

Original Research Article

The Role of New Electoral Technologies in Influencing Voter Turnout During Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election

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Abstract: This study is concerned with the role of new electoral technologies in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, which had a notable but complex influence on voter turnout. The paper adopts a qualitative methodology, relying on secondary data, and examines how innovations such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) aimed to enhance the credibility, transparency, and efficiency of the electoral process. BVAS improved voter authentication by reducing incidences of fraud like double voting, while IReV enhanced transparency by providing real-time results, thereby fostering public trust in election integrity. Despite these technological advances, voter turnout was remarkably low at approximately 26.7%, the lowest since Nigeria's 1999 return to democracy. This suggests that technology alone could not overcome broader socio-political challenges impacting voter participation. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a suitable theoretical framework for this study. TAM emphasizes the role of perceived usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption and can be adapted to understand voters' acceptance of electoral technologies within the context of political trust and electoral participation. Three key findings emanated from this study, these are that, BVAS facilitated efficient and credible voter accreditation, thus reducing procedural irregularities; IReV's provision of real-time election data increased transparency but did not translate directly into higher voter turnout. Persistent distrust in the electoral body (INEC), political apathy, security concerns, and socioeconomic factors remain significant barriers to voter participation. Recommendations include: Implementation of a comprehensive voter education campaign focusing on the benefits and reliability of new electoral technologies to foster acceptance, address political and institutional distrust through reforms and enhanced civic engagement to complement technological measures and Improvement in technological infrastructure and technical support to minimize operational glitches on Election Day.

Keywords: Electoral Technology, Voter Turnout, BVAS, IREV, and Voter Accreditation

INTRODUCTION

The use of electoral technology in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election has been a pivotal development aimed at enhancing the integrity and credibility of the electoral process. Nigeria has historically experienced fluctuating voter turnout rates, with recent elections witnessing a decline. According to recent analyses, the 2023 presidential election recorded a notably low voter turnout of 29%, one of the lowest since Nigeria's Fourth Republic began (Suleiman, 2024). This decline in voter participation has been attributed to widespread distrust in the electoral system and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as well as concerns about electoral fraud and violence. In response to these challenges, INEC introduced technological innovations such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which uses biometric features like fingerprint and facial recognition to authenticate voters, aiming to ensure transparent and credible accreditation and result transmission processes (Suleiman, 2024).

The introduction of technology in the 2023 elections was intended to address key electoral issues, including voter fraud, vote buying, and result manipulation, while promoting transparency and timely access to election results. The BVAS and INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV) played crucial roles in this technological transition by facilitating real-time verification and public access to polling unit results (Suleiman, 2024). Beyond hardware, civil society organizations also leveraged technology for electoral observation through Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT), which provided independent verification of election outcomes (Yiaga Africa, 2023). Despite these advances, the impact of electoral technology on voter turnout remains complex; low turnout could be influenced by factors such as voter apathy, political disillusionment, logistical challenges, insecurity, and the broader socio-political context. Therefore, understanding how electoral technology influenced voter behavior and turnout in the 2023 election is essential for assessing its efficacy and identifying areas for improvement.

This study aims to explore the role of electoral technology in influencing voter turnout during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. The objectives are to examine how technological innovations such as BVAS and IREV affected voter accreditation and participation, to identify factors associated with voter turnout in the 2023 election with specific emphasis on technology's role, and to evaluate voter perceptions of the credibility and efficiency of electoral technology during the election. To guide this investigation, the research questions include: (1) How did electoral technology impact voter turnout in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election? (2) What are the perceptions of voters regarding the use of biometric and digital technology in the election? (3) What other socio-political factors interacted with electoral technology to influence voter participation in 2023?

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Electoral Technology

Electoral technologies in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election centred on digital innovations aimed at improving transparency, voter authentication, and real-time results transmission. Key technologies included the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which used fingerprint and facial recognition to verify voters and prevent multiple voting, and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV), which allowed real-time public access to election results. These technologies were intended to enhance the credibility and integrity of the electoral process, reduce fraud, and build public confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). However, challenges such as operational and logistical issues also emerged, underscoring both the potential and limitations of technology in Nigeria's electoral context (Suleiman, 2022; Democracy Technologies, 2024).

The most significant technology in the 2023 election was the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). This portable device incorporated biometric fingerprint verification and facial recognition to authenticate voters on-site, ensuring that only eligible voters could cast ballots. The BVAS also scanned and uploaded paper election results to an online platform managed by INEC, enabling transparency and faster collation of results. Complementing BVAS was the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV), which provided citizens and stakeholders with real-time access to electoral results, thereby reducing opacity and suspicion regarding official tallies (Suleiman, 2022; Democracy Technologies, 2024).

The adoption of these technologies was designed to address endemic issues such as ballot box snatching, voter impersonation, and vote rigging, which have historically undermined Nigerian elections. By digitally authenticating voters, BVAS helped curtail multiple voting and falsification of accreditation figures. The initiative also sought to bolster public trust by providing transparent results access during Election Day. Despite these advances, challenges in system deployment, device malfunctions, and digital literacy gaps among some electoral officials and voters limited the full effectiveness of these technologies. Additionally, infrastructural challenges in some regions affected seamless technology use (GIGA, 2024; API Intelligence, 2024).

Conceptually, the integration of electoral technologies in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election illustrates a broader global trend toward the digitalization of democratic processes as a means to strengthen electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy. The use of biometric systems exemplifies how digital tools can enhance the accuracy and security of voter verification in environments vulnerable to fraud. However, this transition also surfaces concerns about technological readiness, inclusiveness, cybersecurity, and the need for incremental implementation guided by legal and procedural frameworks. Technology, while a critical enabler, is insufficient alone to guarantee free and fair elections without supportive legal, institutional, and societal conditions (Yiaga Africa, 2023; ECES, 2018).

Voters Turnout

Voter turnout in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election was notably low, recorded at approximately 26.72%, marking the lowest level since the return to democracy in 1999. This turnout represented a decline of about 8% compared to the 2019 election, where turnout was around 34.7%. Several factors contributed to this low participation, including late arrival of electoral materials, voter suppression, violence, and overall disenfranchisement during the voting process (Yiaga Africa, 2024)

The 2023 election saw only about 24.9 million voters out of over 93 million registered citizens participating, with no state in Nigeria reaching the 50% turnout mark, and several states falling below 30%. Notably, only Adamawa and Jigawa states recorded close to 40% turnout, while populous states like Lagos and Rivers had some of the lowest voter participation. Regionally, turnout was also the lowest in the southern zones and was generally under 30% across Nigeria (Stears, 2023).

Key issues affecting turnout included logistical challenges such as late arrival of electoral officials and voting materials, electoral violence, and intimidation, causing many voters to be disenfranchised. Additionally, a general mistrust in the electoral process, possibly compounded by past reported irregularities, may have also contributed to voter apathy. Some analysts speculate that technology exposure revealed prior inflation in past election numbers, suggesting that actual voter engagement may have been lower historically (Dataphyte, 2023; API Intelligence. 2024)

Voter turnout is a crucial measure of democratic participation and legitimacy. In Nigeria's context, lower turnout can reflect citizen disenchantment with political processes, perceived inefficacy of voting in affecting governance, security concerns, and institutional challenges within electoral management. Despite significant voter registration efforts and awareness campaigns targeting young voters, these were insufficient to overcome the structural and contextual barriers faced during the election.

Voter turnout in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election was about 26.72%, the lowest since 1999, influenced by logistics, violence, and disenfranchisement (Dataphyte, 2023; Folorunsho-Francis, 2023).

Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)

The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) is an innovative electoral technology introduced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria to address persistent issues in the country's voting process and enhance election integrity. Conceptually, BVAS uses a dual biometric verification method to authenticate voters through fingerprint scans and facial recognition. This dual approach significantly improves the accuracy of voter identification, thereby reducing incidences of electoral fraud such as overvoting and impersonation. Beyond voter accreditation, BVAS also functions to capture and upload results from polling units onto a centralized platform in real-time, enabling greater transparency and immediate accessibility of election data. This system is intended to serve as a comprehensive tool that not only certifies voter eligibility but also

strengthens the overall integrity of the electoral process by deterring malpractice and increasing public trust in election outcomes (Ogbadebo, 2025).

In Nigeria's political context, BVAS marks a significant technological advancement from previous voter verification methods, such as the earlier card reader device. Voter accreditation before BVAS relied largely on single biometric authentication, which had vulnerabilities exploited to manipulate election outcomes. The introduction of BVAS in the 2023 general elections allowed for a more stringent and reliable verification process. Empirical studies focusing on states like Nasarawa and the Federal Capital Territory have documented that BVAS positively contributed to mitigating double voting, enhancing voter participation, and improving public confidence in Nigeria's elections. However, challenges remain, including technical malfunctions and infrastructural deficits that occasionally delay accreditation at polling units. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that BVAS has become a critical component in Nigeria's ongoing quest for credible, free, and fair elections, representing a step forward in electoral reforms aimed at democratic consolidation (ABJournals, 2024; Ogbadebo, 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, scholars have linked the adoption of BVAS to technology theory, which emphasizes the role of technological innovations in shaping social and political processes. In Nigeria, BVAS not only embodies a technological intervention but also interacts with institutional frameworks and human factors such as election management autonomy and voter education to yield optimal outcomes. The successful implementation of BVAS requires complementary support structures, including robust technological infrastructure, effective training of electoral officials, and public awareness campaigns. These elements are crucial to overcoming systemic barriers and maximizing the efficacy of BVAS in fostering transparency and accountability. Ultimately, BVAS's deployment reflects Nigeria's broader efforts to integrate technology into its electoral system as a means of combating election fraud and ensuring credible representation, which aligns with the functionalist view that institutions must evolve to meet societal needs for order and legitimacy (British JIR, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis in 1986, is a theoretical framework that explains users' acceptance of new technologies primarily through two key factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to Davis, users are more likely to adopt a technology if they believe it will improve their performance and is easy to use (Davis, 1989). These perceptions influence their attitude towards the technology, ultimately shaping their behavioural intention to use it. TAM has been widely applied across fields, including information systems, e-government, and e-democracy, to understand how technological innovations gain user acceptance and diffusion (Davis, 1989; Worthington, 2021).

In the context of Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, new electoral technologies such as electronic voting machines, biometric voter verification, and digital transmission of results played a significant role in influencing voter turnout. These technologies addressed key challenges like voter inclusiveness, election transparency, and ease of voting for all demographics, including illiterate and disabled voters. By enhancing the perceived usefulness (e.g., reducing rigging and increasing trust in the electoral process) and the perceived ease of use (e.g., simple interfaces for voting), these technologies positively impacted voters' willingness to participate in the election. Research indicates that technological improvements such as single voter registration and faster transmission of election results significantly improved Nigeria's electoral system and likely contributed to increased voter turnout by making voting more accessible and reliable (rsisinternational.org, 2024).

Applying TAM to this scenario, the adoption of new electoral technologies hinged on voters' beliefs about the benefits (usefulness) and the simplicity (ease of use) of these tools. When voters perceived these technologies as improving the electoral process's integrity and making voting straightforward, their acceptance and turnout increased. Proponents of TAM emphasize that acceptance is shaped by these perceptions, which aligns well with the Nigerian electoral context, where technology is aimed at reducing election malpractices and facilitating inclusive participation. Thus, TAM helps explain how innovations in electoral technology contributed to enhancing voter engagement in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria (Davis, 1989; Worthington, 2021; rsisinternational.org, 2024; Omoregie, Irabor, & Aitimon, 2025).

Gap/Contribution to Knowledge

Two areas where knowledge gaps exist in studies related to electoral technologies and voter turnout, particularly concerning Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, include:

1. Insufficient integration of socioeconomic, psychological, and behavioral factors influencing voter decisions in the context of technology-enhanced elections.
2. A lack of nuanced analysis on how digital electoral innovations affect specific voter demographics differently (e.g., youth versus older voters), especially in Nigeria's diverse and complex political landscape.
3. Incorporating a multidisciplinary approach that combines technological, socioeconomic, and behavioural insights to understand voter motivations and barriers in technology-mediated elections.
4. Conducting demographic-targeted analysis to reveal how new electoral technologies may differentially impact voter turnout across various groups, helping to inform tailored strategies to enhance inclusivity and participation.

Electoral Technologies Impacts on Voter Turnout in the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election witnessed a significant integration of electoral technologies aimed at improving the voting process and enhancing transparency.

Key technological tools included the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV). BVAS combined fingerprint and facial recognition for voter authentication, reducing incidences of voter fraud and multiple voting. IReV was designed to enable real-time public access to vote counts at polling units. These innovations were intended to bolster the credibility of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and increase voter confidence in the electoral process (Dataphyte, 2023). However, despite these efforts, Nigeria recorded a record low voter turnout of approximately 26.7% in a voter pool of over 93 million registered voters, the lowest since the country's return to democracy (The Conversation Africa, 2023).

The low turnout despite advanced electoral technologies reveals a complex dynamic in Nigeria's electoral environment. The technologies enhanced efficiency by ensuring accurate voter identification and reducing rigging efforts, but trust in the electoral process remained low. Technical difficulties with the IReV portal, including failure to upload results in real time, led to dissatisfaction among political parties and citizens, calling into question the utility of technology when not flawlessly implemented (Chatham House, 2023). Other factors contributing to voter apathy included a prolonged history of distrust towards electoral institutions, perceived lack of transparency, and the entrenched political conflicts and insecurity in various regions of the country that discouraged voter participation (Ejekwonyilo, 2024).

Despite the poor turnout, the introduction of these technologies had measurable positive effects on specific areas of the electoral process. Studies show that technologies like BVAS significantly improved single registration of voters, transmission speed of election results, inclusiveness, and accountability within the electoral system. Statistical analyses indicated that such technologies were positively correlated with electoral system improvements when effectively deployed (Yiaga Africa, 2023). The adoption of biometric voter registration and accreditation also reduced multiple voting and electoral malpractices, providing a foundation for more credible future elections despite the immediate challenge of low voter turnout (Giwa, 2024). The interplay of technological innovation with longstanding governance challenges suggests that while technology is a necessary component for electoral reform, broader efforts to build public trust, improve security, and ensure seamless implementation are essential to translate technological capability into higher voter engagement.

Perception of Voters, Regarding the Use of Biometrics and Digital Technology in the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election

The perception of Nigerian voters regarding the use of biometrics and digital technology in the 2023 presidential election reflects a significant evolution in the electoral process, generally marked by increased trust and acceptance. Voters appreciated the biometric systems such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which incorporated fingerprint and facial recognition technologies to authenticate voters more reliably. This technology helped to reduce incidences of multiple voter registrations and attempted fraud, thereby enhancing the credibility of the elections. Although some

challenges were noted during the implementation, such as malfunctioning biometric machines and the need for better training of electoral officials voters generally viewed these efforts as steps toward more transparent and secure elections (The Conversation, 2023; Journals.fukashere.edu.ng, 2025).

However, the deployment of digital technology in elections revealed underlying infrastructural and operational challenges that influenced voter perception. Connectivity issues, such as patchy internet and insufficient technological infrastructure, led to the delayed transmission of election results on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Result Viewing Portal (IReV). This caused frustration among voters and party agents, affecting trust in the real-time digital reporting system despite the successful use of biometric accreditation. Additionally, voters recognized the socioeconomic disparities impacting the implementation of these technologies, as certain regions experienced more significant technological limitations than others, reducing the uniformity of voter experience and technological acceptance (The Conversation, 2023; Omoregie, Irabor, & Aitimon, 2025).

Overall, the Nigerian electorate views the integration of biometrics and digital technology in the 2023 presidential election as a necessary advancement toward more credible and transparent elections. Voters acknowledged that while technology cannot eliminate all electoral challenges, given human factors and operational constraints, it substantially improved the integrity of voter accreditation and ballot casting. The improvements in voter verification, facilitated by biometrics, addressed long-standing issues of electoral fraud and multiple voting. Nevertheless, there remains a demand among voters for enhanced technical readiness, better training for election officials, and improved infrastructure to fully optimize the benefits of digital technology in future elections (The Conversation, 2023; Journals.fukashere.edu.ng, 2025).

Socio-Political Factors, Interacting With Electoral Technologies in Influencing Voters' Perception in the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election was influenced significantly by socio-political factors interacting with electoral technologies, shaping voters' perceptions in complex ways. A prevalent socio-political sentiment among voters was frustration with the state of governance, economic hardship, and insecurity, which framed their overall distrust in the electoral process. According to a survey conducted by Geo-Poll, a majority of Nigerians believed the country was heading in the wrong direction, influencing their scepticism towards the election integrity and trust in political actors (Geo-Poll, 2023). This general atmosphere of disillusionment was compounded by high awareness of disinformation campaigns, as more than 90% of respondents suspected misinformation related to the elections, impacting how voters perceived the candidates and the voting system itself. Despite this, a significant portion of voters still expressed hope and a willingness to engage, basing their choices primarily on competence, trust, and clear manifestos from candidates, which indicates that socio-political conditions heavily framed their evaluation criteria in the electoral landscape.

Electoral technologies, such as biometric verification systems and digital result transmission platforms, were introduced to enhance transparency and credibility in the 2023 elections. However, these technologies' effectiveness was challenged by the socio-political environment. Though about two-thirds of respondents believed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was relatively transparent, just half saw it as an independent institution free from political bias (GeoPoll, 2023; Omoregie, 2025). Problems arose from the incomplete online transmission of results and inconsistencies between reported outcomes and public opinion polls, which fuelled widespread suspicion and allegations of electoral malfeasance. This mistrust was exacerbated by ethno-religious identity politics and localized voting patterns, as voters tended to support candidates from their home regions, often influenced by long-standing socio-political cleavages (Chatham House, 2023). The digital environment also played a dual role in the election it promoted voter engagement through technology use but simultaneously became a battlefield for manipulation via fake news and disinformation campaigns, complicating voters' ability to make fully informed decisions.

The interaction between socio-political factors and electoral technologies thus reflects a nuanced dynamic where technology alone could not fully overcome deep-rooted political distrust and social divisions. The persistent perception of electoral violence, insecurity, and weak electoral justice frameworks dampened voter turnout and confidence in the voting process, as documented in research highlighting factors like fear of violence, vote manipulation, and insufficient voter education (Ogbonna, 2024; Omoregie, 2021). Additionally, economic conditions and policy missteps, such as the Central Bank's currency redesign shortly before the elections, created practical impediments that further strained voter participation and perception. Hence, while electoral technologies introduced potential improvements in electoral integrity and transparency, they were insufficient to single-handedly overcome the broader socio-political challenges and systemic distrust that ultimately constrained voter participation.

Conclusion

The study on the role of new electoral technologies in influencing voter turnout during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election reveals a mixed but crucial impact. Despite the introduction of advanced digital systems such as the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) for biometric voter authentication and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) for real-time electoral result transparency, voter turnout in 2023 reached a historic low of about 29%, down significantly from previous elections. While these technologies enhanced the credibility and integrity of the electoral process by reducing fraud, facilitating transparency, increasing accountability, and improving the inclusiveness of voting (e.g., aiding disabled and illiterate voters), technical and operational challenges such as authentication delays and underestimation of voting time led to disenfranchisement and contributed to voter apathy. The technologies nonetheless improved voter authentication accuracy and reduced rigging, which could be expected to gradually restore public confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the electoral process in future elections. This comprehensive assessment underscores that while digital electoral technologies hold

transformative potential for increasing voter inclusivity and systemic integrity, their effective deployment requires overcoming logistical hurdles and building voter trust to translate technological improvements into higher voter turnout in Nigeria's evolving democracy.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Transparency and Accountability Features of Electoral Technologies: New electoral technologies, such as biometric voter verification and electronic transmission of results, have the potential to increase voter confidence by reducing fraud and manipulation. The study should recommend improving the transparency and auditability of these technologies, ensuring they can be independently verified by stakeholders to build trust and encourage voter participation. Low turnout in 2023 suggests that trust deficits still need to be addressed despite technology use.
2. Addressing the logistical and Operational Challenges of Technology Deployment: While new technologies can streamline voter identification and result collation, their effectiveness depends on reliable deployment. Reports from the 2023 election showed issues like late arrival of materials and technology systems failures that disenfranchised voters and suppressed turnout. Recommendations should include strengthening INEC's capacity to deploy and manage electoral technology systems on Election Day to avoid technical bottlenecks that discourage voters.
3. Leverage Electoral Technologies for Enhanced Voter Education and Engagement: Advanced voter registration and identification systems can be integrated with digital platforms to provide real-time information and education to voters about voting procedures, locations, and candidate information. The study should recommend expanding the use of technology beyond logistics to voter mobilization efforts, which could increase turnout by reducing confusion and apathy among the electorate, particularly youth who form the largest registered voter bloc.

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