
ELECTION SECURITY CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ELECTION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to examine the nature and characteristics of election security in Nigeria, identify the major challenges associated with its implementation, and analyse their implications for effective election management. Particular attention is paid to assessing the role of security agencies in preventing electoral violence and ensuring the integrity of electoral processes. The study employed a qualitative research design. The data were collected from secondary sources, including academic literature, journal articles, legal documents, reports of international organisations, media publications, and documents of the CLEEN Foundation. The collected data were analysed using content analysis. The theoretical framework was based on the Frustration–Aggression Theory and the Institutional Trust Theory. The findings indicate that election security alone does not guarantee free and fair elections. Major challenges identified include poor coordination among security agencies, political interference in security operations, ineffective law enforcement, and violations of human rights. These factors undermine public confidence in the electoral process and constrain the effectiveness of election management institutions. The study recommends greater consensus-building in election management in Nigeria. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by enhancing the understanding of the relationship between election security, electoral violence, and election management in emerging democracies. It also demonstrates the relevance of combining behavioural and institutional perspectives in analysing electoral security challenges. The findings may assist election management bodies, security agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders in improving election security strategies, strengthening professional standards among security personnel, and enhancing public trust in electoral processes.

Key words: Election Security, Electoral Violence, Election, Election Management, Security Agencies.

Introduction

Across the world, elections have been a significant means of establishing a link between leaders and the public in democratic settings. However, in settings where democracy is still emerging, electoral politics has not only become highly prevalent, but has also become a means through which conflicts and violence are manifested in nearly all elections. Olurode and Jega (2011) observed that the disruption of electoral processes has become a persistent feature of emerging democracies.

Most often, insecurity is a major cause of electoral violence in these democracies. For instance, a study conducted by the National Democratic Institute (2008) on Nigeria's 2007 general elections revealed that insecurity creates an environment in which voters are unable to make their choices freely due to fear, difficulties in campaigning for candidates of their choice, and obstacles to contesting elections. Since insecurity constitutes one of the most serious challenges facing

election management bodies, appropriate mechanisms should be put in place to ensure the proper management of elections and the conduct of credible electoral processes.

In countries where electoral violence has become persistent, elections are often characterised by violence and insecurity, thereby causing citizens to fear approaching elections. Nevertheless, citizens in such settings strongly anticipate a free, fair, and credible electoral process, hence the need to ensure it. Olurode (2013) argues that election security is significant because it helps prevent insecurity during the electoral process, especially in developing countries where democracy is still emerging. Given the complexity of the electoral process, which involves people, logistics, physical locations, and the movement of personnel and materials from one location to another, a high level of security must be ensured.

As beneficial as election security is, it has become a formidable challenge in election management across many African states. This issue has attracted considerable concern among scholars, election managers, security practitioners, civil society organisations, political analysts, political parties, and other relevant stakeholders in recent times. Nevertheless, elections must be conducted periodically to ensure the smooth transfer of governmental authority.

Because elections are a sine qua non of democracy, there can be no democracy without elections. Elections must be conducted in a manner that sustains democratic governance without violence. When violence mars the conduct of an election, “it weakens the integrity of elections and electoral processes, and the will of the people becomes difficult to ascertain in electoral outcomes” (Oni et al., 2025: 2).

To ensure the proper management of elections, the practice of election security is essential in a developing state such as Nigeria. The role of security agencies and other personnel is non-negotiable if the electoral environment is to remain orderly, safe, and free from violence and chaos (Ali & Ali, 2022). Previous studies by Ojo and Ademowo (2015), Oni et al. (2025), Ajayi (2006), Ajayi (2024), Ali and Ali (2022), Nwokike et al. (2023), and Awopeju (2020) have focused on election security by examining the role of security agencies in elections, security challenges and election management, the role of security agencies in managing electoral violence, and the relationship between election security and democratic consolidation. Findings from these studies indicate that election management bodies often underperform due to widespread insecurity, compounded by the inability of security agencies to adequately protect electoral processes. They also show that election security threats arise from multiple interacting factors across all stages of the electoral process. Despite these findings, studies examining election security, its practice, and its implications for election management have received relatively little scholarly attention. Therefore, this paper examines the issue of election security vis-à-vis election management in Nigeria.

This study therefore seeks to answer the following questions: Does the deployment of security agencies effectively curb electoral violence in Nigeria? What implications does election security have for election management in Nigeria? Consequently, the study provides deeper insights into election security challenges and their implications for election management in Nigeria, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge on the subject.

The paper is divided into six sections. The first section provides the introduction. Section Two examines the conceptual discourse. Section Three discusses the theoretical framework. Section Four examines the opportunities presented by election security in Nigeria. Section Five analyses election security challenges and their implications for election management in Nigeria, while Section Six concludes the study and provides policy recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification and Discourse

In the context of this paper, some concepts require clarification in order to facilitate a proper understanding of their meanings and usage. The concepts that are germane to this paper are election, election security, and election management in Nigeria. These concepts are explained below.

Election

Elections are the institutional technology of democracy. It “is an art and science of casting votes to select a preferred candidate or party in competitive party politics or a democratic contest” (Oni, 2015: 230). Keohane (1989: 3) defines an election as “a persistent and connected set of rules and prescribed behavioural roles intended to properly control activities to shape expectations”. It is a means by which a group of people selects one or a few individuals from among many to occupy one or more positions of authority. It involves rules and regulations designed to ensure a certain degree of fairness and justice for those concerned.

According to Nnoli (1986: 144), “election constitutes the most modern form of recruitment of personnel into public offices, and is deemed to be a very crucial aspect of the democratic process, irrespective of the type of democracy that is practised”. Similarly, Anifowose (2003: 21) defines an election “as a means of choosing people for public office”. Therefore, this paper adopts Nnoli’s definition as its working definition. Despite the fact that elections are a means of choosing people for public office, they do not merely sustain democracy; they are regarded as the heart of democracy and the primary means through which the will of the people is regularly expressed (Yagboyaju, 2022).

According to Oni et al. (2025), elections serve two major purposes in democratic settings. First, they serve as a weapon in the hands of the electorate. Voters use this weapon (election) to remove or replace an unpopular government, political party, or candidate from power. Second, elections serve as a means of legitimising government. This is achieved through the popular vote cast for a candidate or political party; thus, authority is derived directly from the people, and obedience to such a government is voluntary. In view of this, elections should be free and fair so that relevant stakeholders will accept their outcomes.

Moreover, Yagboyaju (2022) states that elections can be either competitive or non-competitive. According to him, the nature of elections depends on factors such as candidate viability, electoral system design, and campaign resources. Non-competitive elections are prevalent in one-party states, where they serve as a ritualised affirmation of regime legitimacy, displayed through apparent unanimity. To ensure mass participation in such states, leaders often rely on compulsory voting to create a sense of inclusion among the majority of participants.

Election Security

Election security refers to issues relating to the policing of elections and the management of security concerns arising from electoral processes (Adekanye & Iyanda, 2011). Similarly, Olurode (2011) avers that election security relates to the safety of electoral personnel, election materials and information, voters, and the array of stakeholders participating in the electoral process. He further posits that election security means “the absence of the use of threat or force, harassment and intimidation in all phases of the election” (p. 7). In this context, election security refers to the protection of people and materials during the conduct of elections through the deployment of security personnel to ensure free, fair, and credible elections.

Adekanye and Iyanda (2011) argue that current policing and security approaches are outdated because they have failed to help researchers and policymakers address the real security challenges facing contemporary elections. The authors advance their argument in five ways:

- (i) Security management has become more complex and transnational, blurring the line between internal and external issues;
- (ii) The traditional distinction between internal and external security, especially in election policing, has largely disappeared;
- (iii) Globalisation and market forces have reshaped security, forcing us to rethink and redefine it;

- (iv) New security threats have emerged that must be identified and analysed in order to understand the real security issues associated with election policing; and
- (v) Old security issues have not disappeared; rather, they have become more difficult to manage as new concerns have emerged on the agenda.

Despite the outdated nature of current policing and security approaches, which have failed to assist researchers and policymakers in addressing contemporary electoral security challenges, election security remains an important aspect of maintaining the integrity of democratic processes. As technology evolves, so do threats to elections. Therefore, understanding these threats and implementing effective measures are essential for safeguarding democracy.

Electoral Violence

Alston's report (2010) reveals that there is no single definition of electoral violence or universally accepted terminology for the concept. Most definitions and approaches are structured around the intention to influence electoral outcomes. In this regard, Claes and Von Borzyskowski (2018: 5) conceptualise electoral violence as "any form of intimidation or physical violence directed against electoral stakeholders, or the disruption of events or damage to materials intended to affect the electoral process". Similarly, Fischer (2002: 4) argues that "electoral violence deals with any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the electoral process, or the process itself, during the election period".

More comprehensively, Nnamani and Lloh (2015: 6) conceptualise electoral violence as:

Any act of violence perpetrated in the course of political activities, including pre-election, election-day, and post-election periods, and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, the use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other participants in the electoral process, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with the electoral process.

The above definition, according to Nnamani and Lloh (2015), is adopted as the working definition. It conceives electoral violence as electoral malfeasance capable of causing harm to individuals during electoral processes. Such acts may affect the credibility and integrity of elections. However, in line with Joseph (2011), the conduct of a credible election is the soul of the democratic process. Therefore, when elections are characterised by violence and rigging, they constitute a serious threat to democratic stability.

Hoglund (2009) distinguishes electoral violence from political violence, whereas Bardal (2016) frames electoral violence as a subtype of political violence characterised by the use of emotional, social, or economic pressure, coercion, and physical harm to influence participation in political processes and institutions. From a broader perspective, UNDP (2009: 4) defines electoral violence as "acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect the process or that arise in the context of electoral competition".

A critical review of the literature on electoral violence reveals the following common characteristics:

- (i) It may be harmful to individuals;
- (ii) It is intended to influence or manipulate the outcome of an election or electoral process;
- (iii) It differs from other forms of political violence through its combination of timing and motive;
- (iv) It involves actual or threatened harm; and
- (v) It undermines elections, which are intended to ensure the legitimacy of electoral outcomes.

Kehailia (2014: 31–39) categorises electoral violence into eight types: party-on-party, party-on-voter, party-on-state, voter-on-voter, voter-on-state, state-on-voter, state-on-party, and state-on-state electoral violence. Any of these forms of violence can destabilise election management.

Given its characteristics and manifestations, electoral violence is a debilitating factor in the electoral process. For this reason, many states across the world, especially emerging democracies, engage in the practice of election security.

Materials and methods

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatic representation that shows the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Similarly, Mugenda (2008) views it as a concise description of the phenomenon under study, accompanied by a graphical or visual depiction of the major variables of the study. In this study, the conceptual framework examines the implications of electoral security challenges for election management in Nigeria. The dependent variable refers to the implications or election management outcomes, while the independent variable refers to security challenges. The variables are clearly illustrated in the diagram below.

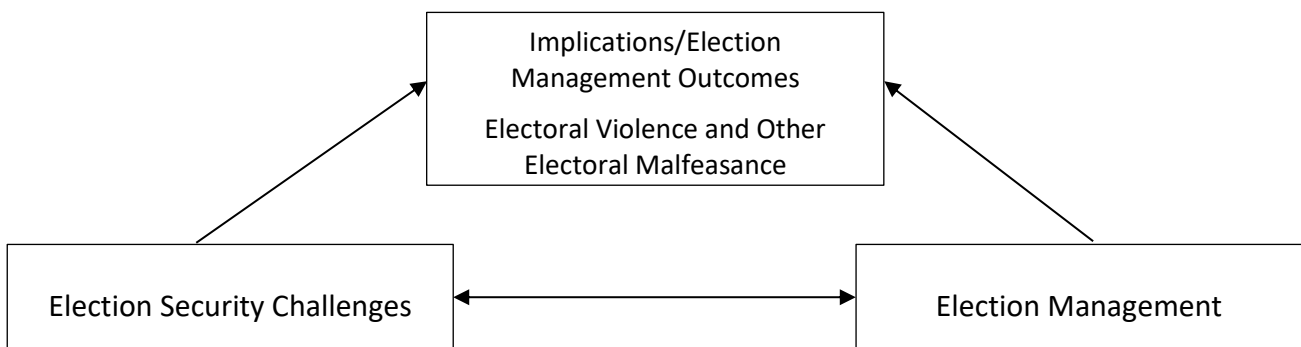


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Source: Authors' Construct

Theoretical Framework

The analysis is anchored on the Frustration–Aggression Theory. This theory was propounded by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears. The scholars who developed the theory were Yale University psychologists who integrated ideas and findings from disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Following its development, the theory became one of the most influential explanations of aggressive behaviour in the history of the social sciences. The theory was originally propounded in 1939 and was further developed by Neal Miller and Leonard Berkowitz in 1941 and 1989, respectively.

The major proposition of this theory is that when an individual's goals are frustrated, this directly or indirectly leads to aggressive behaviour. According to Dollard et al. (1939), frustration occurs when a goal-directed response is blocked, while aggression is defined as "an act whose goal-response is injury to an organism". The theory states that when the source of frustration cannot be overcome, aggression may be displaced onto innocent targets.

Miller (1941) and Sears (1941) refined the theory by proposing that the tendency to react (i.e., display aggression) is a probable response to frustration. In other words, although frustration may trigger an aggressive response, it does not necessarily lead to aggression in every case (Zillmann, 1979). The theory can be applied to situations involving riots and revolutions, where

poorer and more deprived sections of society may express their accumulated frustration and anger through violence.

The theory is relevant to the present study because elections in Nigeria are often associated with electoral malpractice, while their aftermath is frequently characterised by violence. Applying the Frustration–Aggression Theory to this study, the Nigerian electorate is often frustrated during the voting process by politicians who seek to win elections by all means, including the use of state security agencies. When voters cast their ballots expecting them to count, but those votes are undermined through electoral manipulation, intimidation by security personnel, and the falsification of election results, aggression is likely to follow. In other words, the use of election security mechanisms to intimidate or frustrate opponents with the intention of rigging elections is undemocratic. Such actions increase the likelihood of electoral violence. This aggression may manifest itself through acts such as killings, intimidation of opponents, ballot-box snatching, and similar forms of electoral violence.

The Frustration–Aggression Theory does not sufficiently address contemporary election security issues because it focuses primarily on violence and overlooks the role played by state institutions. Therefore, this study combines the Frustration–Aggression Theory with the Institutional Trust Theory.

The Institutional Trust Theory was propounded by Zucker in 1986. Zucker (1986) argues that institutionalisation is the most effective means of generating trust in society. The Institutional Trust Theory focuses on how political, social, and economic systems build, maintain, or lose public confidence. The theory posits that individuals rely on institutional legitimacy, such as the perceived fairness of governments and public institutions (e.g., the Police, INEC, and the Courts), in order to navigate uncertainty within society. Through institutions, citizens develop common understandings and shared expectations based on laws, social roles, and routine practices. Trust emerges when these meanings become objective and embedded in rules and procedures. The theory is widely used to assess democratic stability, citizens' compliance with laws, and confidence in judicial and electoral systems.

In the Nigerian context, the theory allows for an evaluation of the Police, INEC, transparency mechanisms, technological devices, and the manner in which political, social, and economic systems operate with a view to building, maintaining, or undermining public confidence in election security and election management.

Results

Election Security and Feasibility in Nigeria's Election Management

Constitutionally, the police perform the duties of preventing and detecting crimes, apprehending offenders, preserving law and order, protecting life and property, and enforcing laws and regulations within and outside Nigeria, as provided by law or any other Act (FRN Police Act, 2020). Given these functions, there is hardly any stratum of society that can do without the police. Therefore, the police are the most visible law enforcement agents on the streets (Awopeju, 2021).

Apart from these functions, the police are saddled with the responsibility of election security and are the leading agency in policing elections in Nigeria. The military and other paramilitary forces are also involved in election policing. These include the Army, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the Department of State Security (DSS), the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). Ajayi (2024: 4) identifies the roles of these agencies as follows:

The police and the military have defined roles in providing logistics and protecting voters. NIS officials collaborate with INEC to identify non-Nigerians whose names have been included in the voters' register. DSS officials are responsible for investigating the conduct of INEC officials, including ad hoc electoral staff and security personnel during

elections, while FRSC and NSCDC personnel are expected to enforce movement restrictions, ensure that INEC vehicles properly convey electoral materials, protect vital national assets and infrastructure during elections, and secure electoral materials during and after elections, respectively.

The above-stated roles suggest that security during elections is essential for ensuring that electoral processes are not characterised by chaos and violence, thereby preventing election rigging, especially in manually conducted elections. Consequently, the prevalence of chaos and violence during elections has made electoral processes contentious and litigious due to the inability to secure elections during the pre-election, Election Day, and post-election phases. Besides, it often leads to “political crises and governance failures with frequent interruptions of democratic governance through military interventions” (Igini, 2013).

Therefore, one of the most effective ways to conduct elections is to ensure their security through appropriate election security measures. This, in itself, helps to guarantee free, fair, and credible elections that satisfy relevant stakeholders. This is particularly important for electoral management institutions.

It should be noted that electoral management institutions are expected to perform their roles effectively in the conduct of free and fair elections. This can be achieved by putting in place appropriate security arrangements and ensuring effective oversight to enhance electoral credibility (Oni et al., 2025). Considering the high costs, security risks, accessibility barriers, and logistical challenges often associated with traditional voting methods, and given that election security is a sine qua non for electoral credibility, securing elections is essential for making the process transparent and inclusive.

Election security ensures the protection of all electoral infrastructure, including election materials, election officials, federal partners, and local agencies. This gives citizens confidence that their votes will count, thereby reflecting their electoral preferences. Consequently, citizens are more likely to have confidence in the political system, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of government.

Furthermore, election security is essential because it promotes public trust in the electoral process and the electoral system. When the electoral process is adequately secured, elections are protected from manipulation, making them fair and transparent. This, in turn, strengthens public confidence in exercising democratic rights within the political system.

Moreover, election security encourages political participation. In a setting where election security is intended to promote democracy rather than facilitate the forceful acquisition of power, voters are encouraged to cast their ballots without intimidation because they believe they will not be harmed. In addition, election security is fundamental to the integrity of democratic systems and institutions. If elections are not adequately secured, the legitimacy of electoral outcomes may be compromised, thereby undermining public trust and the democratic process itself. Therefore, ensuring that elections are free from interference and manipulation is vital for maintaining democratic principles and ensuring that the will of the people is represented.

The practice of election security aimed at guarding against foreign and domestic interference is also vital for national sovereignty. Any form of interference, whether internal or external, intended to manipulate votes, spread destabilising misinformation, or erode trust in electoral outcomes can be prevented through effective election security measures. This is achieved by identifying influence campaigns, coordinating responses, and deterring insiders from exceeding their legitimate mandates.

Furthermore, election security promotes fairness and preserves the core principles of democratic governance. It transforms democratic ideals into reality by ensuring that the electoral contest itself is fair and trusted. When elections are protected for the public good, losers are more

likely to accept the results, while winners are able to govern with legitimacy and authority. In other words, effective election security strengthens citizens' confidence in government.

However, scholars have argued that the practice of election security can overheat the political environment unless the security agencies involved maintain a strong commitment to neutrality and professionalism. In an emerging state such as Nigeria, election security is often associated with rigging and violence (Awopeju, 2011). Findings from Adebisi's study (2017) suggest that the Nigerian Police have rarely been able to assume the role and attributes of peacekeepers during elections. Hence, this study examines the challenges of election security and their implications for election management in an insecure environment such as Nigeria.

Election security in Nigeria: challenges and implications for electoral management

Despite the significance of election security, it is also associated with a number of challenges. Historically, there was no formal practice of election security in Nigeria before independence; elections have been characterised by violence almost from the outset. The first deployment of security agents to police elections occurred during the 1962 federal elections and the 1963 Western Regional election. Despite this, the elections were riddled with violence (Ediagbonya et al., 2023). In subsequent republics, elections were neither fair nor peaceful. The general elections of 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023 were all plagued by violence. For instance, in 2011, over 1,000 lives were lost following the announcement of the presidential election results (International IDEA, 2026). The subsequent general elections of 2015, 2019, and 2023 recorded death tolls of 106, 629, and 161, respectively (Awopeju, 2025). Given these statistics, the findings indicate that the practice of securing elections through security agencies does not guarantee free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria. The finding that public frustration often escalates into violence during election management in Nigeria aligns with the assumptions of the Frustration–Aggression Theory but contradicts the assumptions of the Institutional Trust Theory.

In an effort to improve elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, INEC established the Inter-Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) in 2010 to strengthen election administration and security. The ICCES was designed to enhance election security before, during, and after elections. According to Olurode (2013), one of its major impacts was that it became increasingly difficult for police officers to openly assist politicians in snatching ballot boxes, as had often occurred in the past. Furthermore, societal and technological advancements, together with their extensive deployment in election administration, have also served as strong deterrents. Despite these improvements, challenges associated with the practice of election security and election management remain evident. These challenges have implications even for the electoral violence that election security seeks to prevent. These challenges are discussed below.

First, there is a problem of coordination associated with election security in Nigeria. This concerns how security agencies coordinate their involvement in the electoral process. According to the Electoral Act (2022) and the ICCES guidelines, election security is primarily the responsibility of the police, while other security agencies provide support. The coordination problem arises because no single chain of command unites these agencies, and each tends to claim a leading role, particularly the Police, the Army, and the DSS. Consequently, these agencies often engage in disputes over who should supervise security at polling stations and collation centres. To illustrate this, soldiers and police officers reportedly clashed at INEC offices during the 2019 Rivers State collation process (Sahara Reporters, 2019). The conflict centred on which agency should control security at the entrance gate. As a result, collation centres were invaded and INEC suspended the process. Subsequently, the police and the army accused each other of misconduct (Sahara Reporters, 2019). In a similar incident, soldiers killed two police officers, while two others sustained injuries during election security duties in Taraba State during the 2023 gubernatorial election (Ige, 2023). The implication for election management is that collation centres may become

battlegrounds, thereby encouraging electoral violence and intensifying rivalries among security agencies. This creates the impression that law enforcement agencies can intervene politically, potentially pushing the state towards instability.

Second, the behaviour of the police and other law enforcement agencies often triggers and, at times, facilitates electoral malpractice in Nigeria. The success or failure of elections frequently depends on the conduct of security agencies. These agencies are often accused of assisting political actors in manipulating elections. Reports on their performance indicate that law enforcement agencies have often failed to discharge their responsibilities effectively and have become a central component of the security challenges associated with elections in Nigeria (CLEEN, 2010; Berwind-Dart & Onwudiwe, 2010). A study by Mediayanose (2018) examining the role of security officials in elections revealed that many security officers, with only a few exceptions, have participated in electoral malpractice. In many elections held during the Fourth Republic, including both general and off-cycle elections, security personnel were unable to distance themselves from the pervasive problem of corruption, suggesting that they are susceptible to influence from politicians, particularly those in government. This implies that the use of police and other security agencies can inflame the political environment and derail the electoral process. It also has implications for electoral violence, as there is a possibility that security personnel may facilitate the accumulation of illegal arms for political militias during election periods. Furthermore, it may encourage impunity within the electoral process, thereby undermining its integrity.

Third, the challenge of election security is not due to the absence of laws governing the conduct and management of elections. There is a plethora of provisions in both the Constitution and the Electoral Act. For instance, Section 227 and Sections 117–132 of the Constitution and the Electoral Act address issues of violence and insecurity before, during, and after elections. These laws, together with the rules and regulations contained in INEC election manuals, are intended to ensure peaceful elections in Nigeria. However, the greatest challenge to election security has been ineffective enforcement (Igini, 2013). Simply put, the failure to enforce the law when violations occur, thereby preventing future infractions, has been a major weakness of election security in Nigeria. At the heart of this enforcement problem lies corruption, which has permeated the entire administration of justice. This ranges from failure to make arrests and conduct diligent investigations to the improper filing of charges and endless adjournments. The implication of weak enforcement for election management is that it negatively affects every aspect of the electoral process.

Fourth, there is the challenge of human rights violations and abuses associated with election security in Nigeria. Law enforcement agencies have, at times, abused the purpose and practice of electoral security. Studies by Alemika (2011), Human Rights Watch (2019), Olurode (2011), and the CLEEN Foundation (2015) have raised concerns about the conduct of security personnel. Alemika (2011) and Human Rights Watch (2019) reported instances of excessive use of force and collaboration with political actors to intimidate opponents. Olurode (2011) argues that the inappropriate deployment of state security services may indirectly result in intimidation, harassment, and both overt and covert coercion of voters in the exercise of their civic responsibilities. The implication for election management is that when security personnel are deployed for partisan rather than public purposes, they may become complicit in suppressing voter turnout. Studies by Yagboyaju (2022) and Mbah et al. (2025) suggest that the uneven deployment of security officials and the partisan behaviour displayed in some states undermine public trust and increase citizens' fears about voting. This weakens democracy, encourages partisan politics, and promotes violence rather than adherence to the rules governing electoral processes.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that election security remains a critical component of

election management in emerging democracies such as Nigeria. While the deployment of security personnel is intended to protect electoral stakeholders, materials, and infrastructure, the evidence suggests that security measures alone are insufficient to guarantee free, fair, and credible elections. Instead, the effectiveness of election security depends largely on the neutrality, professionalism, and accountability of the institutions responsible for its implementation.

The study confirms previous research indicating that electoral violence is closely linked to weak institutional performance, political interference, and inadequate coordination among security agencies. These findings support the assumptions of the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which explains how perceived electoral injustice and voter disenfranchisement may trigger violent reactions. At the same time, the results highlight the relevance of Institutional Trust Theory, as citizens' confidence in electoral management bodies and security institutions significantly influences the legitimacy of electoral outcomes.

A key implication of the study is that election security should not be viewed solely as a law-enforcement function but as an integral part of democratic governance. Excessive use of force, partisan deployment of security personnel, and weak enforcement of electoral laws undermine public trust and may intensify rather than prevent electoral conflict. Therefore, strengthening inter-agency coordination, enhancing professional training, ensuring institutional independence, and promoting accountability mechanisms are essential for improving election management and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis, it can be established that the practice of election security is significant because it protects all elements of electoral infrastructure, maintains public trust, promotes fairness, preserves the core of democratic governance, and encourages political participation. However, it is also evident that when election security is manipulated to advance partisan political interests, it becomes very difficult for electoral management bodies to effectively oversee the electoral process in an emerging democracy such as Nigeria. In order to ensure best practices in election security in Nigeria, the following measures are recommended:

First, electoral candidates should desist from attempting to win elections by all means. Such actions trigger electoral violence, which leads to negative outcomes for election management. The conduct of elections should not be akin to warfare. The deployment of security agencies should be undertaken for the “public good”. If security agencies are used as instruments for winning elections at all costs, the political environment will become overheated, thereby causing setbacks to democracy.

Second, the Nigerian state should endeavour to learn from the experiences of other countries regarding election security. Nigeria should draw lessons from successful cases such as South Africa and Ghana, which are also emerging democracies in Africa. It is imperative to learn from successful models outside Nigeria in order to identify the factors that have contributed to their success.

Third, election management bodies and security personnel should be provided with adequate training and encouraged to maintain professional conduct in order to cultivate a stronger commitment to ethical standards and the protection of Nigeria's core national values. This implies that INEC should receive adequate preparation and adopt professional standards specifically tailored to election security. Such measures will equip personnel with the skills and guidelines needed to deter violence, fraud, and the manipulation of election results.

Fourth, there should be greater consensus-building in election management. Broad consensus among political parties, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders involved in elections is necessary for strengthening election management in Nigeria. This will enhance transparency, fairness, and public trust in the electoral process. Furthermore, consensus-building will serve as an important indicator of the maturity of Nigeria's democracy within the international community.

Fifth, Nigerians should change their attitudes toward election security and election management. The election of leaders by only a small proportion of citizens is an indication of democratic weakness. Some citizens display apathy whenever large numbers of military personnel and other law enforcement agencies are deployed to polling units, believing that elections will inevitably lead to violence. Citizens should be able to conduct themselves at polling units without intimidation, recognising that they possess the power of popular sovereignty to elect candidates who will govern on their behalf.

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