

Implications of the 2015 IDP Voting Modalities on the Electoral Process and Policy Options for Future Elections in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The study examined the implications of the modalities put in place by INEC to ensure the participation of IDPs in the 2015 general elections on the electoral process, as well as the policy options for future elections in Nigeria. The modalities in question include: change in residency requirement for IDPs; mass transfers of the registration of identified IDPs to their new locations; creation of special voting centres for IDPs in the north east; and distribution of outstanding PVCs to IDPs in their camps before the election. In generating data for the study, documentary method of data collection, based on secondary sources, was adopted. To analyze the data generated, the study used content analysis rooted on logical deductions. The study was anchored on the Social Dominance Theory. The result of data analysis demonstrated that the modalities INEC put in place to ensure the participation of IDPs in the 2015 general elections were skewed in favour of the opposition candidate, especially, given the fact that IDPs from other parts of the country were excluded from the arrangement. The study recommends electronic voting system, strengthening the legal frameworks, and early preparation to enable all eligible Nigerians, including IDPs, to vote from whichever part of the country they are resident at the time of the election.

Keywords: Internally Displaced Persons, Voting, Elections, Insurgency, Displacement.

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Introduction

Nigeria experienced a new vista in its electoral history in the 2015 general elections as, for the first time, there was voting among the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Before this period, the country has never experienced prolonged displacement of the magnitude witnessed towards the build up to the 2015 general elections. Therefore, before 2015, IDP voting was alien to Nigeria's political and electoral lexicon. As 2015 drew closer, the voting rights of IDPs was elevated to the front burner of election discourse. This is because the insurgency in the north eastern part of the country has caused a large number of eligible voters to be displaced from their homes. Apart from the insurgency which was orchestrated by the Islamist militant group – Boko Haram – flooding, herdsmen menace, inter-communal clashes fueled by ethnic and religious tensions, especially in the Middle Belt region, and even elections, have also caused a lot of people to be displaced from their places of abode (IDMC, 2013; Rushing and Read, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2011). Therefore, as the elections drew closer, there were concerns that a good number of registered voters would be disenfranchised, owing to the fact that they have been displaced from their homes/ wards where they registered to vote. Ibeanu (2015, p. 20) succinctly captures it thus:

...by mid-2014 the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East seemed to be rising at tremendous rate, displacing in its wake hundreds of thousands of eligible voters. There were repeated questions put to Chairman Jega by stakeholders, particularly development partners, regarding INEC's plans for IDP voting. Professor Jega's position was consistently that INEC was committed to an inclusive electoral process and therefore would do everything it could to provide opportunities for every qualified Nigerian to vote. In essence, INEC was committed to IDP voting but the realities of organizing the complex processes it would entail will determine if it would be done in 2015 or later. The Governorship by-election in Adamawa State...brought the full magnitude of the IDP challenge in the electoral process to the attention of the Commission for the first time. This is because it was the first time a statewide election would take place in any of the three main insurgency States...The large numbers of IDPs in the holding camps and stories of many others spontaneously settled with families and friends convinced INEC of the need to urgently respond to the situation. Although the Adamawa by-election was later cancelled...the Chairman of INEC and his team were convinced that the Commission would have to respond to requests for IDP voting sooner than later.

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, IDMC (2016) estimated that there were almost 2,152,000 IDPs in the country as of December 31, 2015. This figure is based on an assessment conducted from November to December 2015 by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) team in 207 Local Government Areas covering 13 States in northern Nigeria (Abuja, Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara). According to the same IDMC report, of the total figure of IDPs, 12.6% were displaced due to communal clashes, 2.4% by natural disasters, and 85% as a result of insurgency attacks by the Islamist Boko Haram.

However, there are varying figures as to the number of persons displaced from their homes as a result of the activities of Boko Haram. The figure ranges from 1.2 million (Foster, 2015; NEMA, 2015) to 1.5 million (Rushing and Read, 2014; IDMC, 2015). According to Ibeanu (2015), the figure ranges from 750,000 to 3.5 million. However, NEMA (2015) reported that in the three States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe (where IDP voting took place), not all areas were visited for the survey due to security reasons, but that close to 92% of the IDPs was as a result of insurgency, the remaining being a consequence of community clashes and natural disasters.

The debate on whether the IDPs would vote in the 2015 general elections or if they had been disenfranchised as a result of having been displaced from where they registered to vote got the attention of the National Assembly, as the Senate, in particular, considered an amendment to the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) to make provision for the IDPs to vote in their respective camps nationwide through a proposed insertion of Section 42 (2) into the Act. However, the Bill was later stalled at its second reading in December 2014 as the Senate was of the view that a resolution employing the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to use all administrative mechanisms within the Electoral Act to ensure that IDPs of adult age exercise their franchise in time of general elections would be more effective (PLAC Newsletter, February 2015). Hence, on 16th December, 2014, Senate directed its Committee on INEC to liaise with INEC to establish special polling units for IDPs victims of insurgency in the north east (Cleen Foundation, 2014). Consequently, INEC raised a Task Force on how to get the IDPs to vote during the elections. The establishment of the Task Force was a fallout or outcome of a workshop and a technical brainstorming by the Chairman's office, as well as a one-day

stakeholders' conference on IDP voting also organized by the Chairman's office. One important recommendation of the Task Force was that special centers should be set up for the IDPs in the north east to vote.

Thus, as arrangements were being put in place to ensure that the IDPs in the north-eastern part of the country were not disenfranchised, INEC announced that registered voters fleeing their present abode to their States of origin for fear of outbreak of violence during and after the general elections would not be allowed to vote in their home States (Nweje, 2015). This is the problem. By the definition of internally displaced persons, these categories of people qualify as IDPs, because they are persons or groups of persons that have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (www.internaldisplacement.org). Why then was arrangement made for some IDPs to exercise their franchise and some were denied such rights? According to INEC, such people who registered and have obtained their Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) in one part of the country but have fled to another could only go back to where they were registered if they wished to vote. Those in question feared that there could be a repeat of the painful experience of the post-election violence of 2011. This fear was exacerbated by the threats being issued during the campaigns, especially in the north. They, therefore, resolved to go back to their States for safety, and to vote from there. However, their hope of performing this civic responsibility from their States was dashed.

Against this background, this study examines the implications of the 2015 IDP voting modalities on the electoral process, and goes on to proffer policy options for future elections in Nigeria. It argues that the modalities INEC put in place to ensure that IDPs in the some states in the north east voted during the 2015 general elections, even in contravention of electoral laws, demonstrated the partisanship of the electoral umpire. This is hinged on the fact that if INEC could conduct elections in the difficult terrain of the north east ravaged by Boko Haram insurgency, there was no reason such gesture should not have been extended to other regions which equally had a sizeable number of internally displaced persons.

Methodology

The study relied on documentary evidence, based on secondary sources, for its data. These included data collected from external sources and were originally meant for some other purposes. They are accounts of events which were created well after the events had taken place, and therefore, are a set of data gathered or authored by another person, usually data from archives, either in the form of documents or survey results. The study thus relied on official documents such as the INEC's 2015 General Election Report that contains information on IDP voting and the results of the 2015 Presidential election. The study also utilized information from other institutional reports, CSOs, and other stakeholders in the election, as well as other secondary sources such as text books, journal articles, conference papers, magazines, and other written works. Finally, the study also made extensive use of internet materials that contain information on IDP voting.

To analyze the data, content analysis, rooted on logical deductions, was utilized. A rigorous use of the technique of content analysis helped one to select what is dependable from what is not. It was used with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages. Broadly speaking, content analysis refers to methods for analyzing and/ or retrieving meaningful information from documents and other contents. More specifically, it refers to a technique for studying the "mute evidence" of contents. It is a technique of making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages (Holsti, 1969, cited in Stemler, 2001). It enabled us to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in systematic fashion and inferences and conclusions were logically drawn. We, therefore, employed the use of content analysis, based on logical deductions to retrieve meaningful information from the books, documents, journal articles, conference papers, internet materials etc., and on the basis of that, drew our inferences and conclusions.

We also anchored our analysis on the Social Dominance Theory. It is a theory of inter-group relations that focuses on the maintenance and stability of group-based social hierarchies. According to the theory, group-based inequalities are maintained through three primary inter-group behaviours – institutional discrimination, aggregated individual discrimination, and behavioural asymmetry. The theory proposes that widely shared cultural ideologies, that is,

legitimizing myths, provide the moral and intellectual justification for these intergroup behaviours. The theory was first formulated by Sidanius and Pratto (1999) in their book, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*.

The theory begins with the observation that human social groups tend to be organized according to group-based social hierarchies in societies. These hierarchies have a trimorphic (3-form) structure based on (1) age (adults have more power and higher status than children); (2) gender (men have more power and higher status than women); and (3) arbitrary-set, which are group-based hierarchies that are culturally defined and do not necessarily exist in all societies. It is this arbitrary-set hierarchy that this study adopted in its analysis.

Arbitrary-set hierarchies can be based on ethnicity (for example, Whites over Blacks and vice versa); religion (Christians over Muslims, and vice versa); nationality (Igbos over Hausa/ Fulani, and vice versa) etc. Human social hierarchies consist of a hegemonic group at the top and negative reference groups at the bottom. More powerful social/ political roles are increasingly likely to be occupied by a hegemonic group, than the dominated group, and this domination is justified by legitimizing myths. Legitimizing myths are beliefs justifying social dominance, such as sacred myths (for example, the divine right of kings, or the born-to-rule mentality of the Hausa/ Fulani oligarchy in Nigeria, as a religion-approved mandate for hegemony to govern).

The key propositions of the social dominance theory include:

1. Individuals are stratified by age, sex, and group. Group identification is based on ethnicity, religion, nationality etc.
2. Human social hierarchy consists of a hegemonic group at the top and negative reference groups at the bottom.
3. As role gets more powerful, the probability it is occupied by a hegemonic group increases (Law of increasing proportion).
4. Racism, sexism, nationalism and classism are all manifestations of this same principle of social hierarchy.

To better understand INEC's culpability in excluding IDPs from other geo-political zones in the 2015 IDP voting arrangements, we, therefore, rely on the social dominance theory. First and foremost, it is our contention that the reason social hierarchies exist in human societies is

because they are necessary for survival of inter-group competition during conflicts over resources and struggles over political power. The theory, therefore, explains the age-old and continued political domination of the other ethnic groups in Nigeria by the Hausa/ Fulani oligarchy. We view the exclusion of IDPs from the other geo-political zones from voting in the 2015 general elections as an extension of this domination. In line with the theory's legitimizing myth, INEC tried to justify the exclusion by arguing that being the first time IDP voting was taking place in Nigeria, it would not be feasible for all the IDPs scattered across Nigeria to be carried along, and that in subsequent elections, IDPs in other geo-political zones will be included.

Since independence in 1960, relations between and among the different ethnic nationalities that constitute the Nigerian state has been that of mutual suspicion, antagonism, and the tendency to dominate others, especially politically. This is because in a neo-colonial state like Nigeria, the acquisition of political power not only ensures political domination, but also economic domination of the negative reference groups by the hegemonic group. Thus, there has been intense competition among the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria over which would dominate the others. Struggle for political power, therefore, becomes the ultimate goal, since access to political power easily ensures the domination of one group-based social hierarchy over the others.

In line with the social dominance theory also, these arbitrary-set hierarchies in Nigeria are rooted both in religion (Muslims versus Christians) and in ethnicity (Hausa/ Fulani and Yoruba versus Igbos, as in the 2015 general elections). Thus, the Hausa/ Fulani oligarchy has always laid claim to a divine right to rule or govern Nigeria (sacred legitimizing myth), and therefore, maintain political domination over the other ethnic nationalities. Ensuring this domination also requires that important institutions of the state are manned by members of this hegemonic group. This is to ensure that these institutions of the state are deployed to the advantage of the group when the need arises. The ethnic nationalists thrown up by this mutual suspicion and antagonisms see themselves in constant struggle for state power and domination against each other, in order to protect, enhance and strengthen their political and economic interests, and by extension, those of their regions. Since military coups are no longer fashionable, elections have become the veritable tools for acquisition of state power. Therefore, ethnic nationalities deploy every arsenal within

their disposal for the attainment of this ultimate goal, including the use of state apparatuses and institutions.

Thus, in the 2015 general elections, the Election Management Body in Nigeria, INEC, being an institution of the State, was deployed in the struggle for power by the contending parties. The two major political parties, the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC), having thrown up Presidential candidates from the Christian-dominated south and the Muslim-dominated north respectively, the stage was set for a titanic battle among the ethnic nationalities. Every side of the divide used every strategy and deployed all state institutions under its control to gain political power. INEC, being under the control of the north, was not left out. Strategies were, therefore, fashioned out by INEC to enhance the chances of the APC Presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, at the polls. Such strategies included enfranchising the IDPs from the north east where Buhari had a large following, while disenfranchising the IDPs from the south (especially the south east and the south south), where the PDP candidate, Goodluck Jonathan, had a large following. All these put together clearly demonstrates the partisan nature of INEC in the administration of the 2015 general elections, especially as regards IDP voting. It is our contention, therefore, that INEC, an institution of the state controlled by the hegemonic group, the Hausa/ Fulani oligarchy, was used during the 2015 general elections to give undue advantage to the opposition candidate by enfranchising IDPs who were likely to vote for him, and consequently, broadening his support base. IDPs from the southern part of the country were, on the hand, disenfranchised, and by so doing, depleting the support base of the candidate of the ruling party.

Modalities for IDP Voting and Implications on the Electoral Process

Extant literature on internally displaced persons in Nigeria and the efforts being made or made to guarantee their rights to vote during the build-up to the 2015 general elections is mainly focused on the north-eastern States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. This is so for two main reasons. One, the activities of the insurgent group, Boko Haram, have its greatest intensity in these areas, and as a result, a large number of indigenes and residents were/ are displaced from their homes to escape to safety. Two, and a corollary to the above, some of these IDPs found shelter in temporary camps provided by the government and other humanitarian agencies. These camps

were/ are located mainly in these areas, thereby making the IDPs in such areas easily located and accessible for planning and policy making. The implication of this is that those who were displaced by other factors other than the Boko Haram insurgency and those from other parts of the country but resident in the north (mostly north east and north west) who had to flee back to their respective home States for fear of attacks on them, especially as the elections approached, were largely ignored in the extant literature. This probably informed INEC's decision to concentrate its arrangements for IDP voting on in the north east.

This section examines the modalities adopted by INEC to ensure the participation of IDPs in the 2015 general elections, and their implications on the electoral process. The modalities include: change in residency requirement for IDPs; mass transfers of the registration of identified IDPs to their new locations; creation of special voting centres for IDPs in the north east; and distribution of outstanding PVCs to IDPs in their camps before the election.

Change in Residency Requirement

There is no doubt that the change in residency requirement adopted by INEC in the 2015 general elections made it possible for IDPs in the north east to vote in the first place. Section 58 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) provides that no person shall be permitted to vote at any polling unit other than the one to which he/ she is allotted. However, as part of the modalities to ensure they voted, this requirement was waived for the IDPs in the north east. Meanwhile, other fleeing IDPs in the other parts of the country were requested to go back to where they registered if they must vote (Nweje, 2015), even against the principle of non-discrimination as provided in Principle 22 of the UN Guiding Principles and Article 9 (2) (1) of the Kampala Convention. It also runs contrary to Principle 28 of the UN Guiding Principles and Article 11 (2) of the Kampala Convention which guarantees the rights of IDPs to make a free and informed choice on whether to return to their former homes. In other words, they cannot be forcibly sent back, as INEC wanted to do. It is, therefore, evident that the latent intention of INEC in this regard was to disenfranchise IDPs from the other parts of the country who could have possibly voted for one of their own, and enfranchise the IDPs in the north east, who were more likely to vote for the candidate from the north.

Mass Transfers of the Registration of Identified IDPs

Mass transfers of the registration of identified IDPs to their new locations was another modality put in place by INEC to ensure IDPs voted in the 2015 general elections. Section 13 (1) (2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) provides the processes of transfer of registration thus:

A person who before the election is resident in a constituency other than the one in which he was registered may apply to the Resident Electoral Commissioner of the State where he is currently resident for his name to be entered on the transferred voters' list for the constituency... An application under Subsection (1) of this Section shall be accompanied by the applicant's voter's card and shall be made not less than 30 days before the date of an election in the constituency where the applicant is resident.

Also Section 58 stipulates that no person shall be permitted to vote at any polling unit other than the one to which he is allotted. However, there was no recorded evidence that IDPs in the north east adhered to this provision before they were allowed to vote, which suggested that INEC overlooked this very important provision of the Electoral Act. In other words, this provision was waived to enable them vote. On the other hand, IDPs from the other parts of the country could not benefit from this waiver. More importantly, even those who would have leveraged on that provision to transfer their registration in order to vote could not do so as INEC had earlier announced that the time for the elections was too close, and as a result there would be no time to process any application for transfer of registration as it was then encumbered with the distribution of PVCs (Nweje, 2015). Therefore, this modality, because it enfranchised IDPs in the north east, and disenfranchised others from the other parts of the country, was meant to give undue advantage to the opposition candidate.

Special Voting Centres for the IDPs

As part of the measures to ensure IDPs participated in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, INEC created special voting centres for them. These voting centres were created based on their Constituencies, Local Government Areas, Registration Areas, and Polling Units of registration (INEC, 2015). Ibeanu (2015) has argued that the Commission is empowered by Section 42 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) to create, relocate, or replicate polling units, including creating and locating such polling units in IDP camps to enable all displaced persons to vote. The

contention with this is not on the legality of INEC's action, but on the discrimination inherent in it. If this could be done for the IDPs in the north east, it could also have been done for other IDPs in the other parts of the country.

Moreover, then INEC Chairman, Attahiru Jega, had assured that those voting centres that would be created would be located outside the camps (Oyebade *et.al*, 2015). The idea of locating the voting centres outside the camps was to allay the fears of some political parties and to safeguard the process of voting from being manipulated by State governments who control the camps. However, the INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Borno State, Samuel Usman, was quoted as saying, a day before the election, that persons that were internally displaced by Boko Haram terrorists from their communities would be casting their votes in camps located within Maiduguri, the Borno State capital (Audu, 2015). For IDPs who did not register in camps, the Borno REC stated that they would be voting at designated centres allocated for their local government areas. Creating special voting centres for the IDPs in the north east, while denying same to others, therefore, brightened the chances of the northern candidate, no doubt. Moreover, since the IDPs, who obviously had sympathy for the opposition candidate, were allowed to vote in camps in Borno State, possibility was that the process of voting in those camps was manipulated by the State government, in favour of the APC candidate, since the party was in power in the State.

Distribution of Outstanding PVCs to the IDPs

This is another modality adopted by INEC to ensure IDPs voted in the 2015 general elections. For the IDPs that did not have the opportunity of collecting their PVCs before their displacement, the PVCs were taken to them in their camps and other designated centres. First, this is a discriminatory act that indirectly enhanced the chances of the opposition candidate, MuhammaduBuhari, by enfranchising more IDPs in the north east. Though this modality is in consonance with Principle 20 (2) of the UN Guiding Principles and Article 13 (2) (3) of the Kampala Convention, which states, *inter alia*, that internally displaced persons shall be issued with relevant documents necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of their rights, and that governments shall replace documents lost or destroyed in the course of displacement. Such documents include voters' cards. However, this measure was not extended to other IDPs in other

parts of the country. Many of the IDPs fleeing to their respective home States without collecting their PVCs were not given the opportunity of having them before the election like their counterparts in the north east.

There is another angle to the distribution and collection of the PVCs that suggested the exercise was skewed in favour of the candidate of the APC. Odinkalu (2014, p. 3) has remarked that:

According to the records from the first two rounds of PVC distribution in 22 States, the States of the North-East (including Bauchi, 83% and Yobe in the heart of the insurgency with 80.3%) have the highest average percentage of PVC collection with 78%. North-West (including Sokoto with 88.9%) comes next with 77%. By comparison, the South-East had a mere 49% and the North-Central 52%.

Odinkalu further noted that possibility is that the PVC collection process could have been contaminated, and that the proportions reflected in INEC's interim distribution figures at least in some States, are unrealistic. Odinkalu (2014) further argued that by any measure, these IDP votes are electorally significant, and that in a closely fought election, they could easily make the difference between winning and losing.

Some of these modalities adopted by INEC in order to accommodate IDPs in the 2015 general elections were in clear violation of extant electoral laws in Nigeria, with serious implications for the electoral process. First, it sets a very dangerous precedence. Since they were not challenged in the courts, most of the anomalies tend to have been accepted as the norm. Political actors could make reference to the illegality as an alibi to perpetuate impunity in the political system. Second, the entire exercise portrays INEC as a partisan umpire. The reason is simple: if elections could be conducted in the north east that was/ is the stronghold of the Islamist Boko Haram, there should be no reason why IDPs in other areas where there was no insurgency would be denied franchise. If, as INEC argued, IDP voting had to start from somewhere first before being extended to other areas, why must it be tested first in an insurgency-ravaged territory, where the lives of the electoral officers were in danger? The point is that the experiment would have cost less, and the risk minimal, if it were done elsewhere other than the north east. This means that the excuse offered by INEC for disenfranchising IDPs in other parts of the country was not tenable.

Policy Options for Future Elections

Based on the issues highlighted above, the following policy options are germane to a more effective administration of IDP voting in Nigeria.

Electronic Voting

In order to strengthen the capacity of INEC to include IDPs in future elections in Nigeria, electronic voting system should be introduced in Nigeria. This will enable all eligible Nigerians to vote from whichever part of the country they are resident at the time of the election. This will not only take care of IDPs, but will also accommodate those who for whatever reasons, choose to vote elsewhere other than where they registered. It will, therefore, put to rest the issue of disenfranchisement based on residency requirements. It is heart-warming that this has gotten the attention of the members of the National Assembly and they are presently working on the enabling laws.

Legal Frameworks

One of the major setbacks in the 2015 experiment was lack of legal backing for IDP voting. At the time the decision was taken to include them in the arrangement, it was too late to start tinkering with the Constitution and the Electoral Act to give legal backing to the exercise. Therefore, the National Assembly should amend the necessary sections of our electoral laws to provide for IDP voting. This should be in line with international best practices, especially the ‘United Nations Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons’ and the ‘African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons’, otherwise known as ‘The Kampala Convention’. In fact, these international conventions and statutes on political participation of IDPs should be domesticated and made part of our national laws, since Nigeria has ratified them. In making the laws, efforts should also be made to minimize the constitutional conflicts witnessed in the 2015 exercise. It was the lack of legal frameworks expressly backing IDP voting that boxed INEC into a tight corner in the 2015 general elections.

Early Preparation

Finally, the Federal Government and INEC should ensure that in subsequent elections, preparations for IDP voting starts early enough, so that the fire brigade approach adopted in 2015

is avoided. In particular, other parts of the country where data on IDPs have not been documented should take priority on this. INEC should also understand that more eligible voters are likely to leave their places of residence as election time draws closer. Therefore, arrangements for this should start long before the elections, in order to ensure that all IDPs are accommodated.

Conclusion

The study examined the modalities put in place by INEC in the conduct of the 2015 IDP voting exercise and their implications on the electoral process. Such modalities include change in residency requirement for IDPs; mass transfers of the registration of identified IDPs to their new locations; creation of special voting centres for IDPs in the North East; and distribution of outstanding PVCs to IDPs in their camps before the election. The study argued that these modalities were skewed in favour of the opposition candidate. This is because as arrangements were being made by INEC to ensure that IDPs in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States voted, IDPs from other parts of the country, especially those from the south, were denied such rights. This clearly demonstrated INEC's partisanship and culpability in the entire exercise.

The study utilized the documentary method for data generation, and used content analysis to analyze the data collected. It also relied on the Social Dominance Theory, and based on that, further argued that INEC, an institution of the state controlled by the hegemonic group, the Hausa/ Fulani oligarchy, was used during the 2015 general elections to give undue advantage to the opposition candidate by enfranchising IDPs who were likely to vote for him, and consequently, broadening his support base. IDPs from the southern part of the country were, on the hand, disenfranchised, and by so doing, depleting the support base of the candidate of the ruling party.

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