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**An Assessment of Citizens' Participation in the 2016
Governorship Electoral Process in Edo State, Nigeria: A
Content Analysis Approach**

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Abstract

The major focus of this paper is to demonstrate the application of content analysis as a methodological tool especially in data collection in social research. In order to contextualize the essence of the paper, an assessment of the role of citizens' participation in electoral process in Nigeria with particular reference to Edo state 2016 Governorship Election in Nigeria was done. The entire research process, starting with problem identification, study, objectives, research theme, data collection, analysis, findings and conclusion were carried out. Though a purely methodology paper, it demonstrated succinctly the expected harmony between the object of research and the tool or technique with which it is carried out.

Key Words: Content analysis, methodology, social research, electoral process, citizens' participation

Introduction

Research is a systematic inquiry which seeks to investigate, examine and analyse hypotheses, suggest new interpretations of data or text and expose new questions for

future research to explore (Creswell 2003). Therefore, the path and functions of research inquiries in human endeavours cannot be underestimated. It, nevertheless, seeks to ask questions that nobody has asked before, finding answers and transferring and communicating knowledge acquired to a large audience. This has led to tremendous advancement in the scientific and the academic domain and creating new direction or pathway to doing and achieving ideas and things that are being found. The application of the terms has been considered a matter with other phenomena by means of general laws. General laws comprise the framework from which a particular explanation can be derived (Braithwaite 1960). Therefore, the relevance of a research inquiry in assessing the role of citizen participation in electoral process in Nigeria has its own research implications. The political stability and development of any political system is a function of the awareness and positive involvement of the citizens in civic and political matters. One of the most crucial and yet least developed democratic institutions in Nigeria is the political party system. The performance of political parties in terms of articulation, aggregation, representation and organization are crucial to political accountability, political communication, political stability and political participation (Ikelegbe, 2013). The central role played by political parties in the development and nurturing of a virile democracy and its consolidation cannot be overstated. It is a mechanism by which the ruling class consolidates its hold on the state power. However, the nature and the function of party systems tend to conform to the interests of the ruling class in the survival of its system of domination (Nnoli, 1999). In the attempts to consolidate its hold on state power, the ruling class and indeed the politicians tend to use political parties and party systems to maintain their grip on political powers at all cost. This study also focuses on other aspects of Nigeria politics that have effect on political parties and the sustenance of citizens participation, one of such is electoral violence (*The observer* 2015, p. 9 & p.15). Voter apathy, the political apathy in Nigeria is based on the problems of ignorance and deliberate deception by some politicians. The consequence of this is the inability of the masses to have a link between their state of underdevelopment and their non-participation in the electoral processes (*The Nation* 2015, pp. 8-10).

The activities of political parties and the sustenance of political participation by the citizenry within Nigeria's democracy form the fundamental aspect of this inquiry. The focus of this paper shall be the 2016 governorship election in Edo State, with Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and Ize Iyamu Osagie Andrew of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as the major candidates. The role of political parties and the political participation of the citizenry cannot be discussed without making allusion to financial resources. The role of money in politics is a major concern for any nation that adheres to democratic tenets (*Guardian* 2016, pp. 18-22). This raises concern because wealth creates unequal opportunity for participation. The source of funding itself is also a vexing issue, given that corporate funding of political processes generally increases non-participation, in self-governance, it can be said to have the pervasive effect of minimizing democracy and promoting the inevitable elite plutocracy. Those, who seek elective positions, search for a god father to nurture these candidates. Therefore, political participation at various levels of electoral process becomes a mere illusion (*The Compass* 2016:22-32). It is the interest of this study to examine the activities of the political parties and their leaders in the 2016 governorship election and evaluate the impact on political participation of the voters of Edo State. In

the 2016 governorship election, both the ruling and opposition parties employed various resources and activities to mobilize citizens to participate in the election to ensure that they win the election and take over political power in the state.

The content analysis methodological tool of data collection was demonstrated as the major tool of evaluating the case of the governorship election. The major processes involved in conducting a basic social science research were carried out beginning with the statement of the problem.

Statement of the Problem

The fundamental issue for Nigeria's democracy is the problem associated with the activities of political parties and its influences on citizens' participation in the political process. For the ordinary voters in an election, there is the perennial issue of their opinion not counting since the electoral process is usually fraught with irregularities. Such problems include the character of the political parties in the 2016 governorship election in Edo State; lack of confidence in the electoral processes; elites' overwhelming dominance; electoral violence; voters' apathy and poverty; god fatherism; money inducement; security of lives and properties; and the power of incumbency.

Objective of the Study

The goal of this study is to demonstrate the use of content analysis data gathering method in the examination of the role of political parties and the sustenance of citizens' participation in Edo State 2016 governorship election.

The Themes

The following themes were identified to give direction to the data collection effort in the study.

Theme I: The character of political parties in the 2016 governorship election impacted the outcome of the election results.

Theme II: Lack of confidence in the electoral processes by the electorate influence the results of the election.

Theme III: Elites overwhelming dominance in the political terrain further influenced the results of the election.

Number of referential/population: 84 (Observer – 24 and the Guardian – 35, Nation – 15, Compass – 10)

Literature Review

Literature review in a research work constitutes an integral part of any research. It shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported. It relates a study to the larger ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic, filling in gaps and extending prior studies (Cooper, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Literature review on the subject of context analysis has not been a major source of data collection (Jones, 1987:77). The emergence and its application of content analysis have generated series of controversies among social science scholars. This method gained general and greater popularity as well as a method of communication

research (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). It became useful in the explanation of “patterns of speech” of various political actors and also in the analysis of thematic issues in public addresses and political statement. Jones (1987: 78) went further to opine that one can find out a great deal about a society’s value system by content analysed 117 text books. The usage and development of content analysis as a scientific tool can be associated to the growth of newspaper at the turn of the sixteenth century which led to a number of investigations as to their role and content which was extended later to all other mass media when they became evident- radio, movies and television. Interest in political symbols also added features to the analysis of public messages using the content analysis. Content analysis, assumed a scholarly form when eminent social scientist [such as Mcdiarmid (1937), Holsti (1968), Klippendorff (1980)] entered the field and brought with them rich theoretical frameworks that eventually became part of the larger research efforts (Omoruyi, 1987, p. 3).

Conceptual Clarification **Content analysis**

Content analysis as a methodological tool in the social science is defined according to Berelson (1952) as a technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. Whilst, Kerlinger (1986) another renown scholar defines it as that method which is concerned with studying and analysed 117 communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. A careful analysis of these definitions centre on areas like system, objective, quantification, context with significant reference drawn from the communication content between the sender and the receiver of the message. Thus, content analysis is all about a method of observation rather than asking response or reply from people to a question. Instead, it takes what they have produced, question been asked and deductions are been answered at, newspapers, letters, radio and television as sources of information or materials.

Electoral Process

An electoral process relates to the entire cycle ranging from the provision of voter’s education to the dissolution of elections, by elections, and the National Assembly (Elekwa 2008, p. 30). Electoral process involves the following stages or phases:

- i. Delimitation of boundaries.
- ii. Registration of voters.
- iii. Notifications of elections.
- iv. Nomination or selection of candidates.
- v. Elections, announcement of results and completion of tribunal sittings.

Electoral process is a complex process that involves the good intentions and undesirable outcome of election administration, particularly in emerging democracies where general elections are often marred by culturally hued electoral malpractices. In Nigeria, electoral process is immensely characterized by a culture of electoral malpractice. Electoral malpractices refer to illegalities committed by 60th government and party officials. Reynolds, et al (2005:5) describes electoral process or system as

the basic of the most basic level. Therefore, an electoral system translates the votes cast in a general election into seat won by parties and candidates.

Citizens' Participation

Hardina (2008) defined citizens' participation as the process whereby those with least resources people on the margins of the society are involved in decision about the services they receive on the part of those that represent them. In practical however the concept of citizens' participation can be classified according to the degrees to which citizens are involved in decision making process, direction of information flow between participants or the status of those who have taken the initiative.

Research Methodology and Methodological Tool

There are several methodological tools in social science researches. Some of these are; survey method, participant observation, sampling technique, etc. among which is content analysis (Zick 1981). Research can readily use content analysis as a technique for text analysis when statement of the problem, objective of the study and hypothesis or proposition is well defined and stated. Therefore, this research paper employed content analysis to analysis and explain the role of citizens participation in electoral process in Nigeria using Edo State 2016 September 28th Governorship election as a reference point. The paper Tested three main hypotheses and attempted to classify interferences according to given procedures.

Section A: Style of Data Presentation and classification

Subject matter	The role of political parties and the sustenance of citizens participation in Edo State 2016 governorship election
Authority	Political parties and Edo State citizens
Standard of the subject matter/level of conflict	Poverty, electoral violence and voter's apathy or alienation.
Location	Edo state, Benin City
Aims of the subject	Political education, security of lives and properties. De-emphasising monetization in elections. Political parties' re-orientation.
Subject of conflict	Elite's dominance, electoral violence poverty, god fatherism and money inducement.
Time of action	April, May, June, July, August and September, 2016
Direction of subject matters	Positive and favourable
Character of the people	Willingness for change

Section B

Form of communication	National newspaper
Form of statement of the problem	Activities of political parties and their influences on citizens participation in the political processes in Edo State
Device	Mass communication

Table I: Analysis of Variable I According to Theme I: Character of Political Parties Impacted the Outcome of the Election Results

News papers	Money inducement by pol. Parties(A)	%	Elites dominance control of parties(B)	%	Citizens' trust in their parties I	%	Total Occurrences	Average %
<i>Observer</i>	10	32.3	8	34.8	10	23.3	28	30.1
<i>Nation</i>	8	25.8	4	17.4	6	13.9	18	19.0
<i>Guardian</i>	10	32.3	8	34.8	17	39.5	35	35.5
<i>Compass</i>	3	9.6	3	13.0	10	23.3	16	15.3
Total	31	100	23	100	43	100	97	100

Source: The four newspapers 119nalysed between April and September, 2016

From table I above, money inducement by political party’s stalwarts accounted for 32.3% in the observer, 25.8% in the Nation Newspaper, 32.3% in the Guardian Newspaper and 9.6% in the Compass. This is followed by Elites dominance control of parties accounted for 34.8% in the observer Newspaper, 34.8% in the Guardian Newspaper and 13.0% in the Compass Newspaper. Whilst citizens trust in their political parties accounted for 23.3% in the observer, 13.9% in the Nation Newspaper, 39.5% in the Guardian Newspaper and 23.3% in the Compass Newspaper.

Citizens Trust in their political parties has 43 occurrences in all the Newspapers accounting for 44.3% of the 97 occurrences of the three (3) variables under the analysis of the character of political parties. Elite’s dominance and control of parties had 23 occurrences in all the Newspapers accounting for 23.7% of the 97 occurrences of the variables under the character of the political parties. Money inducement by political parties has 31 occurrences in all the Newspapers accounting for 31.9% of the 97 occurrences of the variables under the character of political parties imparting the outcome of the election results.

Table 2: Analysis of variable 2 according to theme 2

Theme II: Lack of confidence in the electoral processes influence the result of the election

News papers	Participation of Electoral Violence by the electorate(A)	%	Security of lives and properties (B)	%	PovertyI	%	Total Occurrence	Average %
Observer	12	35.3	5	20	7	28	24	27.8
Nation	8	23.5	5	20	2	8	15	17.2
Guardian	11	32.4	13	52	11	44	35	42.8
Compass	13	8.8	2	8	5	20	20	12.2
Total	34	100	25	100	25	100	94	100

Source: The four newspapers 119nalysed between April and September, 2016

From the above table, electoral violence by political parties accounted for 35.3% in the observer Newspaper, 23.5% in the Nation Newspaper 32.4% in the Guardian

Newspaper and 8.8% in the compass Newspaper. Security of lives and properties accounted for 20.0% in the Observer, 20.0% in the Nation Newspaper, 52.0% in the Guardian Newspaper and 8% in the Compass Newspaper. Poverty accounted for 28% in the Observer, 8% in the Nation, 44% in the Guardian Newspaper and 20% in the Compass Newspaper

Electoral violence, by political parties has 34 occurrences in all the Newspaper, accounting for a total of 40.5% of the 84 occurrences of the three (3) variables under the analysis of the lack of confidence in the Electoral Processes. Security of lives and properties has 25 occurrences in all the Newspapers, accounting for a total of 29.8% of the 84 occurrences of the three (3) variables under the analysis of the lack of confidence in the Electoral process, followed by Poverty which has 25 occurrences in all the Newspapers accounting for a total of 29.8% of the 84 occurrences of the three (3) variables under the analysis of the lack of confidence in the Electoral processes influencing the results of the Election.

Table III: Analysis of variable 3 according to theme 3

Theme III: Elites overwhelming dominance in the political terrain further influences the result of the election

News papers	God fatherism (A)	%	Power of incumbency (B)	%	Voter apathy I	%	Total occurrences	Average %
Observer	8	29.6	9	22.5	7	28	24	26.7
Nation	7	25.9	10	25.0	2	8	19	19.6
Guardian	8	29.6	14	35.0	13	52	35	38.9
Compass	4	14.8	7	17.5	3	12	14	14.8
Total	27	100	40	100	25	100	92	100

Source: The four newspapers analysed between April and September, 2016

From the table above, god fatherism accounted for 29.6% in the Observer, 25.9% in the Nation Newspaper, 29.6% in the Guardian Newspaper, 29.6% in the Guardian Newspaper, and 14.8% in the Compass Newspaper. This is followed by power of incumbency which accounted for a total of 22.5% in the Observer Newspaper, 25.0% in the Nation Newspaper, 35.0% in the Guardian and 17.5% in the Compass Newspaper. Voter apathy accounted for 28% in the Observer Newspaper, 8% in the Nation, 52% in the Guardian Newspaper and 12% in the Compass Newspaper.

Power of incumbency has 40 occurrences in all the Newspapers, accounting for a total of 43.5% of the 92 total occurrences of the three (3) variables under the analysis of the Elites overwhelming dominance in the political terrain. It is followed by god fatherism with a total of 27 occurrences in all the Newspapers, accounting for 29.3% of the 92 total occurrences of the three (3) variables under the analysis above. Voter apathy has 25 occurrences in all the Newspapers, accounting for 27.2% of the 92 occurrences of the three (3) variables under the analysis of Elites overwhelming dominance control in the political terrain influencing the outcome of the Election results.

Discussion of Findings

The first theme states that the “character of political parties impacted the outcome of the elections”. Under that, three variables notably “money inducement by political parties”, “elite’s dominance/control of political parties” and “citizens’ trust in the political parties” were isolated. The three variables have the frequency of occurrence of the variables as 31 which accounts for 31.9%; 23 which accounts for 23.7% and 43 which accounts for 44.3% in that order. Though, there is the element of money inducement by the political parties as reported by the newspapers and there is the impact of party hierarchies influence on the electorate; but the overriding influence as far as theme one (1) is concerned is citizens’ trust in the political parties and the electoral process which eventually culminated in the result of the 2016 Governorship Election in Edo State.

The second theme states that “lack of confidence in the electorate processes influenced the results of the elections”. Anticipation of electoral violence by the electorate is the first variable; “security of lives and properties” is the second while the third isolated variable is “poverty”. The first occurred 34 times which accounts for 36.2%; the second has 25 frequencies accounting for 26.6%; whilst the third has 25 frequencies accounting for 26.6%. The overriding variable in the second theme is “anticipation of electoral violence”.

For the third theme, which is “elite overwhelming dominance in the political terrain influenced the result of the election”. The first variable is “god fatherism” with 27 frequencies accounting for 29.3%; “power of incumbency” has 40 frequencies accounting for 43.5% and “voters’ apathy” with 20 frequencies accounting for 27.2%. With this theme, “power of incumbency is most prominent of the three isolated variables.

It is observed that through the three themes, three variables notably “citizens’ trust of parties”, “anticipation of electoral violence” and “power of incumbency” have highest prominence among other variables. This observation may not be ordinary coincidence. In the Nigerian politics where the contest or struggle for power is almost a “do or die” affair, violence between the supporters of major political parties in the contest is always anticipated. The “power of incumbency” is also a major factor hence its prominence in the data. The incumbency has a number of indices to its advantages: control of the security apparatus, the control of the government media houses, availability of state funds to finance campaign and above all, if the incumbent political party has a good record of performance, it could be a positive index that could earn the party “citizens’ trust” which is the variable that has the greatest prominence among the nine (9) variable isolated in the three (3) themes.

With “poverty” so pervasive in our society, it is not unexpected that political parties will want to influence or induce voters with money, people will collect the money and still vote according to the trust they have in the party that, in their opinion, will serve them or perform better than the others.

In summary, the content analysis of the data collected from the four (4) newspapers points to the fact that the overriding index that had influence on the result of the 2016 Governorship Election in Edo state is citizens’ trust in their political parties. This is

without prejudices to the other indices with varying degrees of prominence indicated by the frequencies of their occurrences in the data gathered.

Conclusion

Content analysis is a comparative tool of analysis with other methods of social science. The analytical tool is unique, as it specifically gathers and draw inferences from information which might be recent or past, according to the rudiment of its contents. The methodology of content analysis has proven very useful in data collection with analysis that will eliminate the problem of bias that is associated with interview or questionnaires where the respondents can modify their responses. The analysis of the data arising from the 2016 Governorship Election in Edo state is a proof of the fact. The data showed the interconnectedness of the various variables that were isolated and how each of them might have influenced the results of the elections. The various degrees of impact of these variables became very clear and those with overriding influence are quite instructive and have didactic imports for political parties and power entrepreneurs that even though other factors may influence the electorate, the parties, when elections are won, must perform to the extent of securing citizens' trust to be able to win future elections.

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