the process of electoral conduct at the higher level of collation officers. They have been observing, since the build-up to the 2019 General Election, the unveiling circumstances and the developments up to the electoral conduct and post-election. In this role of participant observers, they managed to witness and record a significant amount of events as they unfolded. The informants in the categories of specialized interviews and FGD were selected based on relevance, possession of quality information, accessibility, and proximity. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires for both groups. Questions were prepared in semi-structured patterns that were open-ended and flexible.

The secondary sources of data comprised eliciting relevant material from documented resources such as books, journals, reports, media, and internet sources. The data obtained are discussed and interpreted using descriptive statistics such as tables and charts.

5. Findings and Discussion

In this section, several themes were established based on the submissions of the informants. The following were analyzed: the cost of party nomination, regulations and violations on election expenditure, INEC and the cost of an election administration, and the cost of an election on electorates and governance.

5.1. Cost of Party Nomination

The cost of party nomination forms in Nigeria is a challenge for the poor or less competitive candidates. Most of the political parties, particularly the ruling and major opposition parties, set the cost of obtaining party nomination forms for all elective offices above the reach of a common man or even an average Nigerian. The extent to which the two major parties, APC and PDP, made the cost of their nomination forms practically impossible to obtain for an average Nigerian as shown in Table 2.

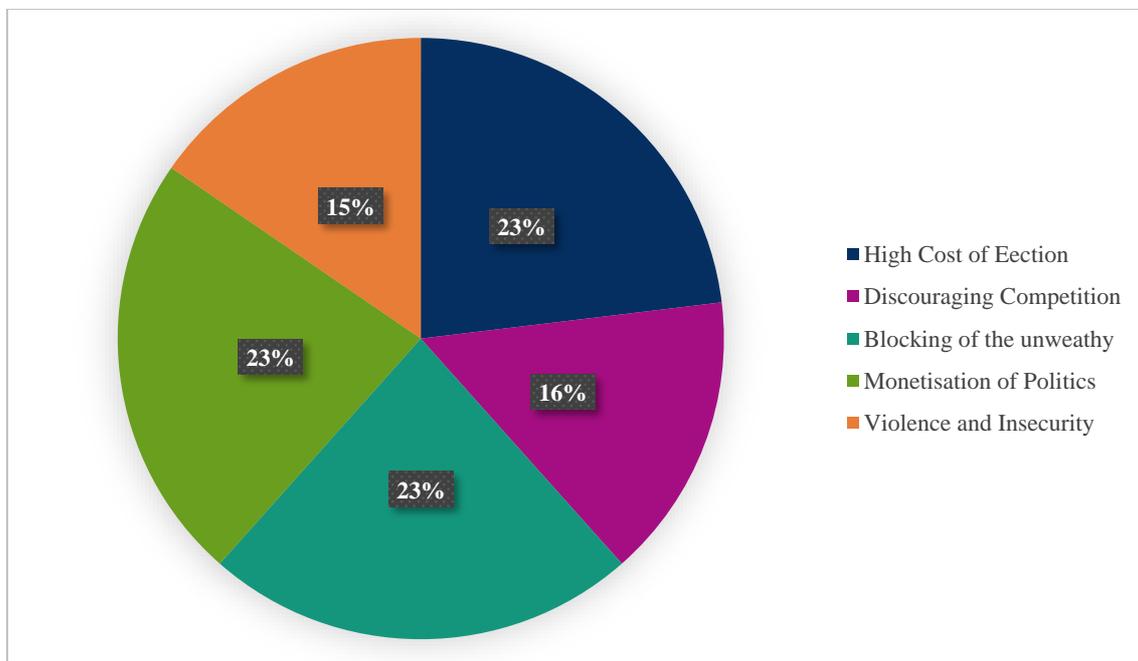
Table 2. Comparative Cost of Ticket for Party Primaries in APC and PDP

| Position | APC | PDP |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Presidential Ticket | N45 million | N12 million |
| Governorship Candidate | N22.5 million | N6 million |
| Senate | N7 million | N4 million |
| House of Representatives | N3.85 million | N1.5 million |
| State House of Assembly | N850, 000 | N600, 000 |

The above table displays clearly the cost of securing the nomination to the elective positions in the APC and PDP, the two major parties in the country, is only for the wealthy, implying that the elections in Nigeria are expensive as it is based on personal wealth, and deadly in the sense that once a candidate succeeds in buying his way into the party's platform representation, he will not hesitate to use all available means, even resorting to violence, to win the final election, as reported in the 2019 General Election (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

In the 2019 General Election, 23,000 candidates contested for various elective offices, from the Presidency to the level of the State House of Assembly. With 91 total registered political parties, 73 candidates vied for the post of President; 73 contested for the office of Vice President; 1,064 battled for the gubernatorial election; 1,064 sought for the post of Deputy Governorship; 1,903 contested for the Senate; 4703 contested for the House of Representatives; 14,643 for State Houses of assembly; 105 candidates for the Chairperson of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; and 701 contested for FCTA Councillorship. The ruling APC made N6.9 billion from the sale of nomination forms distributed: N45 billion for nomination forms from President Buhari, N3.59 billion for 160 governorship candidates, N1.95 billion for expressions of interest and nominations by senatorial candidates, and N1.39 billion for members of the House of Representatives (Okakwu, 2021). The above figures omit the cost of nominating state houses of assemblies, which runs into the billions. The PDP, on the other hand, secured over N3 billion in the sale of nomination forms in the 2019 primaries, as announced in its headquarters in Abuja (Daily Trust, December 12, 2021). The APC made billions from the sale of nomination forms in the 2023 primaries. The cost of expression and nomination in 2023 was N100 million. About 25 aspirants purchased the forms, and the party is believed to have made over N2 billion in presidential nomination forms alone (Sule, 2023). In total, the APC earned N30 billion from the sale of expressions of interest and nomination forms in the 2023 primaries (Uwugiaren & Akinwale, 2023). The major opposition PDP is estimated to earn about N17.3 from the sale of nomination forms across all elective offices (Onuba, 2022).

Most of the informants who were consulted also revealed that the cost of party nomination has many implications for the Nigerian election during the 2019 General Election. Their views are summarized and presented in the chart below (see Figure 1).



Source: Field Survey 2020/2021.

Figure 1. Informants' Perception of the Implications of High Cost of Party Nomination

In addition, the results obtained from the FGD on the implications of the high cost of an election on the outcome of the 2019 General Election revealed in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of FGD Views on High Cost of Party Nomination

| S/No. | Views | Responses | Frequency Percentage |
|-------|---|-----------|----------------------|
| 1. | Youth and poor are discouraged from the contest | 2 | 28.57% |
| 2. | Credible candidates are discarded | 1 | 14.29% |
| 3. | Bribery and corruption | 2 | 28.57% |
| 4. | Violence and Security Threats | 2 | 28.57% |
| 5. | Total | 7 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2020/2021.

One important view from the informants worthy of mentioning here is the submission:

"The bigger parties in Nigeria advertently pegged the cost of securing nomination forms as expensive to purposely weed out all threats and unwanted candidates so that it will just look like an elite affair because only the super-rich can afford it. All weak and average-rich Nigerians could not afford it. This process enables the patronage and clientele relationship where the wealthy politicians buy their way into power constantly in some cases, using violence that affects the entire electoral process and its integrity" (A specialized in-depth interview with an informant in category C in Kano on November 18, 2020 at 11 a.m.).

In addition, clientelism can be seen operating in this context because purchasing nomination forms is expensive, meaning that only those with money could buy the forms, implying that those who could afford to buy the forms costing millions, could also buy the votes of the electorates during the final election, including other stakeholders such as INEC, security personnel, and other categories. Previous studies (Sule et al., 2017a; Sule et al., 2017b; Sule et al., 2018a; Sule et al., 2018b; Sule et al., 2019) confirmed the incidences of patronage and clientelism in Nigerian elections.

5.2. Regulations on Election Expenditure

A study reports that Nigeria is one of the African counties with well-designed and articulated regulations on party financing rules and conduct but it also identifies the ineffectiveness of the sanctions in apprehending the violators of the regulations (Sule, 2021). For instance, Sections 225 and 226 with all their sub-sections in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution provide for the legal sources of securing funds and expenditure as well as the report of all financial statements of political parties and campaign expenditure to the electoral body at the end of every year to guarantee accountability and ensure transparency. Likewise, Section 88(a and b) provides that no party or candidate should receive any donation from abroad, and in the case of violation, the funds should not stay more than one month in the party's or candidates' hands, and that should be notified duly to the INEC or they will face a sanction of N500,000. Additionally, Section 89 subsections 1 to 4, provide that all political parties must prepare and submit their statement of income and expenditure annually on or before December 31st of every year, and these reports must be published in at least one of the national dailies.

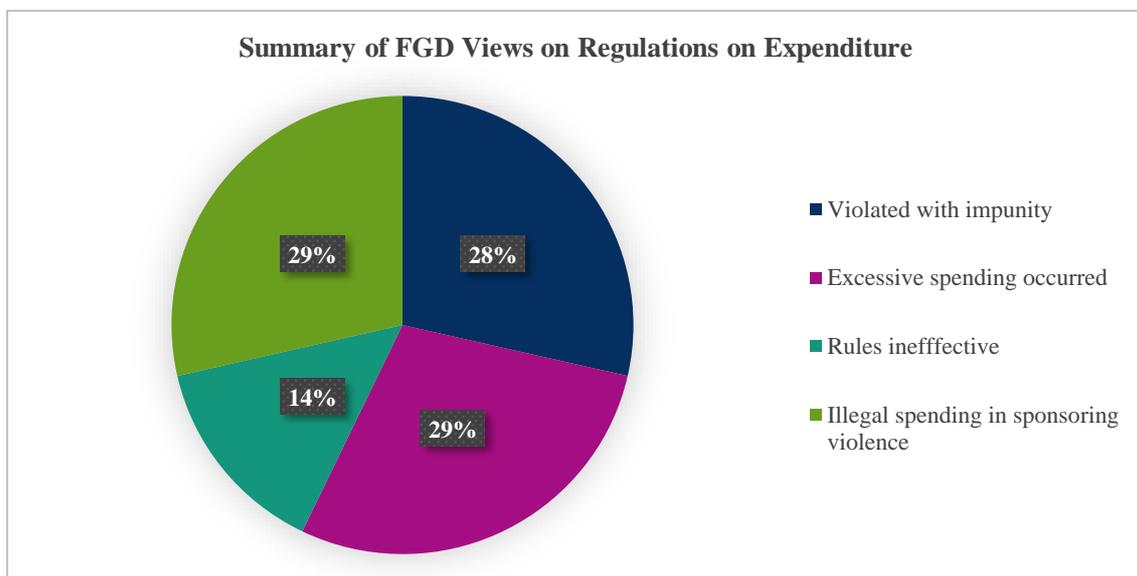
Sections 225(1-6) and 226(1-3) of the 1999 Constitution are unequivocal on the sources of funds for parties and candidates. The sections identified what is expected as legal sources of finance for parties, disclosure, and other provisions, in the same way that Section 88 of the Electoral Act 2010 did in its specification of what is a legal source that cannot contravene electoral rules, disclosure, monitoring, and other related issues that have to do with financing. Additionally, a study (Sule et al., 2019) conducted on sources of campaign expenditure for political parties in the 2015 General Election in Nigeria revealed that 36% came from the personal savings of the candidates, 20% from godfatherism, 17% donations from family, friends, and corporate bodies, 13% loot from the public treasury, 7% grants from parties, and 7% selling of forms for the party nomination. However, shreds of evidence (Falguera et al., 2014; Piccio, 2014; Londono & Zobatto, 2014; Walecki, 2017; Piccio & Van Biezen, 2018) disclose that emerging democracies like Nigeria recorded the use and abuse of the public treasury for political party financing in the electoral process. Excessive spending without sanction, as reported by Sule et al. (2017b) in Nigeria, violation of regulations, illegal sources, and other dubious ways of raising funds for executing campaign expenditures are common. Sule et al.'s (2019) study reported that a significant percentage of the funds derived for a campaign by parties and politicians in the Nigerian elections was used in an unauthorized way, including violence, where violence is purposely orchestrated by politicians to ostracize a perceived threat or to chase away their rivals and their supporters to secure a means of victory at all costs. This scenario affected the security of the election in 2019, where violence in many states was reported with loss of lives and burning of properties and INEC materials.

Additionally, studies (Sule et al., 2017a; Sule et al., 2017b; Sule et al., 2018a; Sule et al., 2018c; Sule et al., 2019) reported evidence of violations of campaign regulations by the major parties of APC and PDP in terms of excessive spending above the limit, vote buying, and failure to present the statement of accounts to INEC or publish them in dailies. A study (Onyekpere, 2015) observed that PDP spent N8,749,685,296.00 billion while APC spent N2,915,846,737.00 billion just in the media campaign alone for the 2015 Presidential Election, in which the rule stipulates that a Presidential Candidate must not spend above N1 billion as a maximum spending limit. All indicators from the informants' views and reports disclosed that the APC and PDP spent more in the 2019 General Election owing to inflation, a high competitive contest, and the compatibility of financial muscle between the two giant parties. This is just for the media campaign. Sule et al. (2018a) reported that the PDP in the same year gave a N23 billion bribe to the INEC for rigging the Presidential election in its favour, and they diverted \$2.3 billion meant for the procurement of weapons to fight the Boko Haram insurgency for their campaign. The most disturbing aspect of the illegal spending is that violence is involved, but the politicians and their parties would never report an audited account declaring their involvement as subscribers of weapons and other incriminating materials for their supporters to unleash mayhem on innocent voters and opposition in the process. The repercussion is that the electoral process in Nigeria is facing insecurity on top of already existing security threats of militancy, insurgency, ethnoreligious conflict, farmers-herders clashes, secessionist agitations, and separatist movements. The country cannot withstand such internal security threats from all angles if they are not addressed properly.

In an interview, an informant disclosed that:

"It is indisputable that the 2010 Electoral Act has good provisions and sanctions that could ensure compliance, but the ineffectiveness of the applicability of the regulations by INEC enabled violations with impunity, thereby raising the cost of electoral campaigns in the country where the biggest bidder always secures victory through vote buying, bribery, and other irregularities. They used and abused the public treasury in conducting their campaign, and it is clear that all forms of public funding are prohibited by law" (A specialized interview with an informant in category E on January 24, 2021, at 4 p.m.).

The problem with regulations on electoral expenditure in Nigeria is that public funds are deployed in campaigns, especially by political officeholders. Figure 2 below summarised the findings. The FGD discussions revealed the following results on the implications of violations of regulations on campaign expenditure:



Source: Field Survey 2020/2021.

Figure 2. Summary of Informants' Views on Regulations on Campaign Expenditure

Clientelism was clear here because regulations were violated, leading to a high cost of an election in the 2019 General Election in Nigeria. Sule et al. (2019) reported the active use of the government's treasury in violation of regulations, leading to the high cost of the election in 2019.

5.3. INEC and the Cost of Election

Funding elections is an expensive venture. Nigeria holds one of the most expensive elections in the world, and that makes Nigerian democracy costly in terms of funding and preparation. Elections in Nigeria are one of the most expensive in Africa (Sule et al., 2018c). In the 2007 General Election, INEC spent N45.5 billion (\$124, 150, and 946.80 million). The 2011 General Election cost N111 billion (\$306, 235, 599.477 million), the 2015 General Election cost N125 billion (\$344, 859, 909.321 million) (Sule et al., 2017a), and the 2019 General Election cost N189 billion (\$521, 428, 182.893 million) (Sule, 2019).

Election funding in Nigeria became a matter of political controversy, especially when the ruling class perceived any threat to their victory. This led to the unfortunate phenomenon of election postponements in 2007, 2011, 2015, and even 2019.

On the part of the electoral body, the 2019 General Election cost N189 billion, or \$521, 428, 182.893 million (Sule, 2019). This showed that Nigeria spent more than Canada in the 2007 General Election, more than the UK in the 2011 General Election, and more than Australia in the 2015 General Election (Abdallah, 2018). The cost increased to an estimated N300 billion because an additional N120 billion in expenditure emerged from the repercussions of the postponement (Sambo & Sule, 2021). The cost of the postponement to Nigerians was estimated at an economic loss of around N140 billion emanating from business shutdowns and other economic losses (Sambo & Sule, 2021).

There are many arguments for why the election is expensive in Nigeria. Population, corruption, embezzlement, and negligence are regarded as reasons by the informants, as revealed in the following table (see Table 4).

Table 4. Summary of Informants' Views on Why Election is Expensive in Nigeria

| S/No. | Views | Responses | Frequency Percentage |
|-------|--------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 1. | Population | 4 | 30.77% |
| 2. | Corruption | 4 | 30.77% |
| 3. | Embezzlement | 3 | 23.08% |
| 4. | Negligence | 2 | 15.38% |
| 5. | Total | 13 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2020/2021.

The FGD discussions also present a similar result, as all the consulted interviewers narrated that the cost of an election in Nigeria is expensive, making Nigerian democracy expensive too. They also added that corruption, bureaucratic cumbersomeness, population, and abuse of public funds and properties all contributed to making Nigerian elections expensive. In an interview, an informant made a valuable submission on the cost of an election in Nigeria as follows:

"The Nigerian Constitution and the act that established INEC prohibit all forms of external donation or sponsorship from any country or any international agency towards the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Nigeria professes its richness and declares before the world that it can handle its election. In this process, some unscrupulous elements inflate the cost of the election, enriching themselves in the process" (A specialized interview with an informant in category B on September 19, 2020, at 10 a.m.).

Also, another informant made a vital revelation akin to a discovery in this study as follows:

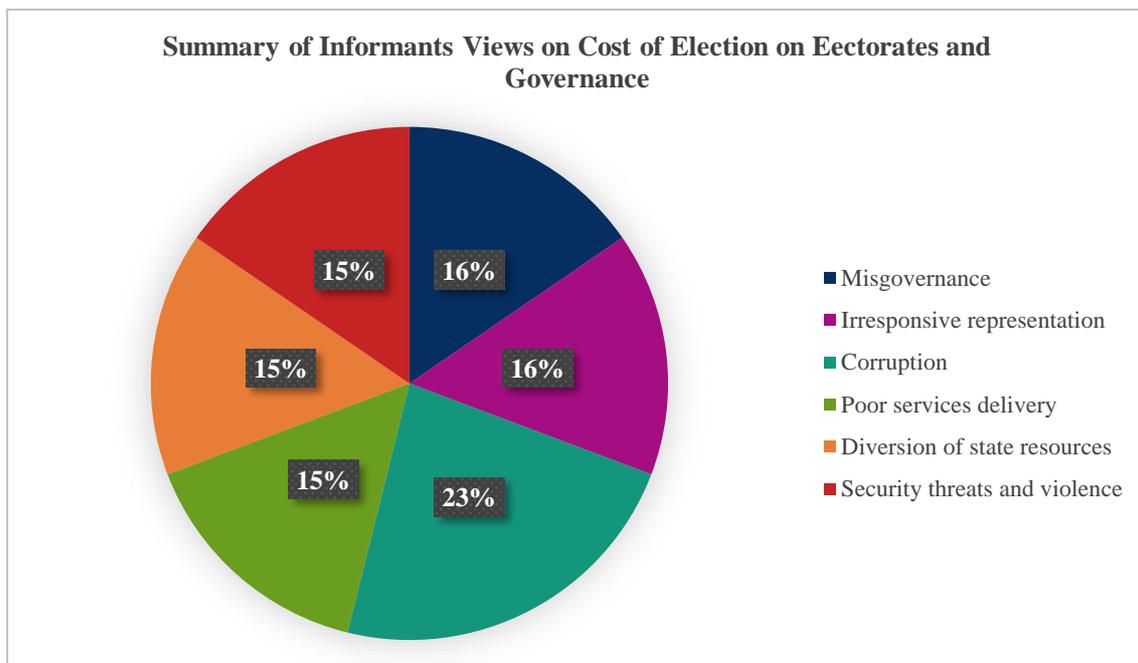
"Elections are expensive in Nigeria because of the attitude of Nigerians. Politicians purposely register numerous irrelevant parties, making the materials for the election heavy; electoral officials handle election materials nonchalantly after the election, such as computers and other hardware destroying them; and voters refused to register or collect their PVCs until a few days before the election, making INEC incur additional expenses of distribution; and the

most annoying are politicians' tricks and dirty games of prolonged litigation, sometimes causing damages and losing to INEC to reproduce election materials after final preparations" (a specialized interview with an informant in category B on December 2020 at 2 pm).

From the above revelations by the informants, it is unequivocal that Clientelism is obtainable in the process of funding INEC or its cost of the election. Apart from the inflation of the cost of the election, the destruction of durable electoral materials necessitates procurement in the next election, which is obviously a contract given to a crony of the ruling party. It is part and parcel of the reward that the INEC officials may get for cooperating with the ruling class to sway the electoral result.

5.4. Cost of Election on Electorates and Governance

One of the breakthroughs in this research as an original contribution is the discovery that apart from the cost of elections on politicians, INEC, and the regulatory process, it also has an implication on the electorate and governed. In the interview, the informants revealed their diverse views in the following way (see Figure 3).



Source: Field Survey 2020/2021.

Figure 3. Informants' Views on the Cost of Election on Electorates and Governance

The FGD also disclosed in the discussions that the cost of the election has several implications for the electorate and governance in Nigeria. Their views are summarized below in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of FGD Views on Cost of Election on Electorates and Governance

| S/No. | Views | Responses | Frequency Percentage |
|-------|--|-----------|----------------------|
| 1. | Corrupt and selfish leadership | 2 | 28.57% |
| 2. | Diversion of the public treasury for self-enrichment | 3 | 42.86% |
| 3. | The entrenchment of poverty and social vices | 2 | 28.57% |
| 4. | Total | 7 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2020/2021.

Various scholars (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Hagel, 2020; Muniz, 2015) posit that vote buying and Clientelism lead to economic sabotage, political crisis, violence and insecurity, and misgovernance in several states, all of which has been successfully established in a study by Sule et al. (2018a).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study made the valuable discovery that the cost of the election in Nigeria is expensive and implicative on various fronts, not only in securing party nominations, regulations and spending limits, INEC, but also on the electorates, and governance. With regard to the party nomination, the highest bidders are accorded the tickets at the expense of credible and better candidates just because they are wealthy or have the support of godfathers to sponsor them. The regulations and rules are violated, incurring a high cost to the public treasury due to lavish spending on the campaign in direct violation of the rules. With regard to the INEC, it leads to the cyclical friction of a high expenditure enshrouded in corruption, the inflation of contracts, and possible kickbacks. The electorate in turn suffers as such fraudulent practices leads to misgovernance, corruption, diversion of the public treasury, poverty, and other social vices. This study also established that the Nigerian election in 2019 was influenced by clientelism as exhibited in the course of party primaries, electoral conduct, and the voting process. The whole process resulted in violence and insecurity affecting the citizens and the country's national security internally.

For the sake of the country's economic and social development, this phenomenon should not continue. Some practical recommendations are suggested here.

- INEC should be empowered to have its Chairman appointed by the National Judicial Commission, and its cost of operation should be allocated directly from the consolidated revenue to enable it to be in a strong position to sanction all violators irrespective of their power or influence.
- The maximum spending limit provided in the 2010 Electoral Act should be reviewed upward, at least by a ten-fold increase or beyond, to meet the reality of current inflation and the cost of services.

The electorates require massive enlightenment from the media, civil society, academics, religious clerics, and other influential individuals and organizations on the need to discard money politics and embrace credible politicians from other alternative parties that are ready to offer a platform for the financially disadvantaged contestants who are good enough to secure victory in the polls.

Acknowledgements

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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