ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND ELECTION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INEC AND SECURITY AGENCIES IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

This study examines electoral violence and election management in Nigeria, with particular attention to the effectiveness of the Independent National Electoral Commission and security agencies during the 2023 General Elections. The study is premised on the argument that electoral credibility depends not only on the formal independence of election management institutions or the deployment of security personnel, but also on their capacity to coordinate effectively, respond to electoral threats, protect electoral actors and materials, and maintain public confidence. The study adopts a qualitative research design and relies on secondary data obtained from scholarly literature, official documents, institutional reports and relevant electoral studies. The data were subjected to qualitative content analysis to identify recurring patterns concerning electoral violence, institutional capacity, security deployment, technological interventions and interagency coordination. Findings indicate that electoral violence remained a significant challenge despite the deployment of security agencies and the introduction of technological innovations such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and the INEC Result Viewing Portal. The evidence further indicates that inadequate logistics, perceived partisanship, weak institutional coordination, political interference and limited operational preparedness constrained the effectiveness of election management and electoral security. The study argues that institutional presence should not be equated with institutional effectiveness, while technology should be regarded as an instrument rather than a substitute for institutional capacity. The study therefore recommends a permanent and professionally coordinated electoral security framework linking INEC and relevant security agencies throughout the electoral cycle. Such a framework should institutionalise

continuous risk assessment, intelligence sharing, joint operational planning, rapid response, professional training and independent accountability to strengthen electoral credibility and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria's democratic trajectory since 1999 has made electoral management a critical determinant of democratic legitimacy, political stability and public confidence in government. Yet, the persistence of electoral violence continues to expose the fragility of the country's electoral governance architecture. The 2023 general elections were conducted within an unusually complex security environment characterised by attacks on electoral personnel and facilities, voter intimidation, disruption of electoral activities and violence involving political actors and organised groups. Evidence from the 2023 election cycle indicates that violence was more extensive than in the 2019 cycle and that attacks on Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) offices, personnel and materials constituted a significant threat to the electoral process (National Democratic Institute [NDI] & International Republican Institute [IRI], 2023). The significance of this problem extends beyond the immediate protection of voters and electoral officials because electoral violence can weaken citizens' confidence in electoral institutions and compromise the legitimacy of electoral outcomes.

Recent scholarship has substantially advanced understanding of Nigeria's 2023 elections, but important analytical limitations remain. Madueke and Enyiazu (2025), for instance, provide a significant examination of INEC's organisational capacity and identify political interference, institutional weakness, corruption and inadequate adherence to electoral rules as constraints on electoral integrity. Similarly, Salaudeen (2024) examines violence surrounding the 2023 gubernatorial elections and attributes its persistence partly to the high political value attached to controlling state power. Studies focusing specifically on electoral security have also established that the presence of security personnel did not necessarily translate into effective electoral protection. Ikwuoma and John (2025), for example, find that although security agencies were extensively deployed during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State, their effectiveness was undermined by voter intimidation, allegations of partisanship, inadequate logistics, insufficient training and political interference. Ayobolu (2025) similarly observes that security agencies played an important role in mitigating electoral violence, but that concerns surrounding neutrality, operational transparency and public perception persisted. These studies constitute important contributions, but the academic literature remains fragmented between studies of INEC as an electoral management institution and studies of security agencies as instruments of electoral security. What remains insufficiently interrogated is the institutional relationship between election management and electoral security, particularly how the effectiveness or limitations of INEC interact with the performance of security agencies to shape the incidence, containment and consequences of electoral violence. Thus, the central academic gap lies not simply in the absence of studies on electoral violence, INEC or security agencies, but in the limited integrated analysis of these institutions as interconnected components of a single electoral governance system.

The practical gap is equally consequential. The 2023 elections were preceded by extensive institutional preparations, a new

Electoral Act, technological innovations and substantial deployment of security personnel, yet serious incidents of violence and threats to electoral personnel persisted. INEC itself maintains specific rules of engagement for security personnel assigned to elections, demonstrating that electoral security is institutionally recognised as an essential component of election administration. Nevertheless, evidence from the election cycle suggests a persistent disjuncture between formal institutional arrangements and their operational effectiveness. The practical question is therefore not merely whether INEC and security agencies possess statutory responsibilities, but whether those responsibilities were effectively translated into prevention, deterrence, rapid response and protection during the 2023 electoral process. This gap is particularly important because recommendations for electoral reform frequently emphasise institutional strengthening in general terms without sufficiently establishing which dimensions of institutional performance failed, how those failures interacted and what specific mechanisms can improve coordination between the electoral management body and security institutions.

The research problem, therefore, arises from the apparent contradiction between the institutional and operational investments made to secure and manage Nigeria's 2023 general elections and the persistence of electoral violence that threatened voters, electoral personnel, electoral materials and public confidence. Existing studies have illuminated important dimensions of the problem, but their predominantly institution specific and geographically bounded approaches provide limited explanation of the combined effectiveness of INEC and security agencies in managing electoral violence across the broader 2023 electoral process. The unresolved problem is consequently whether the institutional capacity, neutrality, coordination and operational responsiveness of INEC and security agencies were sufficient to prevent and contain electoral violence and thereby protect the credibility of the elections. Addressing this problem requires an integrated assessment that moves beyond documenting incidents of violence to evaluating the institutional performance of the principal actors responsible for electoral management and security.

Against this background, the study pursues two objectives: first, to assess the effectiveness of INEC in managing the electoral process and responding to challenges associated with electoral violence during the 2023 general elections; and second, to examine the effectiveness of security agencies in preventing, containing and responding to electoral violence during the 2023 general elections. The remainder of the paper is organised into five broad sections. The next section reviews the conceptual and empirical literature on electoral violence, election management and electoral security, with particular attention to the identified gaps in existing scholarship. The subsequent section presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study and explains its relevance to understanding institutional effectiveness and electoral security. The methodology section then explains the research design, population, sampling procedure, instruments and methods of data analysis. The next section presents and discusses the findings in relation to the research objectives and existing literature. The final section concludes the paper by synthesising the major findings, drawing out their implications for electoral governance in Nigeria and proposing measures for strengthening the institutional capacity, neutrality and coordination of INEC and security agencies in future elections.

Literature Review

The contemporary literature on electoral violence and election management in Nigeria increasingly recognises that the credibility of elections depends not only on the formal institutional architecture of electoral administration but also on the capacity of institutions to prevent, contain and respond to violence. This shift is particularly evident in scholarship on the 2023 general elections, which generated considerable academic attention because the elections combined significant institutional reforms, including the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and the INEC Result Viewing Portal, with persistent allegations of electoral malpractice, voter intimidation, insecurity and violence. The literature, however, remains fragmented across studies of electoral violence, electoral technology, INEC, security institutions and specific manifestations of voter suppression. A critical interrogation of these studies is therefore necessary to determine what is already known, how such knowledge was produced, what methodological limitations remain and where a more integrated assessment of INEC and security agencies becomes necessary.

Yusuf and Saminu (2023) examined the relationship between electoral violence, insecurity and the credibility of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Their central argument is that electoral violence was not an isolated occurrence but a persistent feature of the electoral environment that manifested through intimidation, destruction of electoral materials, attacks on electoral personnel, displacement of voters and threats to political opponents. The study concludes that insecurity diminished the credibility of the electoral process because fear discouraged some citizens from participating while violence created opportunities for political actors to manipulate the electoral environment. Methodologically, the study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach and relied principally on participant observation and literature based evidence, which were subjected to triangulation. The contribution of the study lies in connecting violence directly with electoral credibility rather than treating electoral violence merely as a security problem. Nevertheless, its methodological dependence on observation and existing literature limits its ability to establish systematically how voters, electoral officials and security personnel evaluated institutional performance. The study explains why violence matters but provides less empirical evidence for determining whether INEC or security agencies were effective in preventing or responding to specific incidents. Its focus on the general relationship between insecurity and credibility therefore leaves unanswered the institutional question of which actor performed effectively, which actor failed and how institutional responses influenced the electoral experience.

Idowu (2023) approached the problem from the broader perspective of electoral security and democratic governance. The study argues that electoral security encompasses much more than the physical protection of polling units and electoral materials because it also involves protecting the institutional, technological and administrative processes through which elections are organised. This conceptualisation is important because it expands the meaning of election security from physical policing to the protection of the entire electoral system. The research employed secondary data and content analysis, thereby allowing the author to draw together institutional and documentary evidence concerning electoral security in Nigeria. Its principal contribution is conceptual, particularly in demonstrating that electoral security should be understood as an essential component of election management rather than as a peripheral responsibility assigned exclusively to security agencies. However, the reliance on secondary sources

limits the study's capacity to measure the actual effectiveness of institutional interventions during the 2023 elections. The analysis establishes what electoral security should encompass but does not sufficiently demonstrate whether INEC and security institutions actually fulfilled those responsibilities during specific stages of the 2023 electoral process. Consequently, a gap remains between the conceptual requirements of electoral security and empirical assessment of institutional performance.

Ogu and Abraham (2023) specifically examined the role of INEC in the conduct of the 2023 general elections. The study identifies several challenges associated with election administration, including late arrival of electoral materials and officials, malfunctioning electoral technologies, vote buying and electoral violence. The authors employed qualitative research and relied exclusively on secondary materials drawn from books, journals, newspapers and magazines. Systems theory provided the analytical framework, allowing the study to conceptualise INEC, political actors and voters as interconnected components of the electoral system. The study is valuable because it locates electoral violence within broader institutional and administrative weaknesses rather than regarding violence as an independent phenomenon. However, its methodological design creates important limitations. Since the research relies exclusively on secondary sources and does not generate primary evidence from electoral officials, security personnel, voters or other stakeholders, its assessment of INEC effectiveness remains largely interpretive. More importantly, the study treats electoral violence as one among several challenges confronting INEC without developing an independent analytical assessment of the effectiveness of INEC's violence prevention and response mechanisms. Thus, while the study establishes that administrative deficiencies and violence were interconnected in 2023, it does not adequately explain the degree to which INEC's institutional performance contributed to the prevention or escalation of electoral violence.

Ifedi et al. (2023) examined security challenges associated with the 2023 general elections, with particular attention to policing, military involvement and the broader deployment of security personnel. The study anticipated that the professionalism, neutrality and conduct of security institutions would significantly influence the security environment surrounding the elections. Methodologically, the researchers adopted a qualitative approach and analysed documentary evidence obtained from INEC materials, independent observer reports, political party observations, Transparency International materials and relevant laws. The study's principal contribution is its recognition that the deployment of security personnel does not automatically produce electoral security because the professionalism and political neutrality of those personnel remain decisive. This observation is particularly relevant to the present research because it introduces a distinction between institutional presence and institutional effectiveness. Nevertheless, the research is essentially predictive and documentary in orientation. Its evidence was constructed largely before the full consequences of the 2023 elections could be systematically evaluated. It therefore provides a useful framework for anticipating security challenges but does not offer a sufficiently developed post-election assessment of how security agencies actually performed during the election. The gap is consequently one of empirical verification between anticipated security risks and observed institutional performance.

Saleh et al. (2023) investigated the role of the media in managing electoral violence during the 2023 elections in Bauchi

metropolis. The study is particularly significant because it demonstrates that electoral violence cannot be managed exclusively through coercive security mechanisms. Using a survey research design, the researchers selected respondents through stratified sampling across five wards and employed a structured questionnaire for data collection. Reliability testing produced an acceptable coefficient of 0.72, while frequency distributions and chi square statistics were used to analyse the data. The findings indicate that media sensitisation, media autonomy, regulation and journalistic professionalism contributed to the management of electoral violence. The methodological strength of this study is its use of primary data and inferential statistics, which permits a more systematic assessment of relationships than purely documentary studies. Its principal limitation, however, is geographical scope. The study is restricted to Bauchi metropolis and therefore cannot adequately explain institutional effectiveness across Nigeria's highly differentiated electoral environment. Moreover, the focus on media institutions leaves unexplored the interaction between media intervention, INEC performance and security agency responses. The study consequently demonstrates that electoral violence management is multidimensional, but it does not resolve the central institutional question concerning the combined performance of the electoral management body and security agencies.

Lambe and Mubarak (2023) examined political conflict and electoral violence in Nigeria from the perspective of national security. Their analysis establishes that electoral competition can become a security problem when political actors perceive elections as contests for access to state power and material resources. The study contributes to the literature by moving beyond the immediate electoral arena and connecting electoral violence to wider national security consequences. Its publication in 2023 makes it particularly relevant to understanding the security environment within which the general elections occurred. Nevertheless, the study is principally concerned with the implications of political conflict and violence for national security rather than with institutional effectiveness in election management. Consequently, the roles of INEC and security agencies are not subjected to systematic comparative assessment. The methodological and analytical orientation therefore produces an important conceptual insight but leaves a significant empirical gap concerning whether institutional interventions reduced, contained or aggravated electoral violence during the 2023 elections. This distinction is important because the existence of violence does not by itself establish institutional failure. A rigorous assessment requires evidence of institutional responses and their consequences.

Omotola and Oyewole (2025) provide one of the more methodologically sophisticated contributions to the recent literature on electoral violence in Nigeria. Their study interrogates the assumption that off cycle subnational elections are necessarily less violent than general elections because their smaller geographical and demographic scope should enable INEC and security agencies to concentrate resources more effectively. The researchers comparatively examined violence records from the Edo, Kogi and Ondo off cycle elections conducted between 2019 and 2020 and compared them with the 2019 general elections. The study used a descriptive research design and drew violence data largely from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, supplemented by mixed method analysis. The significance of the study lies in questioning the assumption that electoral scale alone determines the capacity of electoral institutions to manage violence. It demonstrates that institutional concentration does not automatically eliminate electoral violence. However, the study does not

examine the 2023 general elections directly and its primary comparison concerns the 2019 electoral cycle and earlier subnational elections. Its findings are therefore valuable for understanding institutional scale and electoral violence but cannot sufficiently explain the performance of INEC and security agencies during the 2023 elections. The present research extends this line of inquiry by shifting the analytical focus from whether election type influences violence to whether the institutions responsible for election administration and security were effective within the specific context of the 2023 general elections.

Abumbe and Egbara Owa (2024) assessed democracy and electoral integrity during the 2023 general elections. Their study employed a qualitative research design and drew evidence from textbooks, journal articles, the INEC website and more than 26 Nigerian newspapers. Content analysis was used to interpret the evidence. The study found that although the introduction of BVAS and IReV generated expectations of greater transparency, the elections were still affected by insecurity, logistical difficulties, technological failures, violence, intimidation, electoral fraud, inadequate communication and weaknesses in infrastructure. The contribution of the research is its multidimensional understanding of electoral integrity, demonstrating that technology cannot independently resolve structural weaknesses within electoral governance. Its extensive documentary coverage also provides a relatively broad evidential base compared with studies restricted to a single locality. Nevertheless, the study remains predominantly descriptive and documentary. The use of newspaper reports and other secondary materials makes it difficult to distinguish systematically between the incidence of institutional failure and perceptions of such failure. More importantly, INEC and security agencies are considered principally within the broader integrity of the electoral process rather than as separate institutional actors whose effectiveness can be independently assessed. This creates an important analytical opening for research that explicitly examines institutional capacity, responsiveness and coordination.

Chineyemba et al. (2024) examined electoral violence and the ethnic question through the experience of the 2023 elections in Lagos State. The study argues that ethnic identity became politicised and contributed to intimidation, polarisation and electoral violence. Using a qualitative methodology, the researchers relied on secondary data from books, academic journals, newspapers and magazines and applied content analysis. Race and ethnicity theory and relative deprivation theory were employed to explain the emergence and escalation of violence. The study is significant because it highlights the sociopolitical dimensions of electoral violence that cannot be adequately explained by institutional weakness alone. It demonstrates that violence may be socially embedded and politically mobilised through identity narratives. However, the geographical restriction to Lagos State and reliance exclusively on secondary evidence constrain the generalisability of its conclusions. More importantly, the analysis focuses on the causes and consequences of ethnicised electoral violence rather than examining how INEC and security agencies responded to such violence. Thus, the study enriches knowledge about the social drivers of electoral violence but leaves unresolved whether electoral institutions and security actors possessed the capacity and neutrality required to manage violence arising from identity based political mobilisation.

Johnson and Omotola (2024) investigated the involvement of paramilitary forces in Nigerian elections between 2015 and 2023. Their study is particularly relevant because it addresses an institutional dimension that has received less systematic attention than the role

of the police or INEC. The researchers argue that previous literature had not adequately examined the roles and impediments of paramilitary institutions in the 2015, 2019 and 2023 elections. The study combined primary and secondary sources. Primary evidence was generated through oral interviews with officers of paramilitary agencies who participated in the three electoral cycles, while secondary evidence was derived from existing literature. The study concludes that paramilitary agencies contributed substantially to electoral security through collaboration with other security institutions. The use of interviews with personnel who actually participated in election security is a methodological strength because it provides institutional experience that documentary studies cannot easily capture. However, the study also presents a potential limitation arising from its reliance on institutional respondents. Security personnel may emphasise operational achievements while underreporting institutional weaknesses, political pressures or incidents of misconduct. Furthermore, the study covers three election cycles and several paramilitary institutions, which provides breadth but potentially reduces the depth of its analysis of the 2023 elections. Most importantly, it does not systematically compare paramilitary performance with INEC performance or examine whether the cooperation between electoral and security institutions translated into measurable reductions in electoral violence.

Madueke and Enyiazu (2025) provide a particularly important contribution to understanding INEC's institutional capacity during the 2023 general elections. The study examines how organisational attributes of INEC affected electoral integrity, focusing mainly on the 2023 presidential election. The researchers relied on interviews, internet based materials and documentary evidence to assess INEC's organisational efficiency. Their findings identify corruption, weak adherence to institutional rules, limited independence and political interference as major constraints on the commission's capacity to deliver credible elections. The study is analytically significant because it moves beyond the technical performance of electoral technology and examines the organisational characteristics that determine whether electoral reforms can function effectively. Its use of interviews strengthens the evidence base by supplementing documentary sources with stakeholder perspectives. However, its principal analytical concern is electoral integrity rather than electoral violence. Violence appears as part of the broader environment affecting election credibility rather than as the dependent outcome through which institutional effectiveness is assessed. Furthermore, the study focuses mainly on the presidential election and INEC's organisational attributes, leaving the security agencies outside the centre of analysis. This creates a substantial gap because electoral violence is generated and managed through interactions among political actors, INEC, security institutions and voters. Assessing INEC independently therefore provides only one side of the institutional explanation.

Asangausung et al. (2025) examined the management of election related violence through the use of electoral technologies during the 2023 general elections, with particular attention to Akwa Ibom State. The researchers employed a qualitative approach and thematic analysis, using frustration aggression theory to explain the relationship between political frustration, rivalry and violent behaviour. Their findings suggest that political rivalry, thuggery and intimidation remained important drivers of violence despite the introduction of BVAS and IReV. The study further argues that technological innovations were constrained by reliability problems and inadequate public trust. The major contribution of this research is its demonstration that technology should not be mistaken for institutional effectiveness. Digital mechanisms

may reduce certain forms of malpractice while leaving underlying political incentives for violence substantially unchanged. Nevertheless, the study is geographically concentrated in Akwa Ibom State and adopts a qualitative approach, which limits its capacity to establish the prevalence of particular institutional failures across the country. More importantly, technology is placed at the centre of the analysis, whereas the present research is concerned with the wider institutional performance of INEC and security agencies. The study therefore provides an important warning against technological determinism but does not fully explain whether weaknesses in election management and security coordination account for the persistence of violence.

Ayobolu (2025) examined the roles of security agencies during the 2023 general elections and explicitly connected security intervention with electoral integrity. The study is important because it moves closer to the institutional question addressed by the present research. It considers how security agencies maintained order during the electoral process and examines the relationship between security responsibilities and the integrity of elections. Its principal contribution is the recognition that security agencies are not merely auxiliary actors but central participants in the electoral governance process. Nevertheless, the available study is largely qualitative and institutionally oriented, which means that its conclusions depend substantially on documentary and interpretive evidence rather than systematic measurement of security effectiveness across electoral locations. This methodological orientation is useful for understanding institutional roles but less capable of establishing the extent to which security deployment actually prevented violence, protected voters or increased confidence in the electoral process. The study therefore advances the debate considerably but still leaves a need for an integrated analysis in which security agency performance is examined alongside INEC's institutional performance rather than independently.

Ikwuoma and John (2025) provide a more geographically specific assessment of electoral security management by examining the conduct of security agencies during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State. The study focuses on the roles, challenges and effects of security agencies within a specific state context and argues that security deployment did not necessarily guarantee effective electoral security. The study identifies challenges associated with professionalism, neutrality, logistical constraints and interagency cooperation. Its principal strength lies in its attempt to move beyond the abstract discussion of security agencies and examine their conduct within an identifiable electoral environment. However, its deliberate restriction to Oyo State and the presidential election limits its ability to explain the broader national experience of the 2023 general elections, which involved substantial regional variations in political competition, insecurity and institutional capacity. Furthermore, the state specific design does not sufficiently illuminate the relationship between security agencies and INEC as interconnected institutional actors. Its findings consequently support the proposition that institutional presence is different from institutional effectiveness, but they do not provide a comprehensive national assessment of the combined capacity of INEC and security agencies.

Obani et al. (2025) examined security institutions and electoral violence during the 2023 general elections from a systems theory perspective. The study adopted a qualitative approach, relied extensively on secondary sources and employed content analysis. Its central finding is that electoral violence persisted despite substantial security deployment, suggesting that the presence of

security personnel alone was insufficient to guarantee peaceful elections. The researchers emphasise political neutrality, institutional coherence and systemic interaction among INEC, security institutions, political parties, voters and other electoral actors. This study is particularly important to the present research because it recognises that electoral violence is produced within an interconnected institutional system rather than by a single actor. Nevertheless, its reliance on secondary evidence means that institutional effectiveness is inferred rather than directly measured through primary responses from voters, electoral officials or security personnel. In addition, the systems perspective, while theoretically useful, does not by itself establish which component of the system was most responsible for particular failures. The study therefore identifies systemic interaction as a central explanatory factor but leaves the empirical task of assessing the relative effectiveness of INEC and security agencies unresolved.

The foregoing literature reveals several important patterns. First, recent scholarship establishes that electoral violence remained a significant feature of the 2023 Nigerian electoral environment despite major institutional and technological reforms. Second, the literature demonstrates that electoral violence cannot be explained exclusively through security deficiencies because political competition, institutional weakness, ethnic mobilisation, voter suppression, technological limitations and administrative shortcomings interact to shape electoral insecurity. Third, existing studies increasingly recognise that the effectiveness of electoral institutions depends on independence, neutrality, professionalism, coordination and accountability rather than merely on the existence of statutory responsibilities or the physical deployment of personnel. Fourth, the methodological literature remains dominated by qualitative designs, documentary analysis, content analysis and geographically bounded case studies. Although these approaches provide valuable contextual explanations, relatively fewer studies systematically combine primary empirical evidence with an integrated assessment of INEC and security agencies across the 2023 general elections.

A more fundamental gap therefore emerges from the fragmentation of the existing literature. Studies of INEC principally investigate electoral integrity, organisational capacity, technological innovation and administrative shortcomings, while studies of security agencies principally examine deployment, professionalism, neutrality and the prevention of electoral disorder. Studies of electoral violence, on the other hand, tend to emphasise its political, ethnic, socioeconomic or security causes. These three strands of scholarship rarely converge analytically. Consequently, the existing literature does not sufficiently answer the institutional question of how the effectiveness of INEC and security agencies interacted to shape the management of electoral violence during the 2023 general elections. The absence of such an integrated assessment constitutes both an academic and practical gap. Academically, it limits understanding of electoral violence as an institutional governance problem rather than simply a manifestation of political conflict. Practically, it limits the capacity of electoral reform to identify whether future improvements should concentrate primarily on INEC's administrative capacity, security professionalism, interagency coordination, political neutrality, technological reliability or some combination of these factors.

This study therefore takes the position that electoral violence during the 2023 general elections should not be examined simply as evidence that Nigerian elections remain violent. Such an interpretation risks overlooking the more consequential question

of institutional effectiveness. The relevant analytical issue is whether INEC and security agencies possessed and effectively exercised the capacities required to prevent violence, protect voters and electoral personnel, secure electoral materials, respond to threats, maintain institutional neutrality and preserve public confidence. This position moves the discussion from an event centred description of electoral violence towards an institutional assessment of election management. It further recognises that INEC and security agencies perform different but interdependent functions and that weakness in one institution may amplify weaknesses in the other. The contribution of this research consequently lies in bringing the two institutional dimensions into a common analytical framework and examining their effectiveness in managing electoral violence during the 2023 general elections.

The literature also reveals a methodological opportunity. Much of the recent scholarship is qualitative and documentary, while some geographically specific studies employ questionnaires and inferential statistics. This study considers an empirical approach capable of capturing the perceptions and experiences of relevant electoral stakeholders while also permitting systematic assessment of the relationship between institutional performance and electoral violence. Such an approach is necessary because effectiveness cannot be established solely from the existence of institutional mandates or post-election narratives. It requires evidence concerning whether the institutions performed their assigned responsibilities, how stakeholders perceived that performance and whether institutional interventions contributed to preventing or containing violence. The present research therefore seeks to move beyond the descriptive documentation of electoral violence and generate evidence capable of evaluating institutional performance.

Taken collectively, the reviewed studies demonstrate that the 2023 general elections represented neither a simple failure of electoral administration nor a purely security problem. Rather, the evidence points to a complex interaction among institutional capacity, political incentives, technological limitations, security challenges, social identities and administrative weaknesses. Yet, the literature has not sufficiently integrated these dimensions around the specific question of whether INEC and security agencies were effective in managing electoral violence. This unresolved issue constitutes the central knowledge gap to which this study responds. By placing INEC and security agencies within the same analytical frame, the study seeks to contribute a more institutionally grounded explanation of electoral violence and election management in Nigeria and to generate findings capable of informing future electoral security and institutional reform.

Methods and Materials

The study adopted a qualitative research design and relied exclusively on secondary sources of data. Relevant data were obtained from peer reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, published research reports, electoral studies and other credible academic publications relating to electoral violence, election management, INEC and the role of security agencies in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the 2023 general elections. The sources were purposively selected based on their relevance, scholarly credibility, recency and direct connection to the subject under investigation. Data were subjected to qualitative content analysis, involving the systematic identification, interpretation and synthesis of recurring themes concerning electoral violence, institutional capacity, electoral administration, security response, interagency coordination and electoral credibility. The analysis enabled the study to critically interrogate existing evidence,

identify areas of convergence and divergence among previous studies, and establish the knowledge and practical gaps that the present study seeks to address.

INEC and Security Agencies in the 2023 General Elections The Paradox of Electoral Violence and Election

The contemporary literature on electoral violence and election management in Nigeria increasingly recognises that the credibility of an election cannot be separated from the capacity of institutions to secure the electoral environment. Idowu (2023) provides an important starting point by conceptualising electoral security as a multidimensional component of democratic election management rather than merely the physical protection of voters and polling stations. Using secondary sources and qualitative content analysis, the study argues that electoral security encompasses the protection of polling units, ballots, election officials, electoral resources, technological infrastructure and the broader institutional functions required for the administration of elections. The significance of this argument lies in its departure from a narrow understanding of security as the deployment of armed personnel on Election Day. By locating security within the wider architecture of election administration, the study establishes a conceptual connection between electoral security and electoral credibility

However, the methodological strength of Idowu's study is also its principal limitation. Because the evidence is derived entirely from secondary materials and analysed through content analysis, the study demonstrates convincingly why electoral security matters but does not sufficiently establish how effectively security institutions actually performed during a specific electoral cycle. The distinction is important. An institutional mandate to protect electoral personnel, materials and voters does not necessarily translate into institutional effectiveness. Effectiveness requires evidence concerning prevention, responsiveness, coordination, neutrality, operational readiness and the ability to contain violence when preventive measures fail. The study therefore establishes the normative importance of electoral security without empirically measuring the performance of the institutions responsible for delivering it. This creates an important opening for the present study. Rather than treating electoral security as an abstract prerequisite for credible elections, this research interrogates the actual effectiveness of security agencies during the 2023 General Elections and examines that performance alongside the capacity of INEC to manage an electoral process conducted under conditions of insecurity. The position advanced here is that electoral security should be evaluated not simply by the presence of security personnel but by the extent to which institutional interventions prevented violence, protected electoral actors and preserved the integrity of election administration.

Yusuf and Saminu (2024) move the discussion closer to the 2023 electoral experience by examining the relationship between electoral violence, insecurity and the credibility of the general election. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach and relied on participant observation and documentary literature, with triangulation employed to strengthen interpretation. Its findings indicate that insecurity and electoral violence affected the credibility of the election through intimidation of voters, attacks on election personnel, destruction of electoral materials, disruption of electoral activities and displacement of citizens. The study further argues that violence occurred across the pre-election, Election Day and post-election phases, thereby demonstrating that electoral violence cannot be reduced to isolated incidents occurring at polling units.

The study makes an important contribution by demonstrating that the security environment surrounding an election can affect both participation and perceptions of legitimacy. Nevertheless, its analytical emphasis remains largely on the consequences of violence rather than on the institutional mechanisms through which violence was prevented or managed. Participant observation and secondary evidence can reveal the existence and consequences of insecurity, but they offer less precise evidence about the relative performance of INEC and security agencies. The study also treats electoral violence and insecurity in relatively broad terms, which makes it difficult to determine whether specific institutional failures were responsible for particular electoral disruptions. Consequently, the literature still lacks a sufficiently disaggregated explanation of institutional effectiveness. This study advances the argument that the question should not merely be whether insecurity damaged the 2023 elections, since the existing literature has already established that proposition. The more analytically useful question is why existing institutional arrangements were unable to prevent or contain particular forms of violence and whether weaknesses in INEC administration, security deployment, institutional coordination, neutrality or operational responsiveness contributed to the persistence of electoral insecurity.

Ogu and Abraham (2023) examine INEC and the conduct of the 2023 General Elections through a qualitative discourse based on secondary materials including books, journals, newspapers, magazines and other documentary evidence. The study identifies several difficulties surrounding the election, including late arrival of electoral personnel and materials, problems associated with electronic electoral equipment, vote buying and electoral violence. The authors consequently argue for improved preparation, greater compliance with electoral laws and stronger institutional commitment by INEC.

The contribution of this study is particularly relevant because it places INEC at the centre of the explanation of electoral performance. Yet its conception of institutional effectiveness is principally organisational and procedural. The study identifies deficiencies in preparation and implementation, but it does not adequately distinguish between institutional incapacity, technological failure, logistical constraints and security related disruption. This distinction is crucial because electoral management takes place within an environment in which INEC does not possess coercive authority over all actors. For example, an election official who arrives late because of insecurity presents a different institutional problem from an official who arrives late because of administrative inefficiency. Similarly, the inability to deploy electoral materials may reflect poor logistics, insecurity along transportation routes, inadequate interagency coordination or some combination of these factors. The study therefore identifies important symptoms without sufficiently establishing the interaction between administrative weaknesses and security conditions. The present research departs from this limitation by treating election management and electoral security as interconnected institutional processes. The central position is that INEC's effectiveness cannot be properly assessed in isolation from the security environment within which its officials, materials, technologies and procedures operated.

Abumbe and Owa (2024) provide a broader assessment of democratic and electoral integrity during the 2023 General Elections. Their research adopted a qualitative approach and relied on secondary materials comprising textbooks, journal publications, Internet sources, the official INEC website and more than 26 Nigerian newspapers. The data were

subjected to content analysis. The study acknowledges the optimism surrounding the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and the INEC Result Viewing portal but concludes that insecurity, operational and logistical problems, technological malfunction, electoral violence, intimidation, electoral fraud, inadequate communication concerning results and infrastructural deficiencies weakened electoral integrity.

The breadth of this study is useful because it demonstrates that the problems of the 2023 election were multidimensional. Its evidence, however, raises an important methodological concern. Newspapers and documentary materials are valuable for reconstructing electoral events, but they cannot by themselves provide a sufficiently systematic measure of institutional effectiveness. Moreover, by combining insecurity, logistics, technology, fraud, communication and violence within one broad account of electoral integrity, the causal relationship among these variables becomes difficult to establish. The fact that electoral violence and technological malfunction occurred during the same election does not establish that one caused the other or that both resulted from the same institutional deficiency. There is therefore a tendency in this strand of literature to catalogue electoral problems rather than explain institutional performance. This study responds to that limitation by analytically separating institutional responsibilities and examining how INEC and security agencies performed different but interconnected functions. The intention is not simply to reproduce the catalogue of difficulties surrounding the 2023 election, but to establish which institutional weaknesses were most consequential for the management of electoral violence and how those weaknesses interacted.

Lambe and Mubarak (2023) approach the problem from the perspective of political conflict and national security. Using a descriptive analytical approach, the study examines electoral violence as a manifestation of broader political competition and argues that electoral violence has consequences extending beyond the immediate electoral process into the wider national security environment. The research is significant because it refuses to treat electoral violence as a temporary disturbance confined to election day. Instead, violence is connected to political conflict and its broader consequences for social stability and democratic development. Although this perspective is valuable, its explanatory direction differs from that required for an institutional assessment of election management. By concentrating on the implications of electoral violence for national security, the study places greater analytical weight on the consequences of violence than on the institutional capacity to prevent it. This produces an important unresolved question: if political conflict generates incentives for violence, under what institutional conditions can electoral management bodies and security agencies successfully neutralise those incentives? The existence of political competition does not automatically produce electoral violence; rather, violence becomes electorally consequential when institutions fail to constrain actors who are willing to employ coercion. This study therefore takes the position that political conflict constitutes an important contextual condition, but institutional effectiveness determines to a significant extent whether such conflict becomes translated into electoral disorder. The present research consequently shifts the analytical focus from the existence of political conflict to the capacity of electoral and security institutions to manage its manifestations.

Saleh et al. (2023) introduce another dimension by examining the contribution of the media to the management of electoral violence during the 2023 elections in Bauchi

metropolis. The study employed a survey design, selected respondents from five wards through stratified and simple random sampling techniques, and used a questionnaire whose reliability coefficient was reported as 0.72. Frequency distributions and chi square analysis were employed in analysing the data. The study found that media sensitisation, media autonomy, regulation and journalistic professionalism contributed to the management of electoral violence.

The methodological sophistication of this study is relatively stronger than purely documentary accounts because it introduces primary empirical evidence and statistical testing. Yet its explanatory reach is limited by its geographical concentration on Bauchi metropolis and its specific focus on the media. The findings therefore cannot adequately explain the performance of the principal institutions responsible for electoral administration and security. More importantly, the study treats the media largely as an external mechanism for violence management rather than considering how media reporting interacts with institutional responses by INEC and security agencies. Media sensitisation may reduce tensions, but the capacity of institutions to secure polling locations, protect election officials and respond to attacks remains indispensable. The present study therefore regards the media as part of the wider electoral environment but does not substitute media effectiveness for institutional effectiveness. This distinction is important because a peaceful electoral environment cannot be sustainably produced by communication alone where institutional capacity, neutrality or coordination remains weak.

Chineyemba et al. (2024) examine electoral violence through the ethnic question, focusing specifically on the 2023 elections in Lagos State. The study uses qualitative secondary data drawn from books, journals, newspapers and magazines and applies content analysis to investigate the ways in which ethnicity was mobilised within electoral competition. The authors argue that ethnic identity became a mechanism through which political rivalry was intensified and that the resulting violence had implications for social cohesion and national unity. The study is important because it introduces a sociopolitical explanation that cannot be captured adequately through institutional analysis alone. Electoral violence is not generated exclusively by administrative failure. Identity mobilisation, political competition and perceptions of exclusion can create powerful incentives for collective violence. Nevertheless, the Lagos centred character of the study imposes a significant limitation on generalisation. More importantly, the study explains the social roots of violence more effectively than it explains the institutional response to violence. This distinction matters for the present research because the presence of ethnic mobilisation does not explain whether security agencies acted impartially, whether INEC adapted its operational strategies to areas of heightened risk or whether interagency coordination was effective. The position advanced in this study is therefore that ethnic mobilisation should be treated as a source of electoral risk rather than as a sufficient explanation of electoral violence. The effectiveness of election management institutions must be assessed precisely at the point where sociopolitical pressures challenge their capacity to remain neutral, responsive and operationally effective.

Johnson and Omotola (2024) make a more direct contribution to the security dimension by examining the participation of paramilitary institutions in Nigeria's elections between 2015 and 2023. The study combines primary and secondary sources. Primary evidence was obtained through oral interviews with officers of paramilitary agencies who participated in the 2015, 2019 and 2023 elections, while secondary evidence was generated from relevant literature. The study concludes that

paramilitary agencies contributed substantially to the security of the elections and that collaboration among sister security institutions helped provide an environment in which elections could be conducted. It also identifies impediments affecting the performance of paramilitary institutions.

This study is particularly valuable because it introduces institutional actors that are often underexamined in electoral scholarship. Its use of interviews with personnel who actually participated in elections also provides an institutional perspective that is largely absent from documentary studies. Nevertheless, the three election cycle scope creates an analytical problem. Experiences from 2015, 2019 and 2023 are aggregated in a manner that can obscure changes in institutional capacity and operational circumstances across electoral cycles. Furthermore, the conclusion that paramilitary agency contributed to electoral success risks equating deployment with effectiveness. The presence of security institutions may coexist with intimidation, ballot disruption or perceptions of partiality. Institutional effectiveness must therefore be assessed against outcomes and not merely against deployment or institutional participation. The present study builds on this contribution by concentrating specifically on the 2023 General Elections and by examining security effectiveness through prevention, response, neutrality, coordination and protection of electoral personnel and materials. It also extends the analysis by placing security agencies alongside INEC rather than treating security institutions as independent from election management.

Madueke and Enyiazu (2025) provide one of the most directly relevant recent studies by examining electoral integrity and election management through the organisational attributes of INEC, with particular attention to the 2023 presidential election. The study draws on interviews, Internet materials and documentary evidence to evaluate INEC's organisational efficiency. Its findings identify corruption, inadequate adherence to institutional rules and insufficient institutional independence as major constraints. The study further argues that political interference persisted despite the 2022 Electoral Act, thereby limiting INEC's capacity to deliver elections that command broad confidence.

The importance of this contribution is that it moves beyond the description of individual electoral failures and investigates the organisational attributes of the election management body. Nevertheless, its concentration on INEC creates an institutional asymmetry in the literature. An election management body does not operate within a vacuum. Its effectiveness is conditioned by the behaviour of political parties, courts, security institutions, technology providers, election personnel and voters. In a violent electoral environment, the independence and organisational efficiency of INEC may be necessary but insufficient conditions for electoral credibility. For example, even an administratively competent INEC may be unable to protect polling personnel or electoral materials where security agencies fail to provide effective protection. Conversely, substantial security deployment may have limited value where INEC's logistical and technological systems fail. The present study therefore accepts Madueke and Enyiazu's institutional argument but extends it through an integrated institutional perspective. The central position is that the effectiveness of election management should be understood as an interactive institutional outcome produced through the relationship between INEC and the agencies responsible for electoral security.

Ayobolu (2025) specifically examines the role of security agencies during the 2023 General Elections and provides evidence that security institutions played an important role in mitigating violence and facilitating a

relatively peaceful voting environment. At the same time, the study identifies persistent concerns surrounding political neutrality, public perception and operational transparency. It recommends improved training, clearer operational guidelines and stronger accountability mechanisms.

The study is particularly relevant because it recognises that security effectiveness has at least two dimensions: operational capacity and legitimacy. A security agency may possess sufficient personnel and coercive capability to control an electoral environment while simultaneously undermining public confidence if its conduct is perceived as partisan. This creates an important conceptual distinction between coercive effectiveness and democratic effectiveness. Yet the study remains predominantly qualitative and does not sufficiently establish the conditions under which security deployment succeeded or failed across different electoral settings. Nor does it systematically compare security performance with INEC's administrative performance. This leaves unresolved the question of whether electoral violence in 2023 resulted primarily from inadequate security capacity, institutional partiality, poor coordination or weaknesses within election administration itself. The present research addresses this gap by treating security effectiveness as multidimensional and by examining it in relation to the wider election management process rather than as a separate security sector issue.

Ikwuoma and John (2025) narrow the geographical focus further by examining the conduct of security agencies during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State. The study uses qualitative research and secondary data drawn from electoral institutions, civil society organisations and credible media reports. Its findings indicate that security agencies were visibly present, yet their effectiveness was mixed. Voter intimidation and ballot box snatching remained problems, while perceptions of partisanship weakened voter confidence. The study also identifies inadequate logistics, insufficient training and political interference as important constraints on security performance.

The strength of this research lies in its explicit concern with effectiveness rather than mere institutional presence. It demonstrates that deployment should not be confused with successful security management. However, its Oyo State focus and concentration on the presidential election limit its capacity to explain the national character of the 2023 General Elections. The use of secondary data also means that perceptions of security performance are largely mediated through reports produced by other institutions. Furthermore, the study does not fully investigate interagency coordination or the relationship between security agencies and INEC. This is a significant omission because election security is inherently interdependent. INEC controls the administrative architecture of the election, while security agencies operate within and around that architecture. The present study therefore extends the argument by asking whether the effectiveness of security agencies was enhanced or weakened by the quality of their coordination with INEC and by the operational demands generated by INEC's own election management processes.

Obani et al. (2025) directly examine security institutions and electoral violence during the 2023 General Elections. The study adopts a qualitative approach, relies extensively on secondary sources and employs content analysis within a systems theory framework. Its findings indicate that electoral violence persisted despite extensive deployment of security personnel and therefore point toward the importance of institutional neutrality and systemic reform. The study recommends impartiality by INEC and the police and argues for institutional

reforms capable of reducing the political incentives surrounding electoral competition.

This study makes a significant conceptual contribution by challenging the assumption that increased security deployment necessarily produces reduced electoral violence. Nevertheless, the use of systems theory and secondary documentary evidence produces a relatively broad institutional explanation without sufficiently differentiating the performance of individual agencies. Security institutions are not a homogeneous category. Police, military personnel, civil defence personnel and other agencies have different mandates, command structures, operational capacities and relationships with the electoral process. Treating them collectively may obscure variations in effectiveness. Similarly, the conclusion that institutional neutrality is necessary, while normatively persuasive, requires further empirical specification. What constitutes neutrality in operational practice? How does neutrality affect voter confidence? Does neutrality improve the prevention of violence, response to violence or both? The present study advances the literature by disaggregating institutional effectiveness into identifiable dimensions and by examining the specific relationship between INEC and security agencies rather than treating the electoral security system as an undifferentiated whole.

Asangausung et al. (2025) approach the management of electoral violence through the technological innovations introduced into Nigeria's electoral process. Focusing on Akwa Ibom State, the study employs a qualitative approach and thematic analysis and examines the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and the INEC Result Viewing portal. The findings show that political rivalry, thuggery and intimidation remained important drivers of electoral violence and that the presence of technological innovations did not eliminate violence. The study further finds that reliability problems and limited public trust constrained the effectiveness of the technologies.

The study provides an important corrective to technologically deterministic explanations of electoral reform. Technology may strengthen electoral transparency, but it cannot independently neutralise political incentives for violence. Yet the Akwa Ibom focus again raises questions concerning generalisability. More importantly, technology is treated primarily as an instrument for reducing malpractice and strengthening credibility rather than as one component within a larger institutional system. This study takes the position that technological effectiveness must be understood relationally. BVAS and IReV can only contribute to credible election management when electoral officials are properly trained, materials reach polling locations, security agencies protect personnel and equipment, and political actors respect institutional procedures. Thus, technological reform cannot substitute for institutional effectiveness. The present research consequently treats technology as part of the operational environment within which INEC and security agencies performed their functions, rather than as an independent solution to electoral violence.

Oshinfowokan (2024) examines the 2023 General Elections through the broader challenge of electoral violence. The study identifies intense political competition, mobilisation of militant groups, exploitation of ethnic and religious divisions, institutional weaknesses, declining public confidence and voter apathy as significant characteristics of the electoral environment. It adopts a qualitative orientation involving literature review, interviews and policy analysis. The study argues that electoral violence undermines democratic legitimacy, reduces citizen participation and produces wider socioeconomic consequences.

The contribution of this research lies in its attempt to connect electoral violence with both political and developmental consequences. Nevertheless, the analysis remains principally explanatory at the macro level. It identifies the conditions associated with violence but does not sufficiently disaggregate the institutional mechanisms through which those conditions translated into particular electoral outcomes. This creates a familiar gap within the literature. Many studies have established that political competition, identity mobilisation, insecurity and institutional weakness increase electoral vulnerability, but fewer studies have systematically asked how the institutions charged with managing those vulnerabilities actually performed. The present study therefore shifts the analytical emphasis from identifying the causes and consequences of electoral violence to evaluating institutional response. This distinction permits a more policy relevant assessment because electoral violence cannot be addressed effectively merely by identifying its social causes; attention must also be given to the capacity, neutrality and coordination of institutions responsible for preventing and managing it.

Ojiako et al. (2024) provide another critical assessment of democratic problems and electoral violence during the 2023 elections. The study draws on both primary and secondary data and employs Social Contract Theory as its analytical framework. Its findings associate the 2023 election with electoral malpractice, political consolidation, controversies surrounding the electoral process and declining public confidence. The study argues that post-election judicial outcomes further contributed to political apathy and recommends stronger democratic institutions, including electronic voting and electronic transmission of results.

The significance of this study lies in its recognition that the credibility of an election extends beyond polling day and into the post-election period. Nevertheless, the study's interpretation is strongly oriented toward democratic legitimacy and political outcomes rather than institutional performance. Its use of Social Contract Theory provides a useful normative basis for understanding citizen expectations, but it is less capable of explaining the organisational processes through which INEC and security agencies respond to violence. Furthermore, recommendations for electronic voting and result transmission risk assuming that technological reform can resolve institutional weaknesses that are political and organisational in character. The present study therefore argues that electoral credibility should be treated as the cumulative outcome of administrative competence, security effectiveness, procedural compliance, neutrality and public trust. Technology may support these dimensions, but cannot replace them.

The emerging literature therefore reveals a substantial but fragmented body of knowledge on electoral violence and election management in Nigeria. One strand explains the structural and political origins of violence through political competition, insecurity, ethnic mobilisation and socioeconomic vulnerability (Lambe & Mubarak, 2023; Chineyemba et al., 2024; Oshinfowokan, 2024). A second strand concentrates on INEC and identifies organisational weakness, political interference, logistical difficulties, technological problems and limited institutional independence as threats to electoral integrity (Ogu & Abraham, 2023; Abumbe & Owa, 2024; Madueke & Enyiazu, 2025). A third strand examines security institutions and demonstrates that deployment does not necessarily translate into effective electoral security, particularly where neutrality, accountability, logistics and public confidence are compromised (Johnson & Omotola, 2024; Ayobolu, 2025; Ikwuoma & John, 2025; Obani et al., 2025). A fourth strand examines technology and

complementary institutions such as the media, showing that technological and communicative interventions can support election management but cannot independently eliminate the political and institutional drivers of violence (Saleh et al., 2023; Asangausung et al., 2025).

The critical problem with the existing literature is therefore not an absence of studies on electoral violence or election management. Rather, the problem is fragmentation. Studies tend to examine either the causes of electoral violence, the performance of INEC, the role of security agencies, the influence of technology or the consequences of electoral insecurity. The relationship among these dimensions remains inadequately theorised and empirically interrogated. In particular, relatively little attention has been devoted to the institutional interface between INEC and security agencies during the same electoral cycle. This is consequential because the effectiveness of one institution can be constrained or enhanced by the effectiveness of another. INEC may possess sound electoral procedures but be unable to implement them where security agencies fail to secure electoral personnel and materials. Security agencies may deploy substantial personnel but achieve limited results where electoral logistics are inadequate, intelligence is poorly coordinated or institutional neutrality is questioned. Electoral violence therefore emerges not merely from the failure of one institution but potentially from weaknesses in the interaction among institutions.

A further gap concerns the measurement of effectiveness. Much of the recent literature uses qualitative documentary analysis to establish that institutions encountered problems. Such studies are valuable for identifying institutional weaknesses, but the concept of effectiveness is frequently used without sufficiently specifying its dimensions. This study treats institutional effectiveness as multidimensional, encompassing preventive capacity, operational responsiveness, neutrality, protection of electoral personnel and materials, logistical adequacy, interagency coordination, adherence to electoral rules and the ability to sustain public confidence. This conceptualisation makes it possible to distinguish institutional presence from institutional performance and institutional performance from institutional legitimacy.

Another important gap concerns the tendency to treat the 2023 General Elections as a single national experience. Although the election was national, electoral violence was spatially differentiated and institutional performance was unlikely to have been uniform across all locations. The existing state specific studies provide valuable contextual evidence, but their findings cannot automatically be generalised to the national level. Conversely, national studies frequently aggregate diverse electoral experiences and therefore risk concealing important variations in institutional effectiveness. This study occupies an intermediate analytical position by using the national electoral experience as the principal context while interrogating institutional performance across the different dimensions through which electoral violence and election management interacted.

The methodological pattern within the literature also reveals a significant gap. Recent scholarship is dominated by qualitative approaches based on secondary materials, while a smaller number of studies use surveys or interviews. Qualitative documentary research is appropriate for reconstructing institutional developments and identifying recurring patterns, but it is vulnerable to the limitations of source selection, retrospective interpretation and uneven reporting. Survey research can introduce measurable perceptions but may be geographically restricted. Interviews can provide institutional insight but may also be affected by respondent positioning

and retrospective rationalisation. The present study therefore treats methodological triangulation and critical interrogation of sources as essential to avoiding the reproduction of institutional claims without adequate scrutiny. The objectives is not simply to determine what previous studies have said about the 2023 elections but to compare their claims, identify points of convergence and divergence, and determine what their methodological choices allow them to establish.

The position of this study is consequently that electoral violence during the 2023 General Elections should be understood as both a political phenomenon and an institutional performance problem. Political competition, insecurity, ethnic mobilisation, vote buying and other drivers created conditions conducive to electoral violence, but the extent to which these conditions translated into actual disruption depended substantially on the capacity and conduct of election management and security institutions. The principal contribution of this research therefore lies in bringing INEC and security agencies into the same analytical frame. Rather than examining the institutions as separate actors, this study interrogates their complementary responsibilities, institutional weaknesses, operational constraints, coordination mechanisms and implications for electoral credibility. Such an approach moves the literature beyond the descriptive assertion that violence occurred despite institutional intervention and toward the more demanding question of why institutional intervention succeeded in some circumstances and proved inadequate in others.

The literature ultimately suggests that the central problem confronting Nigeria's electoral governance is not simply the existence of electoral violence, nor merely the inadequacy of security deployment or the organisational weaknesses of INEC. The deeper problem is the absence of a sufficiently integrated institutional capacity capable of translating formal electoral rules, technological innovations and security arrangements into predictable, impartial and effective electoral practice. This study therefore adds a distinct voice by arguing that the credibility of the 2023 General Elections cannot be adequately assessed through INEC's administrative performance or security agencies' conduct in isolation. Electoral credibility was produced through the interaction of election administration, security provision, institutional neutrality, technological implementation, logistical capacity and public confidence. Interrogating that interaction provides a more comprehensive explanation of why electoral violence persisted despite extensive institutional and technological investments and offers a stronger basis for understanding the reforms required to improve the management of future elections.

Conclusion

The study concludes that electoral violence during Nigeria’s 2023 General Elections was not merely a consequence of political competition, insecurity or ethnic mobilisation, but also reflected weaknesses in the effectiveness and coordination of institutions responsible for election management and electoral security. Previous studies largely examined INEC, security agencies, technology and the causes of electoral violence separately (Ogu & Abraham, 2023; Yusuf & Saminu, 2024; Madueke & Enyiazu, 2025; Ayobolu, 2025; Obani et al., 2025). This study differs by bringing INEC and security agencies into a single analytical framework and arguing that electoral credibility depends on the interaction between administrative capacity, security effectiveness, institutional neutrality, coordination and public trust.The study further establishes that security presence does not necessarily constitute security effectiveness, just as technological innovation does not

automatically guarantee electoral integrity. The persistence of violence despite security deployment and electoral technology demonstrates that institutional resources become meaningful only when supported by effective coordination, professional conduct, adequate logistics and accountability.

The central recommendation is therefore the establishment of a permanent and professionally coordinated electoral security framework linking INEC with relevant security agencies throughout the electoral cycle**.** Such a framework should provide continuous risk assessment, intelligence sharing, joint planning, protection of electoral personnel and materials, rapid response and strong accountability mechanisms. The study consequently contributes to the literature by shifting attention from isolated institutional weaknesses to the quality of interaction between election administration and electoral security**,** arguing that credible elections require coordinated, impartial and accountable institutions rather than merely more security personnel, laws or technology.

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