

Electoral Reforms and Voting Participation of Persons with Disabilities in 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract : Democracy as practiced across the globe is sustained with the increase participation of all eligible voters irrespective of class, race, colour, and disabilities. However, there is a perception within the contemporary African society that people with disability (PWDs) belongs to charity and welfare. This is exacerbated with little understanding among African counties including Nigeria that persons with disability have fundamental rights inevitably rooted in the constitution. This significant viewpoint has continued to militate against the social inclusion of persons with disabilities in various aspects of societal lives including their political participation. It is instructive to note that the political right of PWDs has been protected by various international conventions. Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights and Dignities for Persons with Disability (CRPD) guaranteed the participation of persons with disability in the political process. Domesticating and ratification of this right has been a challenge for many African countries including Nigeria. Against the backdrop, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the body saddled with the responsibility of conducting elections in Nigeria provided forum for the participation of persons with disability in election through implementations of electoral act. Section 56 (1) and (2) of the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) provide for voting participation of persons with disability. This study examines the implementation of the electoral act and how it impacts the voting participation of persons with disability vis-à-vis other challenges affecting the participation of PWDs in electoral process in Nigeria's 2019 general election. This paper draws on mixed method in sourcing relevant information from the respondents. Interview will be conducted among INEC officials, Civil Society Organisations, Joint National Association of Persons with Disability (JONAPWD). Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion will be held among different forms of PWDs. The data will be analysed using appropriate descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, as well as thematic content analysis. The study will enlighten understanding on the awareness of the political rights of PWDs as well as improving their electoral participation for sustainable democracy in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country.

Keywords : electoral reforms, voting participation, persons with disabilities

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