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Exposure to Social Media Shared Video-Clips on Irregularities from the 2023 Election in Nigeria and Audience Perception of the Outcome

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Abstract

Irregularities have been a major feature of the Nigerian political activities since 1999. The rate at which such impunities thrive in the country has made elections grossly unacceptable among the people because the outcomes have never reflected the wish of the masses. Conscious of this, citizens have subscribed to the use of social media in exposing the ugly faces of the country's elections which has always been against the less privileged. This study is an exploration of the relationship between exposure to social media shared video-clips and the respondents' perception of the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The general objective of the study is to find out what the respondents make of the election as a result of the video-clips shared on different social media platforms showing electoral irregularities. The study adopted survey research method in studying 378 university undergraduates from NAU, COOU and Paul University selected through purposive sampling technique. The study was premised on the theoretical provision of violation of expectation theory. Findings revealed that the respondents are well exposed to different video-clips showing irregularities on the election. It was also found that the respondents have negative perception of the election. It was concluded that electoral umpire, the government in power and the security apparatus violated the respondents' expectation from the election based on the pre-election promises made to the citizens. It was recommended among others, that Nigeria must strengthen the various institutions responsible for the conduct of elections if violence will not be made the best option for the poor masses.

Keywords: Social Media Shared Video-Clips, Exposure, Irregularities, Elections, Audience perception, Outcome.

Introduction

Since its first use in the US presidential election of 2008 between Obama and John McCain, different social media channels have formed the salient and indispensable means of political information dissemination among nations around the world. Relying on its ability to generate and distribute audio-visual contents, its users share on-the-spot events in still and motion pictures to the public on different topics which tell the story as they unfold in real time. The spread of the use of social media shared video-clips as means of disseminating information of all kinds was acknowledged in Obiakor and Ikegbunam (2023) where the scholars argue that social media and their shared-video clips have been major among the means of getting and sharing political, socio-cultural, ethno-religious and health information around the world. Politically, social media have been an instrument that all political stakeholders rely on to reach out to the masses at will irrespective of the time for political purposes.

According to Ikegbunam and Obiakor (2021), the penetration of the global information environment by the social media is mainly connected to the proliferation of internet enabled gadgets among the people. This development led to the emergence of some concepts like e-participation (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Vicente & Novo, 2014; Grönlund & Wakabi, 2015), cyber democracy (Chun & Cho, 2012), digital democracy and netizens (Nizah & Bakar, 2019). In the political environment, scholars like (Ikegbunam & Obiakor, 2021; Bertrand, Natabaalo & Hitchen, 2021; Nizah, & Bakar, 2019) have in recent time paid attention to the impact of social media use on elections in Nigeria and other countries of the world. All these studies pointed to the fact that social media exert much impact in the political atmosphere of different countries as its contents command believability among the netizens. According to Nizah and Bakar (2019), social media have been adjudged as credible source of political information in Malaysia.

The use of social media for political purposes in Nigeria started in 2014 ahead of the 2015 general election when President Muhammadu Buhari applied its use to damage the activities of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) under Goodluck Jonathan. The All Progressive Congress (APC) then used the social media to share different contents including video-clips aimed at de-marketing the PDP in order to take over. These contents penetrated the minds of the citizens creating the impression in their minds that to vote for APC is a way out of the predicament facing them while continuing with the PDP is perpetual insecurity, unemployment and servitude. Drawing from the above point, it could be seen that although scholars like (Larsson & Moe, 2012; Leng Ho, 2012; Miller & Ko, 2015) have argued that electoral success cannot be attributed to social media use; the success of Buhari in the 2015 presidential election and the Peter Obi effect of the third force in the 2023 have shown that social media have significant impact on electorates' voting behaviors.

Relying on the views expressed in previous studies on social media use and electioneering campaigns across the globe, it cannot be out of place to argue that social media has been a solid source of political information dissemination. Owing to the fact that social media have been seen as an integral source of political information for the youths, majority of what the people know and discuss about their political system are what they read or watched from the social media channels of different kinds. Drawing from the fact that seeing commands believing, viewers usually believe what they see

from the social media to be true. In this regard, many social media users use their handles to share audio-visual contents to authenticate their information in order to generate credibility among viewers.

In its nature, Nigerian elections are full of ups and downs as every political gladiator is fighting and employing different strategies to outsmart the other through any possible means available irrespective of the electoral guidelines and provisions. This political culture of seeking to cheat encouraged all political groups to plan their monitoring mechanism in case their effort to cheat fails. This monitoring is mainly done through the use of social media channels owing to its ability to transmit information in real time. The power of the social media to help in election monitoring was captured in Ikegbunam and Obiakor (2021) where they confirmed that WhatsApp social media platform was effective in monitoring the 2019 general elections. Respecting the fact that acquisition of leadership positions in Nigeria is never premised on the ability of a candidate to deliver good governance, anything goes in Nigerian elections with the most common three worded sentence of "Go to Court".

Significantly, compared with the rest of the world, the average Nigerian social media user spends more time of about 4 hours daily surfing the internet. Considering the fact that Nigeria's population of internet users is increasing (Statistica, 2021), the best place to pass information that can impact the audience is the social media. Generally, more than one third of the voting population spend relatively copious amounts of time on social media. This makes it very important for the message creators to push their contents to the place where it can meet the target. Today, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) estimates that there are almost 150 million internet users in Nigeria. The implication of this data is that anything on the social media space is significantly accessible to greater percentage of the Nigerian population.

The height of enthusiasm that accompanied this 2023 election especially among the youths makes the internet a place to be at all time should one want to be abreast with the happenings. Communications and promises made by INEC and all other stakeholders to save their bad past which the Nigerians are not ready to forget placed the election on watch by all. Considering the high expectation for change of government from what INEC and leading political parties used to do in previous elections, consciousness of all social media users in the country were ignited. This was what led to multiplicity of social media videos exposing different irregularities that characterised the conduct of the election that everyone in Nigeria thought would change the narrative for better. The election has come and gone. As a watchdog, the social media have made public on the spot videos of what happened during the period. What viewers think about the election, the image of the electoral umpire (the INEC), and President Buhari who had promised to leave a legacy of free and fair election to Nigerians and the future of the country inspired the quest to embark on this study. It was in the quest to verify the perception of viewers that this study sought to examine what public exposure to social media shared-video clips on irregularities from the 2023 election in Nigeria got to do with the audience perception of the outcome.

Statement of the Problem

Election is a process that is guided by law known to everybody in a country. In a true democracy, power they say belongs to the people and that power can only be used once in every four years.

Unfortunately, the height of impunity in Nigeria is geometrically increasing. Significantly, 2023 election is mission to creation of a new brand of insecurity because this generation that was disappointed by Nigeria may not have the elastic limit to wait for the next four years. The citizens of the country suffered ahead of the election going to and fro INEC registration areas for registration and collection of Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs). They were motivated by the fake promises that their votes would count. Close to the election, currency swap policy was introduced. This was allegedly aimed at combating vote buying and the people accepted to suffer for the few months to save the next four years and possibly, save the next generation. The suffering extended to keeping vigil at the various INEC registration areas to ensure the sensitive materials constitutionally handled by those who have concluded plans to disappoint them. Before then, it will be imperative to state that at the wake of 2022 and the birth of the new electoral law, both INEC and political stakeholders were saying that 2023 election was going to be better than every other election in the country. They kept singing 'one man one vote'. Relying on what the INEC chairman, Prof. Yakubu Mahmood and his team promised the citizens ahead of the election and what was seen in the social media videos, have the promises of the 2023 election been credibly delivered? Is the BVAS still the game changer or has "Go to court" taken over the political space in the country? A look at all the previous activities of INEC and President Buhari before the election reveals that it was as if they just played with Nigerians. It was on the basis of these that this study set out to examine the audience perception of the social media shared video-clips on the irregularities from the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of exposure to the video-clips on the irregularities from the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

- To ascertain the respondents' level of exposure to video-clips exposing irregularities on the conduct of the 2023 elections in Nigeria
- Find out the respondents' perception of the video-clips exposing irregularities on the conduct of the 2023 elections in Nigeria
- Ascertain whether respondents' exposure to video-clips exposing irregularities on the conduct of the 2023 elections in Nigeria influenced their perception of the elections.
- Ascertain respondents' assessment of the outcome of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study is an interrogation of the concept of "promise and fail" approach to leadership. What has changed after the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and development of INEC server which was the bases of the 2019 decision of the court? Has the presence of INEC Result Viewing portal (IREV) changed the narrative of mutilated election results in different strongholds of different political parties? Can Nigerian election from this 2023 outing be classified as credible? These questions and more, when answered will direct future policy making in this country. The study will serve as a means of strengthening the citizens and preparing them not to expect more from the Nigerian institutions. To the political parties, this study will serve as an eye opener on the power of social media to expose the atrocious dealings of some political parties in the country. The study will

also justify the significant and omnipresent power of the social media in monitoring elections in the country. More importantly, this study will show the nations and the various stakeholders in election that what they do are not in secret any longer as far as the social media is there to gather and transmit on the events, actions and inactions in the process. To future academics, the study is a source of information and review of literature. The major limitation to this study is the fact that it was only WhatsApp and Twitter users who are undergraduate students in Anambra State were studied.

Theoretical Framework

Violation of Expectation Theory

This is a communication theory which pays attention to the analysis of how individuals react whenever their expectations are violated. Propounded by Judee K. Burgoon in 1975, the theory argues that there are norms and values in every human society which guide their expectations on certain things that happen in the society. These norms and values determine what they accept and reject at different times. The proponents of the theory suggest that individuals' expectation of how others will behave in a certain issue is guided by their certainty that others will follow a set of norms and values that are known to the public. In the case of this study, the citizens in Nigeria have a set of rules stipulated by INEC which they are expecting to see them follow during the conduct of the election. These laid down rules formed the norms and values in the views of the proponents of this theory. The implication of this is that at any point in time the people fail to see that which they were told to expect, their expectation gets violated and their perception influenced. Violation expectedness captures the degree to which one's behavior goes contrary to that which is expected of them from the public all in line with the guiding norms and values prevalent at that time (Olkkonen & Luoma-Aho, 2015). In the case of Nigeria, citizens were made to be certain that INEC's introduction of the BVAS and IREV would work out to make the process transparent. This makes their expectation higher, and eventually INEC failed to achieve the desired effect and their expectations get violated. The implication here is that the magnitude of the violation expectedness was drastically increased. This theory was considered apt for this study because it captured what exactly happens once what the people sought were not offered. The much-needed transparency that triggered massive response to INEC activities of voters' registration and collection of PVC has been proved to fail following the chunk of videos spread through social media platforms.

The Review

Violation of Expectation and Perceived Accountability of the Electoral Outcome

Expectations control the views that an individual holds about a particular event, issue or action taken by another. As an institution of public record keeping, the people are watching the electoral umpire relying on what is already provided as a guideline for the 2023 election. These electoral guidelines and acts have already bestowed credibility on the process in the eyes of the masses. This makes the expectations very high. This was what led to massive voter registration and collection of voters' cards. It was the views of many Nigerians that INEC would be transparent and accountable.

Definitively, accountability is the implicit or explicit expectation from another person based on expressed rules known to the

expectants. Scientifically, any time the supposed rule as expressed is violated, the credibility of the process is said to be compromised because there must have been a deviation from what the people sought and what was obtained, the case of Obiakor and Nwabueze (2019)'s gratifications sought versus the gratifications obtained. This is expertly the situation between the citizens in Nigeria and INEC which had failed to provide a satisfactory justification for their actions in the 2023 elections. This demonstration of lack of trust by the electoral umpire is most likely to generate negative reactions as is happening already and their possible consequences in the society after it.

Generally, expectation for a free and fair election to take place in Nigeria is an important matter of serious concern to all Nigerians especially with President Buhari and APC's total failure in good governance and social service delivery. This expectation is germin for the acceptance of the electoral outcome and believability in the process (Hitchen, 2018). This is because once the people are exposed to some reasonable efforts put in place (the introduction of the BVAS, new electoral law and the IREV) to make the election more transparent and credible, they are likely to expect reasonable outcome in affirmation while hoping that what they were promised will be delivered. Denial at this point led to violation of the expectation that the people already had about the process which must have influenced their perception of the outcome. The uncertainty of the possibility of effective implementation of the promises made forced the citizens to pay attention closely to what the commission was doing using their devices. Today, the video-clips that were shared on social media platforms are pointing to one direction which is that the commission and the security agencies in the country were unable to deliver on the mandate of ensuring a free and fair election irrespective of the amount of money committed to the process. This has adverse effect on public perceptions about the INEC's reputation.

The point here is that there is the need to hold the commission accountable to their official duty. In other words, it is possible that accountability mitigates expectation violations by increasing the certainty that the citizens have about the commission's future behaviors. While accountability has roots in accounting and management (Brennan & Solomon, 2008), Corporate Social Responsibility scholars have either narrowly considered accountability as being accountable to shareholders or have conflated the term with transparency. On one hand, scholars have recognized the importance of corporate accountability to a wide range of stakeholders (Brennan & Solomon, 2008). Lim and Greenwood (2017, p. 774) argued that "stakeholder engagement in the process of CSR communications is the best way to ensure accountability". On the other hand, some CSR scholars have assumed that accountability derives from transparency (Bachmann, *et al.*, 2015). Yet transparency refers to "the disclosure of relevant information about the organization's decision-making processes, procedures, functioning and performance to the people concerned as well as the wider public" (Bachman *et al.*, 2015, p. 1133). In this regard, accountability goes beyond mere transparency, and implies that a corporation is being held responsible for its actions. We assert that when stakeholders perceive that a corporation is being held responsible for its actions, whether that is from stakeholders or society in general, that reduces stakeholders' uncertainty for future behaviors.

Empirical Literature

Obiakor and Ikegbunam (2023) examined undergraduate students' exposure to social media shared videos and how the videos influenced their perception of the realities of COVID-19 pandemic using survey research method. The study which examined the perception of 400 undergraduate students of three universities in South-eastern Nigeria was anchored on the technological acceptance and conspiracy theories. It was found that respondents' exposure to the social media shared videos on COVID-19 negatively influenced their perception of the health realities of the virus. It was recommended that absolute care be taken while exposing oneself to social media video-clips as such exposure may be misleading to the extent of causing danger to the viewers. This study is closely related to the current one because it deals on social media videos. However, while the previous study examined the influence of shared videos on perception of health realities, this current one is interrogating the influence of shared videos showing electoral fraud on the outcome of the 2023 election in Nigeria.

Ikegbunam and Odishika (2021) investigated the use of Smart-card reader technology as a means of curtailing electoral fraud in Nigeria's 2019 general election. The study which targeted voters in some select Local Government Areas in Anambra State was designed to understand the voters' perception of the use of Smart-card readers in 2019 general election paying attention to the effectiveness of the technology in controlling the fraud it was designed to curtail. Based on the uses and gratifications and technological acceptance theories, the study found that the smart-card reader technology is a total failure given that it could neither stop multiple voting nor ensure credible election in the eyes of the electorates leading to negative perception of the technology among the respondents. The study recommended that INEC should effect the corrections on all errors observed to have marred the use of the technology and religiously improve on it for better elections in future. This study is related to the current one in the sense that it looked at technology and election. It paves way for an investigation of this current one which capitalizes on the influence of social media shared videos in the 2023 elections

Similarly, relying on observed lack of electoral transparency in Nigeria, Ikegbunam and Obiakor (2021) examined whether heavy use of WhatsApp platforms by different political parties in 2019 elections encouraged popular participation and effective monitoring of the electoral processes. The study adopted the survey research method in studying a total of 313 respondents sampled from select WhatsApp group of the two major political parties in Nigeria. Relying on the provisions of social media engagement and technological acceptance theories, it was found that WhatsApp use encouraged popular participation and monitoring of the electoral process. The researchers recommended that the political parties and the electoral umpire should engage more in the use of social media platforms in passing information before, during and after elections to encourage transparency in the process. This study is closely related to the current one in the sense that they are centered on election monitoring activities through social media. However, this study differs from the previous one in its focus on shared video-clips concerning the election.

Omotayo and Folorunso (2020), this study investigated the types of social media used for political participation, and the factors influencing the use of the media for political participation. A total of 322 youth was surveyed. The technological acceptance theory was used as the theoretical base of the study. Findings

demonstrated that monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices are some of the major uses of social media in electoral process. This study provided the needed gap as to whether social media videos shared during the election exert any influence on the peoples' perception of the process given that it can be used to monitor the process. This current study is an addendum to the previous one supporting the use of social media for election monitoring in Nigeria.

While relying on the change brought into the world by the evolution of the internet Adamu (2018) adopted secondary sources of data interrogation to investigate the influence of the application of social media in politics. Relying on the uses and gratifications theory, the study found that the use of social media during the 2015 presidential election influenced voting patterns in Nigeria. The study concluded that social media had significant influence on Nigerians voting pattern in the election. It was recommended that social media use should be intensified but positively used in a manner that could not divide the country or mislead the public. This study is related to the current one in the sense that they both looked at the influence of social media use on the political behavior of Nigerians. However, it is important to state that while the previous study is looking at social media use as whole, the current study is focused on videos shared through social media and how such videos influenced the audience perception of the outcome of the election.

Methodology

This study used survey research method to extract the views of the people on shared video-clips they have been exposed to arising from the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Nwodu (2017, p. 178) explains that survey research serves the purpose of scientifically examining socio-psychological variables or phenomena in their natural settings; describing objectively, the relationships that exist among the examined variables or phenomena within their actual environment at a defined time frame; probing directly or indirectly, attitudes, feelings, and dispositions of the samples towards a given phenomenon and by extension, use the outcome to generalize on the entire population; and offering researchers the opportunity to communicate with the respondents directly or indirectly. The population of this study was the number of undergraduate students of NAU, COOU, and Paul University. These Universities were selected because the researchers could conveniently reach out to their undergraduate students. Again, the choice of the universities is aimed at getting the spread of private, State and Federal government ownership. The reason for the choice of undergraduate students was because they form majority of the population using social media platforms and as well get and shared contents through the networks. According the students' affairs units of the three universities, the population of undergraduate students are 12,700 for COOU, 25,000 for NAU and 1116 for Paul University respectively. The total population therefore is 38,816 students in all. The researcher used the Taro Yamani's formula of sample size derivation to draw the sample from the total of 38,816 students, thus; $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = total population

$(e)^2$ = error margin

l = constant

$$n = \frac{38,816}{1+38,816(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{38,816}{1+38,816 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{38,816}{1+97.04}$$

$$n = \frac{38,816}{98.04}$$

$$n = 396$$

The researchers applied the purposive sampling technique to select only respondents who were exposed to the shared video-clips on Twitter and WhatsApp showing the electoral irregularities that characterised the election under study. The entire sample size for the study was 396 respondents as obtained from the Taro Yamani formula stated above. This sample was equally distributed among the three universities under study. The choice of equal distribution was informed by the desire to ensure that each university gets equal distribution of respondents from the sample. In this regard, this figure was divided into three of 132 respondents per school. This study made use of the questionnaire for the collection of data from the respondents on their exposure to social media shared video-clips on the said election in the country. For the sake of clarity, the questionnaire was divided into two sections to cover the demographic and thematic response of the respondents. The demographic questions exposed the researcher to the personal details of the respondents such as age, sex, level of study and University affiliation. Thematic data contained open ended question items capturing the research objectives aimed at supplying appropriate information that can provide answers to the research questions posed for the study.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Out of the 396 total copies of the questionnaire distributed, 378 copies were retrieved and found usable for the study.

Demographic Representation of the Respondents

Table 1: University Affiliations of the Respondents

University of study	Frequency	Percentage
NAU	126	33.3
COOU	126	33.3
Paul University	126	33.3
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

The universities under study were equal in producing 126 respondents for the study. The reason was to provide equilibrium and fair play.

Table 2: Respondents' Marital Status

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Married	106	28 %
Single	272	72%
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

From the above table, it is evident that some of the respondents representing 28% are married while 72% are single. The implication of this is that, the respondents are within the undergraduates' school age.

Table 3: The Respondents' Levels of Study in the University

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
100 level	68	18
200 level	105	28
300 level	95	25
400 level	65	17
500 level	45	12
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

The implication of this table is that the study has representatives from all levels in the university in order to cover diverse students studying different courses in the university.

Table 4: Respondents' Age Distribution

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
17-20	105	27.8
21-24	113	29.9
25-28	102	27
29+	58	15.3
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

This table shows that the Nigerian university of today is dominated by students within the age of 21-24, followed by those within the age of 17-20.

Table 5: Respondents' Accommodation Type

Hostel Accommodation	Frequency	Percentage
In School Hostel	122	32.3
Off campus accommodation	256	67.7
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

Table 8: Whether respondents' exposure to video-clips exposing irregularities on the conduct of the 2023 election in Nigeria influenced their perception of the election?

Response category	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total	X	Rmk
By demonstrating total security compliance to fraud	155 775	118 472	88 264	10 20	7 7	1538	4.0	Accepted
By showing that INEC violated public expectations	219 1095	159 636	0 0	0 0	0 0	1731	4.5	Accepted
By portending that election cannot be free & fair in Nigeria	134 670	148 592	78 234	8 16	10 10	1522	4.0	Accepted
By showing that incumbency is a serious factor in								

This table revealed that students of the three universities enjoy off campus accommodation more than in school hostel accommodation.

Thematic Data Presentation

Table 6: Respondents' level of exposure to video-clips exposing irregularities on the conduct of the 2023 election in Nigeria

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Significantly exposed	237	62.7
Very significantly exposed	125	33.1
Sparingly exposed	16	4.2
Very sparingly exposed	0	0
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

This table above revealed that the respondents are overwhelmingly exposed to different video clips showing gross irregularities that characterized the 2023 general election in Nigeria. The implication of this is that video-clips are very popular in the media and that the respondents are active social media users.

Table 7: Respondents' perception of the video-clips exposing irregularities on the conduct of the 2023 election in Nigeria

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Social media videos are revealing the unwanted truth	205	54.2%
The videos are not all true as posted	7	1.9%
The videos are there to incite crises	24	6.3%
The videos show the omnipresence nature of social media	142	37.6%
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

This information demonstrated that of the 378 respondents only 1.8% and 6.3% were not in commendation of the service provided by the social media during the election. The overwhelming populations of the respondents see the service as necessary and condemned the process that led to the irregularities. The implication of the data is that the video-clips murdered whatever outcome of the election in the eyes of the people who are exposed to them.

politics	98 490	86 344	165 495	20 40	9 9	1378	3.6	Accepted
Total						378		

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

Report from the above table shows the manners or ways in which the video-clips influenced the respondents' perception of the election. Looking at the 5-point Likert rating scale above as obtained in the responses, it is clear that the video-clips influenced the respondents' perception of the election in different but interrelated ways. The implication of this is that, the fleet of video-clips revealing all manners of electoral irregularities in the election encouraged negative perception of the election among the people.

Table 9: Respondents' assessment of the outcome of the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Generally flawed by irregularities	167	44.2%
There was no election at all	64	16.9%
The election is the best that the country can get	38	10.1%
The election is never a reflection of democracy	109	28.8%
Nothing is wrong with the election except normal political disagreement	0	0
Total	378	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2023

The above data represented the respondents' assessment of the outcome of the presidential election of 2023 in Nigeria. Looking at the reactions and response categories above, it can be understood that the election has negative assessment reports from the respondents considering that not even a single respondent see anything good about the election. From the data, it was only 38 respondents that classified the election as the best that the country can get. Unfortunately, the majority of the respondents disowned the election for lack of credibility.

Discussion of Findings

On the research question one posed to discover the respondents' level of exposure to the video-clips on irregularities in the election, it was found that majority of the respondents are significantly exposed to the videos and none of the respondents said he was not exposed to the videos. Relying on the data from the table 6, an overwhelming 237 of the respondents accounting for 62.7% of the respondents admitted that they were *significantly exposed* to the videos. 125 others said that they were *very significantly exposed* to the videos. Meanwhile, a minimal 16 respondents accounting for only 4.2% of the respondents admitted being *Sparingly exposed* and as none admitted being *Very sparingly exposed* to the videos. The implication of these data is that the social media platforms under study were effectively used for monitoring the 2023 election and that its use enhances universality of the irregularities encountered in the election that attracted global attention. The spread of the videos was made possible by massive availability of the social media. Impliedly, the popularity of the videos impacts on the credibility of the election and sends the signal that the INEC

has violated the expectations of the public. The finding above shows that everything that is happening in Nigerian finds its way into the social media. This finding shows that social media is one of the most vibrant means of disseminating information to the masses. It equally justifies the power of the social media networks in spreading politically motivated information faster to the people too. The rate of exposure as presented in the data confirms earlier media scholars' views in which social media platforms were described to have the capacity to provide direct access to contents to an unprecedented number of people (Ikegbunam & Obiakor, 2021; Obiakor & Ikegbunam, 2023; Obiakor, Ikegbunam & Ezeaso, 2023). The level of exposure to the social media shared video-clips is a factor of the perceived ease of use (Cha, 2013; Yang & Lee, 2018; Tefertiller, 2020), usefulness of the videos (Munoz-Leiva, Climent-Climent, & Liébana-Cabanillas, 2017; Nagy, 2018).

On the second research question which sought to ascertain the respondents' perception of the videos shared from the election, it was found that the videos generated negative perception of the election among the respondents. According to the table 7, 205 respondents accounting for 54.2 percent of the respondents said that *"Social media videos are revealing the unwanted truth"*. To these respondents, the information revealed about the election from the videos are the truths that the powers that be never wanted the people to know. In support of this view was another 142 respondents representing 37.6 percent of the sample said that *"The videos show the omnipresence nature of social media"*. To these respondents, the videos justify the fact that the social media are everywhere. In fact, it reveals the strength of social media in monitoring elections in Nigeria. This finding corroborates the finding in Ikegbunam & Agudoso (2021) where the scholars found that the use of social media in monitoring election in Nigeria is very effective because it gives access to the most remote area and shows what the mainstream media may not like do disseminate for fear of sanctions as found in Obiakor, Okelue and Okeke (2024) whose recommendation in their study suggests that the government in power should refrain from using the regulatory bodies for their own selfish interests. From the sample it was only 24 respondents representing 6.3 percent and 7 others representing 1.9 percent are of the opinion that *"The videos are there to incite crises"* and that *"The videos are not all true as posted"* (refer to table 7 for details).

In examining the manner in which the respondents' perception were influenced by what they saw in the videos, it was found that the respondents' exposure to these videos highly influenced their perception of the outcome of the election grossly negatively. According to the data presented in the five-point Likert rating scale with which the variables were tested, it was found that all hypothetical statements tested were accepted all against the credibility and fairness of the election (See the Likert rating scale table 8 for more). This means that the people were totally disappointed with the conduct and outcome of the election which was the most taunted and expected to be free and fair considering the promises made by the electoral body. This finding is in line with the provision of the violation of expectation theory which suggests that individuals' expectations for how others will behave

in a certain issue is guided by their certainty that others will follow a set of norms and values that are known to the public (Olkkonen & Luoma-Aho, 2015). Unfortunately, INEC's deviation in the middle of the election violated the peoples' expectations. Significantly, the least mean score of the four hypothetical statements posed to test the manners or ways in which the video-clips influenced their perception of the election was 3.6. This means that they were highly influenced to the extent of "rating the outcome of the election as never credible and fair" and "never reflected the will of the masses". The above perception cannot be divorced from the violation suffered by the masses in the hands of the electoral umpire that assured and reassured the citizens of free and fair polls. This finding is in line with the views expressed in Trafton (2019) who argued that the peoples' perception of the world is grossly influenced by their expectations. No doubt, the peoples' expectations of INEC which was violated led to the negative perception shared about the election as a result of the video-clips that they saw emanating from different parts of the country.

On the last research question posed to find out the respondents' assessment of the election, it was found that the election attracted negative assessment reports from the respondents who mainly saw nothing good in the election especially the presidential election. According to the information from the table, 44.2 percent of the sample accounting for 167 respondents admitted that "The election was generally flawed by irregularities" as seen from the video-clips shared on different social media platforms. This was followed by another 109 respondents representing 28.8 percent of the sample who said that "The election is never a reflection of democracy". 64 others controlling 16.9 percent of the sample were blunt enough to conclude that "There was no election at all" leaving only 38 respondents accounting for 10.1 percent who decided to be fair to the election by concluding that "The election is the best that the country can get". Significantly, of all the respondents under study, none admitted that nothing is wrong with the election. This is because the more people are exposed to contents suggesting what they suspect, the more likely such contents will engage their personal views and force them to accept that which they see from the media (Gerbner, *et al.*, 1980, in Mitomo, Otsuka, & Jeon, 2015). Moreover, this finding agrees with that of Ikegbunam and Obiakor (2021) where they conclude that the more closely related a media message is to a situation on ground, the more likely the people are forced to believe them to be true. The leaked social media shared video-clips are true reflection of the situation as designed and executed by the government in power which the whole Nigerians were aware of even before the election when the APC presidential candidate asked his supporters to grab it and take it by force and run with it, provided they will be returned elected. This means that the closer resemblance the media information is to respondent's previous experience, the stronger the influence of the media message will have on them. This finding corroborates that of Cheng, Mitomo, Otsuka, and Jeon (2015) which concluded that the media exert significant effects on an audience perception of realities and as well changes their behavior intention on the emergency situation that they found themselves in.

Summary

This study was set to examine the influence of shared video-clips revealing the irregularities that characterized the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The study sought to understand the respondents' level of exposure to the videos, the perception of the

election from the video-clips and the manners in which the video-clips influenced their perception of the outcome of the election in Nigeria. The study found that the use of social media made the spread of the video-clips displaying different kinds of electoral irregularities very popular among the respondents. Importantly, these video-clips grossly shaped and guided the respondent's perception of the electoral outcome thoroughly, and negatively. The perception of the video-clips was more of negative about the conduct of the electoral umpire which violated the expectations that it set for itself before the masses ahead of the elections. This violation is what shaped the perception and assessment of the election and its outcome among the people.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, this study concludes that the use of social media in election monitoring is one of the best ways to show it as it is happening and should be encouraged. Considering the influence of the videos on the audience perception of the election, this study concludes that both the political office seekers and the electoral umpire were exposed by the use of social media in the 2023 elections. In all, the 2023 election, based on the shared video-clips of electoral irregularities, can be adjudged the worse since 1999 and similar thing must be discouraged in this country to avoid social uprising or revolution that will cost much to the people of the country. Finally, it is important to note that the electoral umpire, the government in power and the security agencies saddled with the responsibility of overseeing the election which they all promised Nigerians to safeguard, turned around and violated the expectations of the people who placed some values on them and expected to deliver as promised.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made in the study, the researchers came up with the following recommendations:

- That the use of social media in monitoring elections should be encouraged and enshrined in the constitution to enable it serve as admissible evidence in Court during election litigations.
- That Nigeria needs to strengthen its national institution such as the INEC, the Police, the Civil Defence and even the Court to reduce the level of impunity in the country's electoral process. The reason for this is that all these senseless negative activities that have long been reported in the country's election have refused to stop because the institutions that are set to handle them are weak. The videos from the 2023 election indicted all the institutions in the country starting from INEC down to the civil defence who sometimes secure the life of the people destroying the electoral materials.
- That the politicians should purify themselves and learn to allow the will of the people to prevail so as to avoid unconstitutional change of power. This is because he who made a peaceful resolution impossible makes violent revolution possible.
- That the citizens must continue to expose the enemies of the people by participating in the political process in order to bet more videos of their nefarious activities targeted at scuttling the wishes of the masses. In every constituency, the electorates know the person that served and can serve them well.

- That further studies should investigate reasons why INEC and other security agencies who are saddled with the responsibility of conducting and securing the election have refused to allow the will of the masses prevail.

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