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THE IMPETUS OF NON-STATE ACTORS ON ELECTION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: MYTH AND REALITY

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ABSTRACT

Elections are the most accepted mechanisms for changing government within the most common and effective system of governance, known as democracy. Non-state actors are groups of entities that operate independently as autonomous bodies outside the government, which typically functions in democratic environments. Over time, non-state actors have expanded into different sectors of the economy where limited government intervention falls short or into areas that require accountability, transparency, the rule of law, and responsiveness to address economic, political, and social issues. The specific political issue, of which elections are a part, is the focus of this paper. Therefore, this research primarily aims to explore the influence of civil society on election management in Nigeria. The study uses a qualitative approach, collecting primary data through key informant interviews with staff from Yiaga, members of the Senate Committee on Election, members of the House of Representatives Committee on Election, INEC staff, experts, police officers, Nigeria Bar Association members, and journalists—all of whom constitute the study population. The research adopts the sampling method outlined by Hagaman and Wutich (2017), and the data analysis was conducted thematically. It was found that non-state actors have actively participated in the voting administration process in Nigeria. However, the paper recommends that professional ethics and standards of work be maintained by non-state actors working in collaboration with INEC staff, the electorate, security agencies, and other electoral stakeholders.

Keywords: Elections, democracy, non-state actors, Yiaga Africa, management.

INTRODUCTION

Elections denote central principle for citizen's expressions of their legitimacy, preferences and political will, thereby enhancing democratic consolidations. Similarly, election activities emphasize on the impacts of elections in stimulating political participation and representation which are essential elements of democratic governance. According to Popoola (2014), holding frequent elections is thought to be the most significant sign that democracy is present. He contends that elections are reflection of the will of the people, and that credibility is required from both the election's procedure and result. Since 1999, which marks the emergence of Fourth Republic, polls have been governed by a legislative framework made up of the Nigerian law book (constitution), Election Acts, INEC manuals, and other pertinent rulings pertaining to election administration. Democracy assures that voters decide who represents them and policies that impact their lives, all thanks to the electoral process. Three things ought to occur in democratic elections. First, choosing their representatives is a right granted to all residents. Two, the electorate can select from a variety of candidates vying for their support. Lastly, those holding public office may run for re-election once a predetermined time has passed.

The manner and mannerisms in which elections are conducted are being questioned, leading to several complaints from different stakeholders. The issue, however, is that the results of these elections are allegedly tainted with anomalies that undermine their validity. Various problems have been raised, including inflated voter rolls, excessive voting, and manipulation of election results. These troubling outcomes highlight realities that require concerted efforts, often from non-state actors, to support the electoral management process. The idea of promoting democracy worldwide is often linked with the creation and strengthening of non-state actors, especially in places like Africa where popular sovereignty is still developing. Their activities include promoting democracy, educating citizens about their democratic rights, and reforming the electoral process. One of the major non-state actors that has dedicated time and resources to strengthening democracy, increasing political participation, and improving the electoral management process in Africa is the Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA-Africa).

Omotola (2010), Diamond (1999), and Obi (2011) observed that addressing the impact of non-state actors on election management in Nigeria is crucial for safeguarding the country's democratic gains. Failing to effectively manage these actors' influence could weaken the legitimacy of elections, foster distrust in democratic institutions, and lead to cycles of violence and instability. The main goal of non-state actors is to help developing nations establish better living conditions (development) by fostering democratic norms and values. The results of their involvement typically align with democratic ideals such as accountability, transparency, civic engagement, service provision, social rights, and improved living standards. In many countries, especially those with diverse ethnic groups, active non-state actors encourage citizen participation across sectors and support decentralization.

As long as elections remain a key part of liberal democracy and the formal institutions set up to manage elections and resolve conflicts in Nigeria have been mostly ineffective, non-state actors (NSAs) have become more involved in the electoral process. Nigeria's difficult experience with holding credible elections makes it a relevant case for studying how non-state players influence electoral affairs. The reason for establishing an independent body is to ensure credible, transparent, fair, and free elections, promoting a smooth transfer of power. However, this process has been hindered by various issues, including undue interference from the government, elites, party members, and political thugs. It's in light of the above contending issues that this research paper aims to survey the role of civil society organizations in election management practices in Nigerian.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Non-state Actors

The activities and involvement of non-governmental organizations cover not only local issues but also international concerns, as outlined in their framework or scope of objectives. Additionally, their scope includes social, political, and economic issues, such as human rights, politics, disasters, fraud, abuse of power, and humanitarian aid. Civil society organizations are key entities that can influence social, political, and religious aspects of individuals or groups by targeting common needs and through collaborative efforts under a collective stance to address global public issues (The Canadian Foundation for Americans, 2006). Non-state actors are often used interchangeably with the concepts of non-governmental organizations, nonprofit enterprises, and free aid agencies that function within a balanced relationship between government and the private sector, both nationally and internationally (Edwards, 2011:1).

Nevertheless, the most often-quoted definition is the working definition of Torfing (2020) which states that:

“Civil society organizations denotes a platform of voluntary collective joint effort of individual with shared interest, purpose and values, theoretically its structural arrangement differs from that of the government, private and market. Practically, their borders between the government, civil society, family and market are often intricate, fuzzy and bargain able. They are usually diversified in terms of scope, players and structural forms, which differs in their level of formalization, independence, and authority. The includes organizations such as formal charity house , developmental non-governmental organizations, social based groups, women’s associations, faith-based organizations, specialized associations, employment associations, social movements, alliances and support groups. (Torfing, 2020).”

Civil societies are conglomerations of voluntary organizations that have autonomy and are among the most important and active players promoting justice and social order in modern democratic settings (Ikelegbe, 2013:16). Civil society organizations are groups of civil entities where membership is usually free; they are established with the goal of providing free services and aid, although they are bound by similar objectives, determination, and ethics (Almond & Verba, 1963:6). In the words of Adibe (2015), civil society refers to a pattern of unionism or interaction between the state and non-state actors, demonstrated through collaboration, self-interest organizations, and community of public-oriented initiatives activities.

According to Chambers and Kopstein (2008:8), they depict that civil organizations are entities that carry out their own activities differently from those of the government. Sometimes, they antagonize state activities; at other times, they support the state, negotiate with the state, partner with the state, or operate beyond the state. This explanation clearly shows that civil society is an autonomous body that decides when to support, oppose, or strike a balance with the state, depending on the interests and issues at hand. Civil society consists of groups of non-governmental organizations established to promote social equality and good governance under a legal framework that outlines their dos and don’ts (Mlambo, Zubane & Mlambo, 2020). Civil societies include a diverse range of non-governmental organizations that operate outside government control and are not driven by profit. These include Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community-Based Organizations

(CBOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), trade unions, farmers' associations, academic groups, professional organizations, student movements, and other activities not related to political organizations (Edwards, 2011:13). The term civil society is broader and more widely recognized than NGOs because of its global reach and presence across various segments of society (Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, 2015).

The term civil society refers to organizations or mechanisms that facilitate democratic participation and promote good governance. They often operate within governments or nations with popular democracies, serving as a force pushing toward democratic governance. It also provides a platform for interaction among citizens, nongovernmental organizations, and decision-makers to ensure a connection between societal needs and actions (Election Fact book, 2019). Based on all the submissions by experts and practitioners, it can be deduced that civil society typically functions and trends more in democratic settings than in autocratic regimes.

The Concept Election

According to Oluwakemi (2013), elections are the most democratic way for citizens to select their representatives. When they are free and fair, elections promote responsible behavior, political engagement, healthy competition, and peaceful power transfers. They can also serve to gauge a government's support, determine whether it is overbearing, and assess a Member of Parliament or a political party. There are both direct and indirect elections. If they are fair and unrestricted, elections help promote democratic consolidation and good governance, according to Nnamani et al. (2019), an election is the competitive process through which leaders emerge to hold public office and provide selfless service. Although this definition describes an election, it is too limited because it excludes the most critical aspect, mass participation. To address this gap, Omotayo and Adekunle (2020) define an election as the legal process of selecting representatives for public office through voting. To further emphasize representation, Ejikeme (2016) describes an election as the method by which voters choose their representatives in government.

Building on the previous perspective, Odeyemi and Mosunmola (2019) describe election as the democratic platform provided to citizens to select their leaders from among various interested candidates. This definition highlights the competitiveness and rigor involved in the election process. As Adebimpe et al. (2020) contributed, democratic stability relies on the fairness of elections and their processes. Therefore, an election encompasses several core values, such as transparency, fairness, and freedom, which help ensure its credibility. Afolabi (2011; 2014) also views elections as key indicators of democracy, enabling citizens to choose their leaders without hindrance. There are clear connections among democratic values like public participation, good governance, public trust, and elections. This relationship suggests that the greater citizens' confidence in their democratic process, the higher their trust in all aspects of the electoral system.

Furthermore, Alebiosu (2016) added that elections have assumed a mechanism for testing the popularity and acceptance of political parties and their candidates. In stressing the relevance of democratic elections, Afolabi (2011), Ejikeme (2016) and INEC (2017) captured elections as a significant precondition for modern democracies. Realizing a free, fair, and credible election hinges on several traits, important among which are competitiveness, inclusiveness (Funmilola & Olasubomi, 2021), transparency, and absence of chaos. In the administration of elections, adequate attention is thus necessary to establish these traits. Election administration succinctly captures the roles and functions of an electoral umpire, as well as the mechanisms put in place to effectively conduct an

election (Omoleke, 2018). In some literature, election management (Nnamani et al., 2019) is used instead and refers to the processes involved in ensuring open, impartial, and reliable elections. Many differences cannot be observed in their definitions, aside from the interchange of 'administration' with 'management'.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Structural – Functionalism

Structural functional theory cannot be discussed without acknowledging the contributions of the French social scientist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917). He argued that society is interdependent, and this interaction requires institutions to perform specific functions. This theory was further developed by Talcott Parsons, who identified four key principles of structural-functional theory: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency. Adaptation refers to the interaction between the system and its environment. Non-state actors are crucial parts of the social system; they help create structural differentiation through activities such as public enlightenment, voter education, sensitization, and the promotion of democratic norms. The ability of an institution to adapt to social changes is called adaptation. The purpose behind establishing such structures is referred to as the goals. YIAGA Africa was founded to promote good governance, foster democracy, and build popular support. Integration involves maintaining relationships with other subsystem components. Latency means maintaining consistency in the system.

Relevance of the Theory

Adopting structural-functional theory into political discourse was first introduced by Gabriel Almond (1970). He managed to apply the theory to the political realm, which drew the attention of political philosophers. He claimed that a better understanding of discourse can only be achieved when relating institutional behavior to the political process. The ideas behind structural functional theory suggest that social change is constant due to its adaptive responses to political and social issues within the social system. A disruption in one component of the social system will be absorbed by the adaptive features of other components. This explains the connectedness and interdependence among the components.

Another aspect of the functional-structural theory is the ability to identify the available structure and its respective functions. Each structure has specific functions that other structures are not permitted to perform. The notion established is that each political setting comprises an institutional structure, and each is obliged to carry out specific functions that, in the long run, determine its existence. These structures include NGOs, civil society organizations, the electoral process, and the judiciary, among others. Furthermore, Gabriel Almond (1970) asserts that there are seven variables in the structural functional theory, of which four are input tasks carried out by non-state actors; the other three are facilitated by state actors. The first four variables are interest articulation, interest aggregation, political socialization, and political communication. The remaining three output tasks involve lawmaking, law enforcement, and rule adjudication, which are considered constitutional functions (Archibong & Antia, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a qualitative research design. It involves the use of primary qualitative data gathered through interviews. The key informant interview (KII) was used to elicit information about the roles played by non-state actors in the electoral process in Nigeria. The study population consists of 21 staff members from YIAGA, 12 members of the Senate Committee on INEC (Senate Standing Order, 2015), 30 members of the House of Representatives Committee on INEC (House of Reps Standing Order, 2015), 15 INEC staff in Abuja involved in registering non-state actors for election observation (INEC Headquarters, Abuja, 2024), 21 lecturers from the University of Abuja Department of Political Science (HOD Office, 2024), 10 police officers in public relations in Abuja (NPF, 2023), 8 members of the Nigeria Bar Association office in Abuja focusing on election matters (www.barristereng.com/nigeria-bar-association-Abuja-branch-unity-bar-public-notice), and 30 journalists from media houses in Abuja. A summary of the characteristics of the study participants is provided below.

Table 1

Population of the Study

Name of Institutions	Populations
YIAGA Member in Abuja	21 Staff
Nigeria Bar Association Office Staff in Abuja on Election Related Matters	8 Staff
Senate Committee on INEC	12 Senators
House of Representative Committee Members on INEC	30 House of Representatives Members
INEC Staff in Abuja on Registrations of Non-State Actors on Election Observation	15 INEC Staff
Nigeria Police Force Office of Public Relations Officers Division A, B, C, D, E	10 Police Public Relations Officers
Experts Lecturers	21 Lectures in the Departments of Political Science University
Journalist from both Public and Private Media House that Covers Elections Matters in Abuja	30 Media House in Abuja
TOTAL	147

Source. Field work (2025).

As stated in Table 1, the study population is 147. However, to generate our sample size since the study is qualitative research, the study relied on and adopted the Hagaman and Wutich (2017). Sampling size, which states that 16 interviews are sufficient to classify collective variables within a relative cluster. However, they recommended higher sample size ranging from 20 to 40 interviews to achieve data saturation for a larger group. For the purposes of this study, 30 interviewees were selected as the sample size which is a midway between 20 and 40 interviews as stipulated sample size for larger group. For interviews, individuals with direct and indirect experience in election management were purposively chosen. Four (4) representative members of YIAGA were chosen, nine (9) members of both national assembly and house of representative were chosen; three (3) committee members from the senate and six (6) members of house of representative were purposively chosen, it comprise of the chairman and

the secretary of both the upper and lower chamber of INEC committee and one (1) member of the senate while four members four (4) for house of representative. Three (3) INEC electoral officials on registration of non-state actors on election observation matters in Abuja were selected. Four (4) experts in the department of political sciences at the University of Abuja were also chosen. Two (2) police officers from divisions A and B on public relations matters on elections not below the rank of assistant superintendent of police were selected from the police. Two (2) members comprising the chairman and the deputy chairman of the Nigeria bar association Abuja Branch office staff on elections matters were also interviewed.

Lastly, journalists from broadcasting media outlets were selected, including television, radio, print, and online, totaling six (6). This sample size of 30 was based on the interview sample size techniques of Hagaman and Wutich (2017). To allocate the number of interviewees to each identified cluster, the study used the Probability Proportionate to Population (PPP) formula. This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

The PPP Calculations for the Numbers of Interviewers

Name of Institution	Population	PPP Calculations	Interviewed number
YIAGA Members in Abuja	21	$\frac{21 \times 30}{147} = 4.3$	4
Nigeria Bar Association Staff on Election Related Matters Abuja	8	$\frac{8 \times 30}{147} = 1.6$	2
Senate Committee on INEC	12	$\frac{12 \times 30}{147} = 2.5$	3
House of Representative Committee on INEC	30	$\frac{30 \times 30}{147} = 6.1$	6
INEC Staff Abuja Branch	15	$\frac{15 \times 30}{147} = 3$	3
Nigeria Police Force Office of Public Relation officer	10	$\frac{10 \times 30}{147} = 2.0$	2
Experts Lecturers	21	$\frac{21 \times 30}{147} = 4.3$	4
Journalist from both Public and Private Media House on Election Matters in Abuja	30	$\frac{30 \times 30}{147} = 6.1$	6
Total	147	30	30

Source. Field work (2025).

Table 3

Coding of Interview Respondents

Institutions	Number of respondents	Coding
YIAGA	4	YNC, YNE, YNW, YSW,
Senators	3	SCC, SCS, SCM.
House of Reps Members	6	HCC, HSC, HCM
INEC Staff Abuja	3	EOZ1, EOZ2, EOZ3.
Experts Lecturers	4	HOD, PGC, SEC, SL
Security	2	DA, DB,
NBA	2	NBAC, NBAS
Journalist	6	TV, RAD, PRINT, ONLINE

Source. Fieldwork (2025).

A research instrument is a device used to gather, organize, and evaluate data related to research interests. The interview method will constitute the research instrument for this study. Data collection methods are an essential part of research design. The materials used in this study were obtained from various sources. These include interviews (key informants) as well as secondary data from journals, articles, textbooks, internet-based resources, materials, and YIAGA reports. Therefore, the facts gathered for this study were derived from both secondary and primary sources. Primary data are collected directly through interviews, with the goal of obtaining firsthand information. Part of the primary data was collected through interviews. Qualitative data was presented and analyzed in thematic and narrative forms. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with NBA, YIAGA, Senators, members of the House of Representatives, and journalists. Secondary materials were sourced from past studies in the field.

Validity refers to the extent to which the questionnaire, as a measurement tool, accurately assesses the key variables. The data collection instruments were objectively developed and reviewed by the researcher's supervisor for validation. The validity of the interview schedules, which are the instruments used, was evaluated. For this research, the strength of the instruments was assessed by a panel of experts who examined selected items within them. The study relied on qualitative data. According to Kothari (2020), qualitative data involves techniques used to analyze patterns and relationships among data groups. To ensure accuracy, the collected data was carefully examined for precision, consistency, and completeness to meet the research objectives. For analysis, the qualitative data will also be presented in summary and narrative formats.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analyzing the Impetus of Non-State Players on Election Management Process in Nigeria

Non-state players are important external actors in the electoral management process. Their involvement at every stage of the election, from pre-election activities to post-election processes, is crucial. However, their impacts are multifaceted, as they influence the nation, the electoral management process, and electoral umpires. It is evident that the significant presence of non-state actors in Nigeria's democracy aims to promote effective electoral management. One of the most important roles of non-state actors is

voter education. In a democracy, voters and civic education are essential to ensure that all constituents (electorate) understand their rights, political culture, and the electoral process. To conduct a successful democratic election, the electorate needs to be educated about their rights and responsibilities and must be politically informed on how to cast valid ballots and participate meaningfully in the voting process. For instance, YAIGA Africa has adopted mechanisms such as town hall meetings, media campaigns, Democracy Series, and at the state level, uses watching voting hours to educate citizens on general election matters (YIAGA, 2023).

Post-election challenges are events that occur after the conduct of elections. There are several challenges and events beyond the pre-election and election activities. Non-state actors have been involved in various post-election challenges. The following include some areas of their involvement: organizing dialogues between conflicting parties, settling post-election violence, educating voters after elections, writing reports on election outcomes, briefing security agencies on violence hotspots after elections, monitoring celebrations to prevent violence, engaging in policy advocacy, and serving as witnesses in courts and election tribunals.

In other to acknowledge this claim, interviews were conducted to the targeted population that has characteristics with the variables of study.

EOZ1, EOZ2 and EOZ3 of the respondents who are INEC staff narrated that non-state players do partake in the management of post-election challenges. Giving their similar claims the expressed that:

“Non-state players serve as witness to many cases in court in terms of courts judgment verdicts on elections issues. Going further, the stressed that many post-election sensitization programs are organized by the non-state players to help educate voters on the dangers of post-election violence...”

One of the INEC staff also stress that the public have some level of trust for non-state actors than their officials, since they are part of the public and believe they are not corrupt as the think INEC staff are. He said the influence of non-state players are not specific but has inverse and converse impacts on diverse people regarding the election administration. To promote popular participation in the electoral process, non-state actors adopted civic and voter education programmes involving training on development of civic knowledge, skills, and character, as well as citizenship and gender participation in the post-election challenges (Afari-Gyan & Glentworth, 2011) SSC and its Members opined that:

“The impact of non-state players in post-election challenges management is important and it should be encourage. They stated that the non-state actors are seen as autonomous bodies in the electoral management process in Nigeria. They went further to say that non state actor serves as watchdogs, and also plays an intermediary role between government and the general public in post-election.....”

Non-state actors are actively involved in ameliorating post-election challenges in Nigeria. For instance, on 28 April, a prominent Igbo socio-cultural group, *Nzuko Umunna*, convened high-profile Igbo citizens and leaders of recognized religious and socio-cultural groups nationwide for a unity conference labeled *Handshake Across Nigeria*, held in Enugu. The primary objective of the conference was to foster dialogue and negotiation among Nigeria’s diverse ethnic groups in the aftermath of electoral contests. Other sister associations, including the Northern Elders Forum, Arewa Consultative Forum, Ohanaeze

Ndigbo, Afenifere, Middle Belt Forum, and the Pan Niger Delta Development Forum, similarly contribute to promoting national cohesion and mitigating post-election tensions.

In addition, international peacebuilding organizations, such as International Alert, in collaboration with national institutions, have organized national dialogues to promote post-election stability, justice, and inclusive participation, particularly regarding gender inclusion (International Alert, 2022). Buttressing these efforts, collaborative arrangements established by electoral management bodies aim to enhance the credibility and fairness of electoral practices. In this context, non-state actors are formally accredited to observe elections as part of broader initiatives to strengthen transparency, accountability, and public confidence in the electoral process (Omotola, 2010; Mlambo et al., 2020).

On the evaluation of the parts of non-state players in post-election management challenges, SPDA and SPDE buttressed that:

“many instance in which they receive distress call from location of post-election violence these calls are usually from non-state players. So therefore the roles of non-state actors are very crucial in managing post-election challenges.”

Civil organizations, however, face a gap in addressing the decline in electoral issues by fostering a conducive electoral environment among orders (Barnes, 2015; Paffenholz, 2015). He went on to say that non-state actors are groups of individuals who work together and share the same interests to influence, checkmate, or support government policies (Diamond, 1999; Mlambo et al., 2020). In a similar assessment, the NBAC and NBAS confirm that several minor issues that should be discussed outside the courtroom are often addressed by non-state actors as part of their inputs in electoral management challenges across several committees in Nigeria (Omotola, 2010; Obi, 2011). Echoing the above claims, Barnes (2015) stressed that many issues were discussed and resolved through dispute-resolution strategies such as negotiation and dialogue. For example, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Nigeria bar Association to support the prosecution of electoral offences (The Cable, 2023). Mlambo et al. (2020) also affirms that positive non-state actors' involvement and their influence in promoting democracy, peaceful coexistence in the country, a province plagued with election-related violence.

SCC and SCS stated that the impact on non-state actors is significant, and their involvement in election management is encouraging due to activities such as educating individuals about the effects of post-election violence, reminding politicians of their promises in pre-election manifestos, and briefing government and security agencies on various issues across the country after elections. Barnes (2009) observed that non-state players watch victory celebrations after poll results are declared to report cases of post-election violence.

HOD and PGC state that they have been involved in several elections as collation officers and returning officers. Furthermore, they assert that their engagement with non-state actors could help them assess their roles in post-election challenges. They said that non-state actors often come to their institutions after elections to hear individuals' views and opinions about the concluded elections, their fears, and areas where they need advice. They added that this process helps government officials and agencies take possibly proactive measures.

In reference to the response on whether the involvement of non-state actors has actually addressed the problems of post-election challenges in Nigeria, SP, SCD, and SM assert that non-state actors have tried

their best, but much more remains to be done. Furthermore, election management is not the only role of non-state actors in Nigeria. According to Mottair (2009), it is likely to say that the medium has made significant progress in encouraging democratic-leaning voters to be more motivated toward peaceful elections rather than conflict-based ones. However, this progress is limited by challenges related to financing and capacity, which affect their reach and follow-up.

In another report, EOZ3 and EOZ2 said that:

“The involvement of non-state actors has increased observation, monitoring, and education of the electorate, which in the long run helps to curtail the challenges of some post-election challenges in Nigeria. They stated that both pre-election challenges and post-election challenges are important components of the electorate management, and non-state actors have been participating to help reduce or avoid such challenges. Notwithstanding their efforts, there are still some post-election challenges that are yet to be addressed in the Nigeria electoral management...”

Therefore, Orjuela (2017) contends that civil organization is celebrated for contributing to peace building and has specific objectives with the ability to dialogue with different parties without losing its mandate.

Online and Print, said that the activities of non-state actors in post-election challenges are not frequent as in pre-election stages. They said their major concern were in pre and election stages. So therefore, non-state involvement as not totally resolved the problem of post-election challenges in Nigeria fourth republic. That increase in post-election challenges is due to limited and poor active involvement of non-state actors. Post-election challenges have continued to cause a high level of insecurity in the country. In responding to this EOZ1, EOZ2 and EOZ3 of the respondents who are INEC staff narrated that:

“non-state actors contributed to the management of post-election challenges. Giving their similar claims the expressed that non state actors serve as witness to many cases in court in terms of courts judgment verdicts on elections issues. Going further, they stressed that many post-election sensitization programs are organized by the non-state actors to help educate voters on the dangers of post-election violence. One of the INEC staff also stress that the public have some level of trust for non-state actors than their officials, since they are part of the public and believe they are not corrupt as they think INEC staff are. He said the role of non-state actors is not one-sided but has direct and indirect impacts on many people concerning the electoral management process.....”

In another discovering by the NBAC and NBAS they stated that:

“many petty issues that are supposed to be settled out of court were actually treated and settled by non-state actors as part of their inputs in electoral management challenges across several committees in Nigeria.....”

From the above submissions, it's glaring that the magnificent number of the non-state actors in the realm democracy in Nigeria is to promote electoral management. There are several challenges and events beyond the pre-election and elections activities. Non state actors have been involved in one form of post-election challenges to another. The areas includes Organizing of dialogue between conflicting parties, settling post elections violence, post-election education of voters, writing reports on outcomes

of elections, briefing securities agencies on places of violence after elections, monitoring jubilation after election to avoid violence, policy advocacy and serves as witness to courts on election cases tribunals. Backing this findings, Afari-Gyan and Glentworth (2011) also find out that; to promote popular participation in the electoral process, non-state actors adopted civic and voter education programmes involving training on development of civic knowledge, skills, and character, as well as citizenship and gender participation in the post-election challenges.

In similar finding by, Shauna (2015), he also discovered that Non- state actors employ mutual recognition of the rights of parties to the conflict and the utilization of dispute resolution strategies such as negotiation and dialogue. For example Memorandum of understanding was signed with Nigeria bar association to support prosecution of electoral offences (The Cable, 2023).

CONCLUSION

It was discovered that non-state actors participated in the election management process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. However, their level of participation in post-election challenges could not resolve all the issues attributed to those challenges. The second finding is that non-state actors indeed participated in post-election challenges. This was highlighted by the nature of data gathered from the interviews conducted. Non-state actors' involvement in post-election challenges is very encouraging, as their participation is multifaceted and includes activities such as voter education, calling for dialogue after elections, monitoring post-election celebrations to prevent conflicts, and other mechanisms. The activities of non-state actors have improved the electoral process, especially during the pre-election, election, and post-election periods. However, their involvement in post-election challenges has not completely resolved the issues but has reduced them to a minimum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Professional ethics and standards of work should also be addressed by non-state actors in active collaboration with INEC staff and security agencies. Thirdly, non-state actors should expand their role in managing pre-election and post-election matters and challenges by adopting new techniques used in developed countries, such as working closely with security agencies and responding quickly and proactively to election issues. Additionally, there should be improved collaboration with other electoral authorities to discuss the future of elections and build national consensus on electoral reforms. Lastly, the INEC guidelines for involvement in the election management process should be reviewed to better reflect the intentions of NSAs.

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