

Perception of University Undergraduates on Electoral Malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined perception of university undergraduates on electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of 680,144 university undergraduates in seven Federal and 11 state universities in Southwest, Nigeria as at the time of this study. The sample of the study consisted of 1600 respondents that were selected through the multi-stage sampling techniques. Questionnaire was the instrument used in the study with face and content validity procedures ensured. A reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained and this was considered reliable. The data generated for this study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean and percentages were used to answer the research questions while inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 was tested using ANOVA while t-test was used to test hypotheses 2 and 3. The result of the study revealed different forms of electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria and these include harassment of candidates' agents and voters, inflation of figures, ballot box snatching, political assassination, unauthorised announcements of election results, vote-buying, rigging of election results, fake printing of ballot papers, kidnapping during elections and underage voting. The study also revealed a moderate level of electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria. The finding of this study revealed that the perception of university undergraduates to electoral malpractice in Nigeria is not favourable. It was revealed that there was no significant difference in university undergraduates' perceptions of electoral malpractice based on religious affiliation, among others. It was concluded that the level of electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria was moderate and the university undergraduates have negative perception of electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria. The study recommended that, the electoral body, INEC, should be more transparent and impartial at every stage of the electioneering process to positively change the undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice.

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Introduction

The Nigerian Fourth Republic, which started on May 29, 1999, when the military handed over power to a democratically elected President, has been the most enduring Republic in the post-independence history of Nigeria (Oladeji & Ayiti, 2020; Oladeji, 2019). The democratic experience/practice in the Nigerian Fourth Republic has been unbroken for two decades and has witnessed six successive multiparty elections as well as peaceful transfer of political power from a defeated ruling political class/party to the opposition (Oladeji & Ayiti, 2020). The People's Democratic Party (PDP), which had been the dominant party in Nigeria for the first 16 years of the Fourth Republic, lost its grip on power in 2015 when its presidential candidate, the incumbent President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, lost the presidential election to the candidate of the newly formed political party, All Progressives Congress, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd), who, on May 29, 2015, took over power from President Goodluck Jonathan peacefully and handed over power of leadership. This was a watershed in the history of electoral politics and democracy in Nigeria as it was the first time an incumbent and ruling political party would lose and concede defeat in a presidential election in the country (Oladeji and Ayiti, 2020).

Despite this feat, the Nigerian democratic process remains nascent, has been fledging and is remarkably constrained by serious electoral flaws (Oladeji, 2019: 6). A critical aspect of the fledging and flawed democratic process in Nigeria since 1999 has a lot to do with perverse elections (Oladeji and Ayiti, 2020).

For an election to achieve its end, it must be genuine; it must reflect the freely expressed wishes of the electorates. Holding free, fair and credible elections, therefore, is important for a country to be regarded as fully democratic. Unfortunately, virtually everywhere in the world today, elections are marred by electoral fraud,

manipulation, and other electoral crimes (Birch and Carlson, 2012).

In the specific case of Nigeria, elections have become, to paraphrase Schedler (2002), the “menu of manipulation” (cited in Aluaigba, 2016: 137). Elections in Nigeria could be likened to ‘a Trojan horse’ as it has exhibited negative, positive, destructive, and progressive traits, harbouring the seeds of dissolution and decay as well as those of advancement and life (Oladeji and Ayiti, 2020). Consequently, scholars have demonstrated that outcomes of elections in Nigeria since 1999 have hardly reflected the wishes of voters due largely to an avalanche of electoral malpractice (Oladeji and Ayiti, 2020; Aluaigba, 2016, 2009; Bratton, 2008; Oddih, 2007; Suberu, 2007; Ezeani, 2005). That is, in Nigeria, ‘voting does not amount to choosing’ because electoral choices are made by political barons outside the orbit of the electoral norm, rules and procedure (Agbaje and Adejumbi, 2009). In such circumstances, “winners and losers have often been determined before the contest, and voters merely go through the charade of confirming choices already made” (Fawole, 2005).

Consequently, electoral malpractice has become the norm rather than the exception and have dominated Nigeria’s electoral processes and politics, especially since 1999 when the country re-democratised. Electoral malpractice presupposes “an instance where acceptable norms and principles that confer credibility on elections are desecrated; and in their place duplicity, falsehood, manipulation, and cheating by any means are deployed to sway the outcome of elections” (Aluaigba, 2016).

Electoral malpractice is anathema to ‘electoral integrity’, which “refers to international standards and global norms governing the appropriate conduct of elections” (Norris, 2019:7). While free and fair elections, conforming with international standards of electoral integrity and ensuring peaceful transfer of political power, could enhance public assessment of democratic performance in general (Linde & Ekman, 2003), conversely, electoral malpractice could erode citizens’ perceptions of the legitimacy of elections as a peaceful means of gaining or transferring power and could exacerbate political apathy or political grievances, which may fuel popular protest that is capable of degenerating into mass demonstrations. In other words, electoral malpractice does not just affect the outcomes of electoral contests, but also how the entire electoral and/or democratic processes are perceived by citizens. What can be gleaned from the foregoing is that electoral malpractice does shape political perception.

Consequently, the current study sought to explore the socialization effects of elections in environments with a notorious history of electoral malpractice like Nigeria. While scholars have researched elections for years, the socialization effects of elections, especially citizens’ perceptions to electoral malpractice, have started getting systematic attention recently (Birch, 2010, 2011; Coffè, 2017; Flesken & Hartl, 2018; Norris, 2019; Mochtak, et al., 2021). Before now, it is often argued that ordinary citizens cannot evaluate elections with any precision due to their insufficient knowledge, resulting in more sceptical and pessimistic assessments (Norris, Garnett, & Grömping, 2017; Mochtak, et al., 2021). However, “how citizens perceive the integrity of an election and how the occurrence of an election affects these perceptions” (Mochtak, et al., 2021: 1424) cannot be ignored because they represent important evidence on the quality of democracy and the electoral process (Coffè, 2017; Norris, Garnett and Grömping, 2017). That is, it is important to examine how both voters’ political preferences and personal characteristics are potentially responsible for the perception of electoral malpractice over the electoral cycle. Consequently, it is against this background that the current study examined the perception of university undergraduates towards electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria.

The empirical studies carried out included the study of Apat (2011), who investigated violence and the electoral process in Nigeria: A case study of the 2007 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State. The study examined the prevalence of electoral violence in rural and urban areas of Plateau State and factors responsible for the outbreak of violence in the 2007 gubernatorial elections in rural and urban areas of Plateau State. The researcher used the group theory as its theoretical framework because of the group and individual interest used in achieving political ambitions. Data for the research were collected from primary and secondary sources. Relevant information gathered from primary sources involved the use of structured questionnaires and oral interviews among the politicians. The data from primary and oral interviews were analysed using frequency tables and percentages. The analysis of the result shows that; ethnoreligious consideration, lack of political will by the government in implementing committee recommendations have impacted negatively on the electoral process in rural areas than urban areas in the 2007 gubernatorial elections in Plateau State.

A study was carried out by Almond (2015) on comparative politics today: A world view. The study aimed at ascertaining the perception of male and female undergraduates towards the electoral processes in Nigeria. Descriptive research of survey type was adopted in the study. The population of the study comprised all eligible undergraduate voters for the 2015 elections in Nigeria. A total number of 500 voters were used for the study as a sample; questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to provide answers to the research questions and the hypotheses were tested using Chi-square statistics at a 0.05 level of significance. The study showed that male undergraduates are more involved in electoral processes than female undergraduates. This was because elections in Nigeria involved more males than females. This study is related to the present study in that they both involve descriptive research of survey type

and they both examined the electoral processes in Nigeria. The difference between the previous study and the present one is that the previous study focused on electoral processes in Nigeria while the present study is on electoral malpractice in South-West, Nigeria.

Agbor (2019) carried out a study on religion as a determinant of voter behaviour: an analysis of the relation between religious inclination and voting pattern in Cross River State, Nigeria. Religion and politics have come to be inseparable in man's quest for political power. In some societies, religion has been exploited to promote ascendancy to state power. This study assessed the relationship between religion and voters' behaviour in Cross River State, Nigeria and investigated whether religious consideration influenced the voting direction of electorates in 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and segregated Pentecostalism in Nigeria's religious behaviour justifies this study. The research hypothesised that religious inclination tends not to have a significant effect on the voting pattern in Cross River State. Data was collected through a questionnaire from Christian churches and mosques in five locations in the state. A respondent's sample size of 1,000 was got from the five locations covering the three senatorial districts. Data generated were analysed with frequency count, percentages and bar charts. The results showed that respondents voted along religious lines in 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections. Factors such as adherence to religious principles, pressure from religious superiors, denominational considerations accentuated this behaviour.

Additionally, Mikidadi (2017) examined the influence of religion on voters' perception towards elections in Tanzania following an observed trend of having a great proportion of registered voters who did not vote in the General Elections in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. The study is aimed at assessing the voters' religion towards elections and perception of the importance of participating in elections in Morogoro Municipality, an electoral constituent that recorded voters' turnout of 34.6% below the national turnout of 42.8% in 2010 General Elections. A cross-sectional study design and multistage sampling techniques were employed; data were collected using a questionnaire through the Computer Aided Personal Interviewing [CAPI] platform from a proportionate number of male and female respondents from four randomly selected wards from Morogoro urban in the Morogoro region. A total of 14 Likert scale statements were used to assess the attitudes of voters towards elections. Cross tabulation was employed to associate religion with other variables. The study's findings showed that the overall perception based on religion towards elections was negative with 60% of the respondents scoring less than 44.2 points out of 70, whereas 40% had a positive attitude whereby they scored 44.2 points and above. From the foregoing, this study, perception of university undergraduates towards electoral malpractice in SouthWest Nigeria is a research that seeks to examine the attitudes and beliefs of university undergraduates in the Southwest region of Nigeria towards electoral malpractice. The research will aim to identify the forms of malpractices that influence undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice and to what extent these perceptions affect their voting behaviour. The research will explore the role that gender, religion, and location play in determining how undergraduates perceive electoral malpractice and how these factors shape their voting behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that Nigeria had one of the brightest prospects for democratic success in Africa, two decades of electoral democracy have been disappointing and in crises in the country (Oladeji, et al., Forthcoming). This crisis stems from electoral malpractice that have been entrenched in the country. It should, however, be mentioned that electoral malpractice has been on the increase almost everywhere (Birch & Carlson, 2012; Vickery & Shein, 2012; Mauk, 2018). While elections ought to make democracy 'work', in many contexts, they have failed to embody democratic ideals because they are affected by electoral malpractice (Birch, 2012). Indeed, electoral fraud and malpractice provide an unfortunate common ground that transcends culture, religion, and geography among contemporary democracies (Vickery and Shein, 2012). Indeed, electoral malpractice is problematic and has compromised regimes' political legitimacy. That is, while electoral malpractice compromises the basic rules of the democratic process, citizens often react to them with the withdrawal of political legitimacy.

Consequently, "the quality of elections has come under increased scrutiny in recent decades" (Dawson, 2020: 1). As a result, there has emerged an avalanche body of literature on elections and electoral integrity and malpractice (Monila & Lehoucq, 1999; Lehoucq, 2003; Birch, 2010, 2011, 2012; Birch & Carlson, 2012; Vickery & Shein, 2012; Norris, et al., 2017; Norris, 2019; Dawson, 2020; Mauk, 2018, 2020; Mochtak, et al., 2021). Previous research efforts have been able to identify many structural factors such as electoral institutions (oversight bodies, electoral rules, and independence of judiciary and media) (Monila & Lehoucq, 1999; Lehoucq & Kolev, 2015) and other societal factors like economic inequality, ethnolinguistic polarization, and income levels (Lehoucq, 2003; Ziblatt, 2009; Bishop & Hoeffler, 2016) are associated with restrictions in the integrity of the electoral process and that obstruct democratization (Dawson, 2020).

As argued earlier, the socialization impacts of elections or electoral malpractice have only recently gained academic inquiry. The common denominator of this literature is that citizens' perception of electoral malpractice

affects their political attitudes towards the political system and democratic process. That is, the literature has concentrated on how citizens' perceptions of electoral integrity or electoral malpractice affect their political knowledge and attitudes (Norris, 2002, 2004, 2014, 2019; Birch, 2010, 2011; Norris, 2019; Mochtak, et al., 2021). Studies have found that the perceptions of elections' fairness affect the levels of regime support or trust in government (Seligson, 2002; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Bowler & Karp, 2004) as well as the propensity to vote (Finkel, 1985; Norris, 2002).

However, these studies have not explored the socialization effects of electoral malpractice on youths, especially university undergraduates in "environments with notoriously low trust in political institutions and a high electoral stake" (Mochtak, et al., 2021) such as Nigeria. Little or no attention has been paid to its socialization effects on university undergraduates in the country. Also, indeed, little attention has been paid to how the involvement of youths, especially university undergraduates, in electoral malpractice is often influenced by wrong perception, and negative attitude through religious indoctrination, gender biases, and location (Jung, et al 2011; Yamamoto, 2016). Consequently, to fill the identified gap in literature, this study focused on the problem of electoral malpractice and how it shaped political perceptions, and voting behaviour of university undergraduates in Southwest, Nigeria

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the perception of university undergraduates towards electoral malpractice in South West, Nigeria. Specifically, the study

1. examined the forms of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria;
2. examined the level of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria;
3. investigated university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria;

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the forms of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria?
3. What is university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on location.
3. There is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on religious affiliation.

Research Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design of a survey type. The population of this study consisted of all university undergraduates (male and female) in all Federal and State universities in SouthWest, Nigeria. There are 680,144 university undergraduates in Seven Federal and 11 state universities in Southwest, Nigeria as at the time of this study. The sample of the study consisted of 1600 respondents selected through the multi-stage sampling technique. At stage one, simple random sampling technique was used to select four states out of the six states in Southwest, Nigeria. The selected states include Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo States. At the second stage, stratified random sampling technique was used to select two universities (one federal and one state) from each of the selected states in Southwest, Nigeria. At the third stage, simple random sampling technique was employed to select three faculties in each of the eight universities selected for the research. In the last stage, stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents from each of the selected universities using gender (male or female) as the basis for stratification. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire designed by the researchers titled 'Perception of University Undergraduates Towards Electoral Malpractice in SouthWest Nigeria Questionnaire'. To ensure the validity of the instrument, face and content validity procedures were ensured. The data collected were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha method through SPSS. A reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained and this was considered reliable. The data generated for this study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean and percentages were used to answer the research questions while inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses. Specifically, hypotheses 1 was tested using ANOVA while t-test was used to test hypotheses 2 and 3 at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the forms of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria?

In answering the research question, descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to illustrate the responses to items 1-10 in section B of the questionnaire. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Counts of the Forms of Electoral Malpractice in South West, Nigeria

S/N	Forms of Electoral Malpractice	N	Agree		Disagree	
			F	%	f	%
1.	Harassment of Candidates' Agents and Voters	1600	1533	95.8	67	4.2
2.	Inflation of Figures	1600	1481	92.6	119	7.4
3.	Ballot Box Snatching	1600	1362	85.1	238	14.9
4.	Political Assassination	1600	1287	80.4	313	19.6
5.	Unauthorised Announcement of Election Results	1600	1154	72.1	446	27.9
6.	Vote Buying	1600	1064	66.5	536	33.5
7.	Rigging of Election Results	1600	1019	63.7	581	36.3
8.	Fake Printing of Ballot Paper	1600	893	55.8	707	44.2
9.	Kidnapping during Election	1600	856	53.5	744	46.5
10.	Underage Voting	1600	447	27.9	1153	72.1

The result presented in Table 1 revealed that 95.8% of the respondents agreed that electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria is characterised by harassment of candidates' agents and voters. Also, 92.6% agreed that inflation of figures is one of the malpractice of election in South West, Nigeria, while 85.1% believed that snatching of the ballot box is also common malpractice in elections in SouthWest, Nigeria. In addition, the table revealed that electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria is characterised by political assassination, unauthorised announcement of results, vote-buying, rigging of results, fake printing of ballot papers, underage voting and kidnapping during elections.

Research Question 2: What is the level of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria?

In answering research question 2, mean scores and standard deviation were used to illustrate the responses to items 1-10 in section C of the questionnaire. The result is presented in Table 4.2 and Figure ii.

Table 2: Mean Rating on the Level of Electoral Malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria

S/N	Level of Electoral Malpractice	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1	Harassment of Candidates' Agents and Voters	1600	2.22	1.675	High
2	Inflation of Figures	1600	2.10	1.234	High
3	Ballot Box Snatching	1600	2.04	1.183	High
4	Political Assassination	1600	1.95	1.305	Moderate
5	Unauthorised Announcement of Election Results	1600	1.77	1.254	Moderate
6	Vote Buying	1600	1.74	1.131	Moderate
7	Rigging of Election Results	1600	1.65	1.227	Moderate
8	Fake Printing of Ballot Paper	1600	1.45	1.572	Low
9	Kidnapping during Election	1600	1.19	1.175	Low
10	Underage Voting	1600	0.82	1.253	Low

Mean Cut-Off = 1.50-Grand mean = 1.7

The result presented in Table 2 showed the level of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria. Based on the mean cut-off, the mean range, that is, ≤ 1.50 indicated that the respondents agreed that the three-item occurred at a low level, while the mean ranging from 1.50-1.99 indicated that the respondents agreed that four items occurred at a moderate level. Also, the mean ranged from 2.00 and above which indicated that the respondents agreed that three items occurred at a high level. Thus, from the analysis, the level of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria can be adjudged to be moderate. The result is further depicted in Figure ii below.

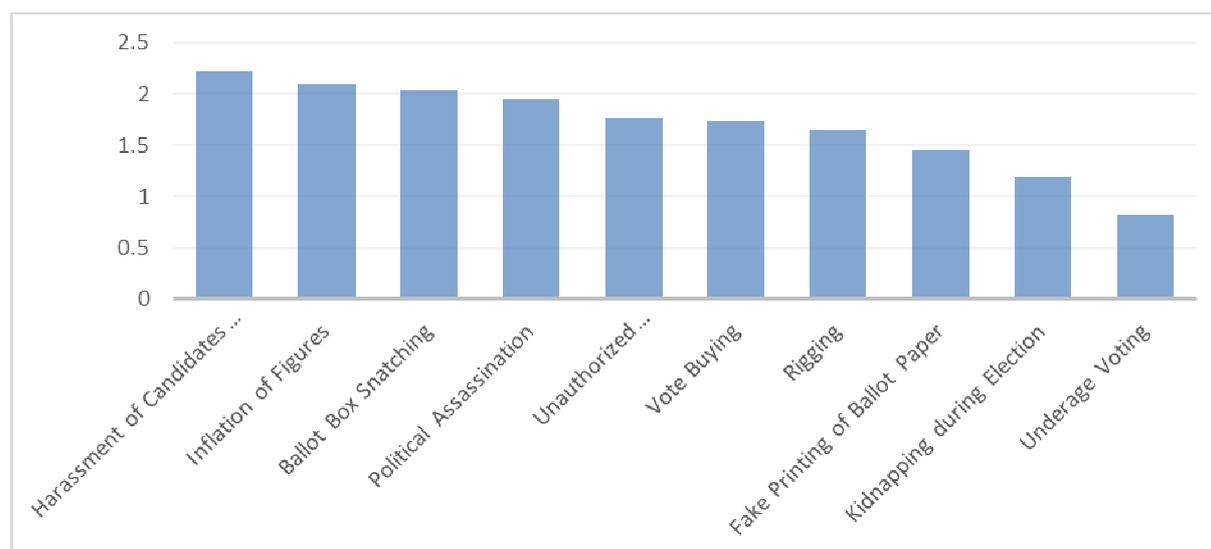


Fig. ii: Bar chart showing the Level of Electoral Malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria

Research Question 3: What is university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria?

To answer this research question 3, frequency counts and percentages were used to illustrate responses to items 1-10 in section C of questionnaire. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage showing the Response of University Undergraduates' Perception of Electoral Malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria

S/N	University Undergraduates' Perception of Electoral Malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria	N	Agree		Disagree	
			f	%	F	%
1.	There is no election process without electoral malpractice in Nigeria.	1600	960	60	640	40
2.	Electoral officials contribute to electoral malpractice in Nigeria	1600	1396	87.3	204	12.7
3.	Power of incumbencies contributes to electoral malpractice in Nigeria	1600	1452	90.8	148	9.2
4.	The use of card reader contributes to electoral malpractice in Nigeria	1600	1436	89.8	164	10.2
5.	Delay of election results is a style of electoral malpractice	1600	1340	83.8	260	16.2
6.	Bribing of voters is a process of electoral malpractice in Nigeria	1600	1160	72.5	440	27.5
7.	The involvement of military personnel during elections contributes to electoral malpractice in Nigeria	1600	1236	77.3	364	22.7
8.	Electoral process in Nigeria is not free and fair	1600	1244	77.8	356	22.2
9.	Cancellation of election results is common in Nigeria's electoral process	1600	1152	72	448	28
10.	Electorates are usually intimidated during voting in Nigeria	1600	1064	66.5	536	33.5

The result in Table 3 showed university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria. The result showed that out of 1600 respondents sampled, 60% agreed that there is no election process in Nigeria without electoral malpractice. Also, 87.3% of the respondents agreed that electoral officials contribute to electoral malpractice in Nigeria while 90.8% of the respondents agreed that the power of incumbencies has lots of things to do with electoral malpractice in Nigeria. In addition, the use of card readers contributes significantly to electoral malpractice in Nigeria as agreed upon by 89.8% of the respondents, while the delay in election results was agreed by 83.8% of the respondents to be a strategy to manipulate results. Similarly, 77.3% agreed that the involvement of military personnel during elections contributes to electoral malpractice in Nigeria while 77.8% of the respondents believed that there has never been a free and fair election electoral process in Nigeria. Finally, 66.5% of the respondents agreed that the electorates are oftentimes intimidated during voting in Nigeria. The responses from the above results showed that university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice in Nigeria is not favourable.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on religious affiliation.

To test the hypothesis, scores relating to undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on religious affiliation were computed and subjected to statistical analysis of ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA showing differences in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on religious affiliation.

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	261.954	2	130.977		
Within Groups	62825.046	1597	39.339	1.475	.230
Total	63087.000	1599			

P>0.05 (Not Significant)

The results in Table 4 show that $F_{2, 1597} = 1.475$; $p = 0.230 > 0.05$. Since the *P-value* is greater than 0.05, thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on religious affiliation. That means religious affiliation does not influence the perception of undergraduates towards electoral malpractice. The type of religion that undergraduates practice does not influence their perception of electoral malpractice.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on gender.

To test the hypothesis, scores relating to university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on gender were computed and subjected to statistical analysis involving t-test statistics at a 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: t-test Analysis of university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on gender

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t_{cal}</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Male	748	30.97	5.763			
Female	852	30.51	6.699	1598	1.482	0.139

P>0.05 (Not Significant)

Table 5 showed that $t_{cal} = 1.482$; $p = 0.139 > 0.05$. Since the *P-value* is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on gender. This means that the perception of undergraduates could not be determined based on gender. The type of gender of undergraduates does not determine their perception of electoral malpractice.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on location.

To test the hypothesis, scores relating to university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on the location of residence were computed and subjected to statistical analysis involving t-test statistics at a 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: t-test Analysis of university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on location

<i>Location</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t_{cal}</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Rural	432	29.77	6.121			
Urban	1168	31.08	6.305	1598	1.856	0.677

P>0.05 (Not Significant)

Information contained in Table 6 showed that $t_{cal} = 1.856$; $p = 0.677 > 0.05$. Since the *P-value* is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on location. That is the location of undergraduates does not influence or determine their perception towards electoral malpractice, there is no relationship between the perception of undergraduates and their location towards electoral malpractice.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the study revealed the forms of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria and these include harassment of candidates' agents and voters, inflation of figures, ballot box snatching, political assassination, unauthorised announcement of election results, vote-buying, rigging of election results, fake printing of ballot papers, kidnapping during elections and underage voting. The implications of persistence of electoral malpractice are mainly to frustrate the democratic aspiration of citizens who have voted or would have voted into office someone other than the rigged individual (Ibrahim, 2007).

This finding corroborated the view of Muhammed, et. al. (2018) who identified compilation of fictitious

names on voters registers, an illegal compilation of separate voters' list, abuses of the voter registration revised exercise, illegal printing of voters cards, illegal possession of ballot boxes, stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers, falsification of election results, illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers, under-aged voting, illegal printing of the forms used for collation and declaration of election results, deliberate refusal to supply election materials to certain areas, announcing results in places where no elections were held, unauthorised announcement of election results, harassment of candidates, agents and voters, change of list of electoral officials, ballot box-switching and inflation of figures as forms of electoral malpractice, etc.

The study also revealed a moderate level of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria. Ballot snatching during the election, vote-buying, rigging of election results, political assassination during the election, harassment of candidates, agents and voters, the prevalence of underage voting, unauthorised announcement of election results, ballot box-switching and inflation of figures, kidnapping during elections were moderate. The study observed that the majority of respondents, particularly, from the urban locations agreed that electoral malpractice was not as high as obtained in some rural locations where security measures were weak.

The finding of this study revealed that the perception of university undergraduates to electoral malpractice in Nigeria is not favourable. They perceived that there is no election process in Nigeria without electoral malpractice; electoral officials contribute to electoral malpractice in Nigeria, the power of incumbencies has lots of things to do with electoral malpractice. Also, their perceptions are against the use of card readers because they perceived that card readers contribute significantly to electoral malpractice and the involvement of military personnel during elections contributes to electoral malpractice in Nigeria. Finally, universities undergraduates perceived that there has never been a free and fair election and transparent electoral process in Nigeria. The implication of this is that university undergraduates see electoral malpractice in Nigeria as a normal way of achieving victory in the electoral process.

In the study, it was revealed that there was no significant difference in university undergraduates' perceptions of electoral malpractice based on religious affiliation. Thus, the university undergraduates' perceptions towards electoral malpractice are not different irrespective of their religious affiliations in Nigeria. This finding is in line with that of Agbor (2019) that religious inclination tends not to have a significant influence on the voting pattern.

The finding of the study also revealed that there was no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on gender. This implies that on a gender basis, university undergraduates have the same perception towards electoral malpractice. Hence, no difference in their involvement in the electoral process because of the same perception they have. The finding disagreed with that of Almond (2015) that male undergraduates are more involved in electoral processes than female undergraduates because they perceive that elections in Nigeria involved more males than females.

In the study, the finding revealed that there was no significant difference in university undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice based on location. That is, the electorates in urban and rural areas have the same perception towards electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria. The finding disagreed with the work of Apat (2011) that ethnoreligious consideration and lack of political will by the government in implementing committee's recommendations, negatively affect the electoral process in rural areas than urban areas in Plateau State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the level of electoral malpractice in Southwest, Nigeria was moderate. Furthermore, it was also concluded that university undergraduates have negative perception of electoral malpractice in SouthWest, Nigeria. The study recommended that, the electoral body INEC should be more transparent and impartial at every stage of the electioneering process to positively change the undergraduates' perception of electoral malpractice. Also, INEC should intensify efforts in sensitising the undergraduates irrespective of their gender, location and religion.

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