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## **Media Education on Nigeria’s Electoral Laws**

**Okechukwu Chukwuma, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, St. Augustine University of Tanzania.

### **Abstract**

The study investigated media education on Nigeria’s electoral Act amendments. The survey research design was used to carry out the study. The residents of Enugu State were used as the study’s population from where a sample size of 384 was determined using the Creative Research Systems online sample size calculator. The purposive sampling technique was used to select only those who were exposed to NTA’s political contents after the 2022 amended electoral bill was signed to law. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study and 384 copies were administered in line with the determined sample size.. The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, and presented in tables. Findings revealed that NTA has significantly educated the respondents on the amendment that allows the use of technology in the conduct of elections; NTA has highly educated the respondents concerning the electoral Act amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties; the extent of NTA’s promotion of public education on the publication of dates for elections by INEC is low; and finally, the extent of NTA’s promotion of public education on overvoting is low. In line with the findings, the study recommended that NTA should intensify efforts in the promotion of public education on the publication of dates for elections by the election management body; NTA should also give adequate attention to effective promotion of public education on overvoting; Further studies should focus on print media to establish print media efforts in this regard.

### **Introduction**

Prior to the 2023 general elections, there were electoral reforms aimed at improving the conduct of elections in Nigeria. The current electoral law which was referred to as the Electoral Act Amendment Bill 2022 initiated by honourable Francis Waive from the House of Representatives(before it became law), was passed by the National Assembly and signed into law by President Muhammed Buhari on Friday 25th February, 2022, after withholding assent because of some contentious issues. The amended Electoral Act 2022, repeals the Electoral Act No. 6, 2010 (Farauk, 2024).

The Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, while speaking during a voter education training workshop organized by the Commission in Abuja, asserted that the amended electoral Act is taking effect at a time Nigeria

desperately needed such law due to the fact that the country was preparing for the 2023 general elections and as such needed some new provisions to be included in the Act for effective conduct of the general elections. The amended Act captured certain specific and innovative provisions which were believed to make the electoral law and process more effective and credible (Okoli, 2023).

The new inclusions in the amended electoral Act were aimed at improving the conduct of elections in the country and making INEC truly independent. In an effort to contribute to voter education towards a successful 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the Director-General of the National Orientation Agency, Dr. GarbaAbari, stated that the electoral law of Nigeria has been amended by the National Assembly and signed into law by President Muhammed Buhari. One fantastic inclusion in the amended Act is the use of technology in the conduct of elections. Sections 41, 47 and 50 of the Act provide for the use of electronic devices such as smart card readers, electronic voting machines and other technological devices in the conduct of elections in Nigeria thereby improving the processes of conduction elections in the country (Hassan, 2024). Specifically, the Act provides for the use of BVAS and the electronic transmission of results to INEC's Result (IRev) Portal. Another inclusion was section 3 which grants financial autonomy to INEC for the sake of becoming truly independent financially. More so, section 28 of the amended Act provides that INEC shall not later than 360 days before the day of election publish a notice for the date of elections in the States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This is an amendment of the old Act that stipulated 90 days notice (Njoku, 2024).

Furthermore, section 31 of the amended Act changed the number of days for political parties to submit the list of their candidates to contest for elections from not less than 60 days to the election date to 180 days. This inclusion aimed at encouraging early submission of nominated candidates for elections by political parties. Regarding the timeframe for campaigns by political parties, the amended Act (as captured in section 94) changed the duration from 150 days prior to the day of election and end 24 hours to the day of election as against the repealed electoral law which provided 90 days before the election day and end 24 hours before the day. Section 9 of the amended Act provides for both manual and electronic storage of voter register as against the repealed Act that provides for only manual storage of voter register. On the issue of overvoting as provided in section 51 of the amended Act, overvoting now means where votes cast at a polling unit exceeds the number of accredited voters and not the number of registered voters as provided in the former Act.

As stated, the amended electoral law brought significant changes especial in the area of the use of technology for elections. Among the changes brought by the current electoral law is the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation Systems (BVAS). This is an electronic device designed to read Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and authenticate voters by using their fingerprints. The usage of BVAS has stopped the use of incident forms in times of voter accreditation for voting on the days of elections. According to the former INEC's National Commissioner and Chairman of information and voter education, Mr. Festus Okoye, "the BVAS is intended to achieve two objectives-firstly, to verify the genuineness of the PVCs and fingerprints or facial authentication of voters during the period of voter accreditation. The second reason for the introduction of the BVAS was to replace the Zpad for uploading the election

results from the various polling units to INEC's Results Viewing Portal (IRev) on the day of the election in real time." The BIVAS is also used as Voter Enrollment Device in times of voter registration (Eke, 2024).

In its voter education efforts for the success of the 2023 general elections, the Executive Director of a non-governmental Organization referred to as Platform for Youth and Women Development (PAYW-DEV), stated that while the organization did general voter education to raise awareness on voting including how to properly thumbprint to prevent invalid votes as well as mobilise public participation in the 2023 general elections, particular efforts were made to education the people of the inclusion of BVAS and IReV in elections. This was because of their newness in conducting Nigeria's elections. And of course, there was needed for people to be properly briefed so as to ensure they are up-to-date of how the elections will be conducted (Okafor, 2024).

To effectively educate the public on electoral amendments, the media is very expedient. The media inform citizens accurately about the amendments on electoral processes: dates and locations of polling stations, times when polling stations will be opened, documents needed to vote, nature of the election depending on the electoral system. The media inform citizens on amendments on election arrangements especially secrecy of the ballot. The media has a responsibility to explain the amendments on procedures for voting and the ballot paper. More so, the media must inform citizens about the candidates & parties contesting elections, the manifestoes or programmes of the parties that are contesting the election, the extent of participation in the elections of those parties-i.e. is a party contesting at all levels-national and provincial etc (Kupe, 2018).

Electoral Act amendment education via the media is to make information on the amendments available and accessible to all constituents using various media such as television, radio, newspapers, new media, etc, with the ultimate aim of improving the citizens' level of awareness on the electoral Act amendments. The media platforms are aimed at achieving coverage of all the electorate. Effective electoral Act amendment education campaign starts early and continuous through the electoral process. Eligible voters should be informed about any amendments on voter registration process so they have ample time to register. They should be told how and where to check their respective voter lists to ensure that their entries are correct. Voters should be informed on: the type of election to be held, the polling data and location, when the polling station will be opened and how to cast their ballots. These messages on amendments should be communicated to the people through different media (Agyiri, 2012).

## **Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, Nigeria's electoral law has continued to be amended to meet the current electoral realities. The most recent amendment to the country's electoral law was done by the National Assembly in 2022 to improve the conduct of the 2023 general elections. The amendment of the electoral Act became necessary because of some of the serious weaknesses identified in the Act. The National Assembly took up the challenge of addressing such weaknesses through the amendments.

One fantastic inclusion in the amended Act is the use of technology in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Sections 41, 47 and 50 of the Act provide for the use of electronic devices such as smart card readers, electronic voting machines and other technological devices in the conduct of elections thereby improving the processes of conduction elections in the country (Hassan, 2024). Specifically, the Act provides for the use of BVAS and the electronic transmission of results to INEC's Result (IRev) Portal. Another inclusion was section 28 which grants financial autonomy to INEC for the sake of becoming truly independent financially. More so, section 28 of the amended Act provides that INEC shall not later than 360 days before the day of election publish a notice for the date of elections in the States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This is an amendment of the old Act that stipulated 90 days notice (Njoku, 2024).

Proper communication of these amendments to the public is very fundamental for an effective implementation of the provisions for the successful conduct of elections in Nigeria. To actualize this, the media is very critical. As a social responsibility function, the media is expected to clearly bring these amendments to the attention of the public. One media establishment which has the required national coverage to communicate the amendments to the Nigerian residents, is the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). The fact that this is a federal government owned television station makes it even more compelling for it to make the Nigerian people updated of amendments of the electoral Act for effective citizens' participation in elections. This is the basis of this study-to ascertain the extent to which NTA has educated Nigerians on the 2022 amendments of the country's electoral Act.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The study was guided by four specific objectives which were to;

1. Determine the extent to which NTA educated Enugu State residents regarding the amendment on the use of technology in the conduct of elections.
2. Find out the extent to which NTA educated Enugu State residents concerning the amendments on the duration of campaigns by political parties.
3. Ascertain the extent to which NTA educated Enugu State residents regarding the amendment on the publication of dates for elections by INEC.
4. Determine the extent to which NTA educated Enugu State residents regarding amendment on the issue of overvoting.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent has NTA educated Enugu State residents regarding the amendment on the use of technology in the conduct of elections?
2. What is the extent to which NTA has educated Enugu State residents concerning the amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties?
3. To what extent has NTA educated Enugu State residents regarding the amendment on the publication of dates for elections by INEC?

4. What is the extent to which NTA has educated Enugu State residents regarding amendment on the issue of overvoting?

## **Significance of the Study**

The study will be relevant to the Nigerian Television Authority as it will help the operators of the television to establish the extent to which they have been able to facilitate public education on the amendments of the country's electoral Act. This implies that the study will be a feedback mechanism to the television station on its efforts to raise public awareness on electoral Act amendments.

The study will also be relevant to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) because it will enable the Commission to know the extent to which the amended portions of the electoral Act have been communicated to the public by the media and consequently intensify collaborations with the media to improve publicity/ public education on the amended electoral Act.

Researchers who intend to explore this area of knowledge will definitely find this study relevant because it will be a valuable literature that can be a significant addition to the quality literature to be reviewed. It shall provide current empirical evidence that shall be useful to further research in this area of knowledge.

The study will also be relevant to institutions of higher learning (such as universities, polytechnics and research centres/ institutes) in the teaching and learning of political communication/ media and politics.

## **Scope of the Study/Delimitation**

Thematically, the study investigated media education of the citizens on the amendments of Nigeria's electoral Act. This means that the research focused on exploring how the media has so far educated the public on sections of the Act that have been amended to strengthen Nigeria's electoral system. Geographically, the study covered residents of Enugu State of Nigeria. This implies that the study was limited to only those residing in Enugu State in South-Eastern Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

Proper communication of these amendments to the public is very fundamental for an effective implementation of the provisions for the successful conduct of elections in Nigeria. To actualize this, the media is very critical. As a social responsibility function, the media is expected to clearly bring these amendments to the attention of the public. The aim is to herald effective public education and compliance/ participation in electoral engagements in the country.

Electoral Act amendment education via the media is to make information on the amendments available and accessible to all constituents using various media such as television, radio, newspapers, new media, etc, with the ultimate aim of improving the citizens' level of awareness on the electoral Act amendments. The media platforms are aimed at achieving coverage of all the electorate. Effective electoral Act amendment education campaign starts early and continuous

through the electoral process. Eligible voters should be informed about any amendments on voter registration process so they have ample time to register. They should be told how and where to check their respective voter lists to ensure that their entries are correct. Voters should be informed on: the type of election to be held, the polling data and location, when the polling station will be opened and how to cast their ballots (Agyiri, 2012).

After the electoral body has established the messages on the amended electoral Act and has determined the most pressing topic areas, the next is to decide on how to provide the information to the public. Several media tools for presenting information include fact sheets, press releases, brochures, videos, frequently asked questions, maps, internet platforms as well as the traditional media. For all of these tools, the electoral body might consider ensuring that the language is simple, direct, and easy to follow. The agency might use active, not passive, language and could avoid bureaucratic terminology that those outside the field of election administration might not understand. The United States Election Assistance Commission recommends convening a small group that is representative of the people who will use these materials to review drafts and provide feedback about their usability. An electoral body might develop the following materials for dissemination through various communication platforms: Registration lookup, polling place locator, election calendar, voter's guide, sample ballots, information kits, historical data, etc(United State Election Assistance Commission, 2020).

Media educates through the transmission of information on the electoral Act amendments. This might be through direct negotiation with Election Management Bodies and NGOs for broadcast of electoral Act amendments educational materials. It also happens indirectly. For example, when media report on an electoral amendment, details such as the location of voting sites, the necessity of voter registration, how the count will be conducted, and so forth, may be provided to the audience. This is one reason it is very important that an EMB communicates frequently with all media, providing them with the necessary facts and figures to ensure accurate reporting of the amended electoral Act (McFaul, 2005; Ahang, 2021).

The electoral management body cannot effectively communicate its messages on amendments to the people without the mass media and other communication platforms. While the body designs the message, the media provides the channel through which the message is disseminated. There are various electoral Act amendment awareness information that should be supported, some would need to be improved on, while some would need to be altered to suit the changing times and peculiar settings. For example, the focus is shifting from building democracy to sustaining it. And as the process gains ground in Nigeria, attention needs also to be paid to new/first time voters who have come of age during the subsisting democratic dispensation. These are factors that determine the direction and message of the public/mass education programme that would create the necessary awareness and participation among the people using various media such as radio, television, the internet, posters, rallies and other significant channels of communication (Ezechinyere, 2014).

Media also play an important analytical role, which enhances their ability to play their other roles, as watchdogs, forums for debate, and so on. For example, if media simply re-post or rebroadcast an EMB press release, transmission of information to the electorate may still warrant

useful, but lacking in scope and context. Without analysis of the press release in relation to on the ground events, results, or opposing opinions, for example, the information received by the media audience is one-dimensional. In ensuring that the public has the level of informational detail required to make informed choices or action, media utilize various tools of analysis. These include: Opinion polls; Research and scrutiny of policies, records and reports; Investigative journalism; Use of expert input and opinion; Assess community needs and opinions; as well as Measure candidates/parties deliveries against promises (McFaul, 2005; Ahang, 2021).

Efforts toward electoral awareness and participation as well as electoral Act amendments education involve the use of best available media and other communication platforms, information, and education technologies and methodologies. Practice rather than prescription becomes the norm. As a result, the effort is driven by a commitment to an informed and invigorated electorate rather than to a set of readily discernible principles. This has made it possible for each national election enterprise to reconsider the important themes, methods, educational practice, available resources, and domestic limitations that govern not only the general voter and civic education programmes that might repeat from one year to the next, but also the specific programme necessary for each election, referendum, or plebiscite (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2016).

INEC's strategic programme of action in raising electoral awareness and participation including amendments in the electoral Act, focuses among others on public enlightenment with emphasis on the deployment of various media platforms such as radio, television, newspapers, erection of bill boards, printing of handbills and posters, as well as dissemination of messages through SMS. The commission noted in its report that it undertook elaborate public enlightenment and voter education programme before the elections through the print and electronic media. Bill boards were strategically located throughout the country as part of the programme. In addition, the Commission maintained that its public enlightenment programme, 'INEC Half Hour', on private and government-owned television networks was strengthened both in content and form to function as a major voter enlightenment platform. This was in addition to the Electoral Magazine; an in-house periodical, the daily Bulletin, as well as the Commission's website (Orji, 2014).

More so, the Commission reported that its voter enlightenment programme got an unprecedented boost through the utilization of conventional public education strategies (such as jingles, drama, sketches, advertisements, commentaries, sponsored editorials, posters, handbills, stickers, face-caps, messages-bearing T-shirts and wrist bands) and non-formal channels (such as town criers, staging of live dramas, public enlightenment tours, engagement with community-based organizations, opinion leaders). The message contents of INEC's public enlightenment programme focus on voter registration procedures, the accreditation and voting process, responsibilities of political parties, rights, duties and obligations of voters as well as anti-violence campaigns. The messages also highlight the locations of polling and registration centers, lists of candidates for clearing or verification, and dates and locations of specific electoral activities such as voter registration, display of preliminary list of voters to enable claims and objections (Orji, 2014).

Mode of voter education range from printed flyers and posters in public spaces to telephone hotlines, newspaper advertisements, mobile brigades and kiosks, radio and television ads, websites, direct mailings, and text messaging. Such voter education activities are typically considered the responsibility of electoral management bodies, although civil society organizations also often carry out similar activities. In conducting voter education programmes in unsafe areas of a country, extra care must be taken to protect the security of citizens and educators on the way to education events. Broadcast media may be the most appropriate tool for voter education in these contexts. Some argue that if the media provide useful information, citizens can attain the political knowledge they need. Some political learning does in fact take place during campaigns, and public discussion and voters use their knowledge, however little, to inform their decisions (ACE Project, 2021; Jerit, Jason & Bolsen, 2006; Ellis, Gratschew, Pammett, & Thiessen. 2006; Brady, 2009).

As earlier stated, an electoral body such as INEC is expected to provide timely and accurate information to the public during via different communication platforms. One of such communication platforms is the traditional news media. The traditional news media can play a vital role in helping to meet this responsibility. Because the electoral body and the media have common goals—they both want to inform the public, explain the process, and report developments before, during, and after the elections—their partnership is natural. Because working together makes sense, the electoral body needs to understand what the media might need and how to get the information they want to disseminate to the public. To provide information efficiently in this partnership, an electoral body might prepare a media kit for reporters, who need the following information about all elections: number of registered voters, number of absentee voters, historical turnout, registration dates, sample ballots, and polling place information (United State Election Assistance Commission, 2020).

A UNDP reports asserts that a creative approach can help ensure information spreads further and is better understood. While some election management bodies may limit themselves to posters, other groups might organize materials or activities such as street theatre, role playing, radio spots, jingles, songs, comic strips or Internet campaigns to ensure that all voters—women and men—have access to the information they need to participate intelligently in the voting process. With respect to raising electoral awareness and participation among women, women's groups can be especially effective in developing material that will resonate with women voters. Ideally, election management bodies should also check privately generated voter education materials to ensure that they are gender-sensitive (Ezechinyere, 2014).

A public outreach strategy in raising electoral awareness should include detailed information about how to vote, as well as how the overall system works. The strategy should consider the target audiences and use different types of media (TV, radio, press, Internet) based on the country context and, in particular, the mediums through which different segments of voters most commonly consume information. Voters should also have an understanding of the reasons why the new technology is being adopted, how it will be implemented and what mechanisms have been included to ensure its integrity. The electoral management body (EMB) should be proactive in providing such information, in order to demonstrate transparency and build public trust in the system (National Democratic Institute, 2013).



The EMB's public outreach plan should also include strategies for how to react to stakeholder comments or media stories about the voting and counting that might not be accurate or that might cast doubt over the process in some way. Particularly in the age of 24-hour news and viral social media, the EMB has to be ready to provide any necessary clarifications at short notice. By responding quickly to critical stories about the voting or counting system, the EMB may be able to avoid a story gaining momentum disproportionate to its accuracy or relevance. It will be useful for EMB to prepare a comprehensive booklet containing frequently asked questions (FAQ) and talking points regarding the process, for use by election commissioners, senior managers and public relations personnel, which includes responses to common and often-repeated criticisms of card reader machines. Responses to questions from journalists or stakeholders should always aim to inform and educate, rather than to dismiss concerns (National Democratic Institute, 2013).

Ghana's Electoral Commission adopts a number of media strategies in conducting voter education including education on the amendments of the electoral laws, which is usually carried out during election year since the entire exercise is periodic (Hamman-Obels, 2014). The dominant strategy, according to Hamman-Obels, (2014) includes the use of conventional methods such as Television –adverts, documentaries, cartoons, etc; Radio –jingles, etc; Print media – newspapers, magazines; Media (print and electronic) outrage and encounter, Press briefing, News Conference; Posters, leaflets, Flyers, billboards.

The Canadian Electoral Commission's civic and voter education initiatives include role plays, choosing a Mascot, debates, roundtables and practical democratic skill acquisition. Its election stimulation kits, comprehensive civic education program, low literacy guide, Canadian history manual, aboriginal theme video, maps, posters and web contents are also indispensable teaching and educational aid used in schools across the country. EC compliments its civic and political education programme with outreach targeted at different segments of the Canadian society. These outreach programmes are unique in that they are designed, taken to the targeted audience and implemented with nuanced messages which is best suited for them. Each of the provincial electoral management bodies and the provincial legislature libraries replicate the role of EC and the Library of Parliament in their areas of jurisdictions (Odukoya, 2014).

The youths, aboriginal people, ethno-cultural communities and people with special needs are specially targeted with different civic and voter education initiatives. Civic and voter education in Canada is continuous, taking place before, during and after elections at all levels. To achieve the objectives of civic and voter education in Canada, the Electoral Commission deploys multiple approaches. The approaches which are implemented through strategies that are inclusive and participatory include: integral, participatory, holistic and tactical. These approaches which are mutually reinforcing are complimented with research, cultural sensitivity orientation, on-site programmes and targeted messages presented in simple and clear formats (Odukoya, 2014).

In India, the Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) in the states and their voter education teams develop voter education messages mostly for the elites and youth in urban centres because they make up most of the population while taking into consideration the social status and peculiarities of specific groups and developing special messages for each group. The mode of delivery of the messages also differs. While workshops and seminars may be used to educate the elites; musical

concerts, debates and sporting activities are the main activities used to raise awareness and participation among the youths. Electoral Management Body deploys the media to convey these activities to the people. The responsibility for developing messages at the district and village level is given to the district electoral officers who with their teams, develop voter education messages for the districts taking into cognizance the demographics of the locality and the cultural, religious backgrounds of the of the people in the locality. Therefore, there are different messages in different languages and styles for different villages and groups within a district. Considering that most of the people who reside in the rural areas are mostly illiterates, civic and voter education messages are woven into folk songs and drama, puppet shows and other activities that hold during cultural shows and festivals in the villages (Shalangwa, 2014).

For electoral bodies to effectively conduct credible elections, such body must take critical steps to properly educate the people regarding the elections. This is because if the people are well informed about the electoral process, it makes the conduct of the elections easier for the electoral body. The implication is that the electoral body must properly engage in voter education to achieve a successful electoral process. To do this efficiently, a synergy with the media is unarguably inevitable.

The right to vote can only be understood in the context of awareness of democratic culture and processes, the rights of the individual and minorities, the rule of law and role of government in a democracy. UNDP report, (2013) described increased participation of a well-informed citizenry in democratic processes, including elections; as a way of influencing decision-making on matters that affect their lives. To make sensible choices, however, citizens must be aware of an elections purpose, their voting rights and obligations, the dates and procedures, the range of electoral options, and they must know how to vote. The goal of voter education is to make information available and accessible to all constituents. This can be effectively actualized via a partnership between the electoral body and the media (Rackner and Svasand, 2005; Blake, 2020).

Voter education is a critical element in building voters' confidence. The electoral management body in partnership with the media should be strategic and proactive in providing information on how to vote, how the overall system works, why a new technology has been adopted and methods to ensure the system's integrity. Voter education strategies should consider the target audiences and use different types of outreach methods based on how different segments of voters commonly access information. Particular consideration should be given to targeting groups, such as voters with disabilities, and rural and elderly voters, that may be less comfortable with technology. It is also important to provide opportunities for voters to try out the new voting equipment in person. Election observers have a responsibility to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of voter education efforts and make recommendations on how any identified gaps can be filled (National Democratic Institute, 2013).

These problems of rejected ballots, declining turnout at elections and other electoral anomalies are widely attributed both directly and indirectly to inadequate civic and voter education. Thus, numerous reports on elections in Nigeria call on INEC to strengthen voter education. Other issues that have been linked to voter and civic education in Nigeria includes, poor turnout and participation in voter registration, lack of understanding of voting procedures, underage voting

and election violence. In fact, it has been noted that the violence that Nigeria has experienced in the aftermath of elections was partly due to negative mobilization by political leaders and by implication inadequate voter education. To address this anomaly, strategic partnership between the INEC and the media is no doubt very important. This is because the media constitute the peoples major sources of information (Ibeanu and Mbah, 2012; Ibeanu, 2014).

At the national level in Nigeria is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which has a function to undertake essential election awareness and voter education activities with support from different agencies, organizations and groups involved in the electoral process. The INEC has identified the following thematic areas as key in the implementation of the electoral process: rights and responsibilities of the Voter, voter registration, elections, voters and representative democracy, causes, consequences and prevention of electoral Conflicts. The commission adopted voter education delivery method which was voter-centered and friendly. It was focused on encouraging learners to express their views and use their initiative in discussing issues in voter education based on their experiences. The facilitator's role is to create an enabling environment for exchange of ideas. Therefore such a person has to be well informed, resourceful and flexible. The methods adopted for teaching the voter education are: problem-solving, value clarification, expository methods which can greatly be successful if there is synergy with the media owing to the factor of wide coverage/reach (Godana, 2015).

In the United States, which is acclaimed to be one of the world's most developed democracies, MacManus (2005, p.537) notes how "for days on end after the 2000 presidential election, Florida's voters, poll workers, and election officials were skewered by the national and international media and caricatured as buffoons". This was as a result of confusion over ballot formats, poor performance of electoral workers and numerous voters who spoilt their ballots, which rendered them uncountable. In fact, almost two million votes were spoilt in that presidential election, which led to the enactment of the federal law suggestively, titled Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002. It is not surprising that voter education became an important aspect of HAVA and greater partnership with the media became a priority (Ibeanu, 2014).

Ghana's constitution empowers the electoral commission to provide civic and voter education to the people. The commission has a duty to educate the people on the electoral process and its purpose; undertake programmes for the expansion of the registration of voters'. In providing electoral education, the electoral commission in strong partnership with the media educates the public on every electoral event and this preceded all electoral events (Hamman-Obels, 2014).

Before 2009 when the Electoral Commission of India (ECI) established the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme, the Commission's civic and voter education programme was focused on voter information. ECI often put out information to the public very close to elections about dates of voters' registration, types of elections, and procedure and dates of elections. Serious engagement with voters, however, began after the Commission introduced the electronic voting machine (EVM) and voters' had to be sensitized on how to use the machines. Further engagement followed the decline in voter turnout, especially during the 2009 Parliamentary elections where the ECI considered the average voter turnout of 50 percent as unsatisfactory. This compelled the ECI to begin to review the mechanism for delivery of civic

and voter education in the country which included a serious partnership with the media. The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) division was established in 2009 as one of the five major divisions in the Commission. Through this division, the ECI adopted and implemented a number of innovative strategies and activities aimed at improving voter awareness and participation. The effectiveness of SVEEP was enhanced through continuous research, establishment of a national policy framework, State and District Plans and a whole range of communication and awareness interventions with CSOs, youth groups, media, women groups etc (Shalangwa, 2014).

Section 18 of the Canada Elections Act makes public education a core function of Elections Canada (EC). As noted by the International Affairs Directorate of Elections Canada, 'the provision allows the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada to implement public education activities on electoral process, particularly to those likely to experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights'. EC operates within a strategic environment guided by: Canada Elections Act (Section 18), EC Strategic Plan, Outreach Action Plan (OAP), and Formal Civic Education Program. Through public education and information dissemination, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada as demanded by law facilitates and deepens the engagement and participation of Canadians in the politics of their country. According to the EC, the electoral body fulfills this mandate essentially in two ways. The first is to carry out voter education before and during an electoral event, highlighting how, where, and when to vote. The second way is to support civic education nationally, which includes: a) Formal - civic education curricula being taught in schools, and b) Informal - supporting NGOs that are working in the field of civic education and engaged citizenship (Odukoya, 2014).

In India, civic and voter education are effective means of promoting participation in the electoral process. The Electoral Commission of India (ECI) has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that every eligible Indian is on the electoral roll and to get everyone on the electoral roll to voluntarily participate in elections. The key strategy for motivating Indian voters to participate in the electoral process is the adoption of a comprehensive voter education programme in synergy with the media that seeks to educate eligible voters on their rights and responsibilities as citizens and enhance electoral participation especially among youths, women, homeless persons, nomads, election staff and the urban elites. In India, voter education is a multi-media programme that is carefully designed to improve the awareness of voters, increase electoral participation, and develop positive attitude toward democracy. The programme was designed against the background of local socio-economic and demographic situation. The focus of the programme is on information dissemination, motivation of eligible voters and building the capacity of voters to many rational and independent electoral choices. Consequently, the ECI accords voter education a top priority, and allocates significant attention and resources to it (Shalangwa, 2014).

Kuffor (2021) did a study on media promotion of public awareness on the amendment of electoral laws in Ghana and found that the media has significantly promoted public awareness regarding the amendment on the use of technologies in the conduct of elections in Ghana. Hassan (2020) did a study on media dissemination of the amended electoral laws in Kenya and found that the amendments on the period for the publication of election date has not been effectively communicated to the public. Also, Kasanga (2022) did a study on broadcast media promotion of

public education on the electoral laws amendments in Uganda. It was revealed that the broadcast has not effectively educated the public on the issue of overvoting but it has however adequately educated the public on the duration of campaigns by political parties.

## Theoretical Framework

The social responsibility theory was used to explain this study. It received its initial shape and form as a theory from the works of 1947 Hutchin’s Commission in the United States. It is a theory of the media which holds that in addition to protecting its freedoms, the mass media as a social institution must also be socially responsible (Nwosu, 1999). The theory is an extension of the libertarian theory in that the press recognizes that it has a responsibility to society to carry out its essential functions” (Hasan, 2013, p.170). The theory asserts that media outlets have a duty to act in the best interests of the public, by providing accurate and reliable information and promoting the well-being of society (Daramola, 2005). This implies that the press has certain roles to play for the society which among others include the education of the public on the amendments of the Electoral Act. As part of its social responsibility function to the society, the media is expected to promote public education on the amended electoral Act for proper understanding and involvements in electoral engagements.

## Methodology

The survey research design was used to carry out the study. The 5,045,540 residents of Enugu State were used as the study’s population from where a sample size of 384 was determined using the Creative Research Systems online sample size calculator. The purposive sampling technique were used to select only those who were exposed to NTA’s political contents after the 2022 amended electoral bill was signed to law. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study and 384 copies were administered in line with the determined sample size.. The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, and presented in tables.

## Data Analysis and Presentation

After the distribution of the 384 copies of questionnaire, 11 copies were not returned while 373 copies were properly filled and retrieved. The returned 373 copies were analyzed and used for the study.

**Table 1: Extent of NTA’s public education concerning the electoral Act amendment on the use of technology in the conduct of elections**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High extent	306	82.0	82.0	82.0
	Moderate extent	51	13.7	13.7	95.7
	Low extent	13	3.5	3.5	99.2
	Not sure	3	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	373	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 above shows the extent of NTA’s public education concerning the electoral Act amendment on the use of technology in the conduct of elections. The data as presented reveal that 306 respondents representing 82.0% indicated high extent, 51 respondents representing 13.7% indicated moderate extent, 13 respondents representing 3.5% indicated low extent while 3 respondents constituting 0.8% said they were not sure of the extent of education.

**Table 2: Extent of NTA’s public education regarding the electoral Act amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High extent	333	89.3	89.3	89.3
	Moderate extent	22	5.9	5.9	95.2
	Low extent	10	2.7	2.7	97.9
	Not sure	8	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	373	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 above shows the extent of NTA’s public education regarding the electoral Act amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties. The data as presented reveal that 333 respondents representing 89.3% indicated high extent, 22 respondents representing 5.9% indicated moderate extent, 10 respondents representing 2.7% indicated low extent while 8 respondents constituting 2.1% said they were not sure of the extent of education.

**Table 3: Extent of NTA’s public education concerning the electoral Act amendment on the publication of dates for elections by INEC**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High extent	25	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Moderate extent	15	4.0	4.0	10.7
	Low extent	325	87.1	87.1	97.9
	Not sure	8	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	373	100.0	100.0	

The data as presented in table 3 above show the extent of NTA’s public education concerning the electoral Act amendment on the publication of dates for elections by INEC. The data as presented reveal that 25 respondents representing 6.7% indicated high extent, 15 respondents representing 4.0% indicated moderate extent, 325 respondents representing 87.1% indicated low extent while 8 respondents constituting 2.1% said they were not sure of the extent of education.

**Table 4: Extent of NTA’s public education concerning the electoral Act amendment on over voting**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High extent	36	9.7	9.7	9.7
	Moderate extent	55	14.7	14.7	24.4
	Low extent	280	75.1	75.1	99.5
	Not sure	2	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	373	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 above shows the extent of NTA's public education concerning the electoral Act amendment on overvoting. The data as presented reveal that 36 respondents representing 9.7% indicated high extent, 55 respondents representing 14.7% indicated moderate extent, 280 respondents representing 75.1% indicated low extent while 2 respondents constituting 0.5% said they were not sure of the extent of education.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study were discussed as presented below:

### **Research question one: To what extent has NTA educated Enugu State residents concerning the amendment on the use of technology in the conduct of elections?**

This research question aimed at finding out the extent to which NTA has promoted public education on the amendments of the electoral Acts with particular focus on the inclusion of technologies in Nigeria's elections such as the use of BVAS and the electronic transmission of results. The data collected, analyzed and presented in table 1 showed that majority of the respondents (306 respondents representing 82.0%) indicated that NTA has highly educated them on the amendment that allows the use of technology in the conduction of elections. giving credence to this finding, Kuffor (2021) did a study on media promotion of public awareness on the amendment of electoral laws in Ghana and found that the media has significantly promoted public awareness regarding the amendment on the use of technologies in the conduct of elections in Ghana.

### **Research question two: What is the extent to which NTA has educated Enugu State residents concerning the amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties?**

The basis for this research question was to establish the extent to which NTA has enhanced the knowledge of the electoral Act amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties. The data presented in table 2 reveal that most of the respondents (333 respondents representing 89.3%) indicated that NTA has highly educated them concerning the electoral Act amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties. Kasanga (2022) did a study on broadcast media promotion of public education on the electoral laws amendments in Uganda. It was revealed that the broadcast media has adequately educated the public on the duration of campaigns by political parties.

### **Research question three: To what extent has NTA educated Enugu State residents regarding the amendment on the publication of dates for elections by INEC?**

This research question was necessary to ascertain whether NTA has properly educated the people concerning the amendment on when INEC should publish dates for elections, with the aim of ensuring that the people are well informed to hold INEC accountable in this regard. The data presented in table 3 above were used to provide answer to this research question. The data showed that 325 respondents representing 87.1% indicated that the extent of NTA's promotion of public education on the publication of dates for elections by INEC is low. Similarly, Hassan (2020) did a study on media dissemination of the amended electoral laws in Kenya and found

that the amendments on the period for the publication of election date has not been effectively communicated to the public.

#### **Research question four: What is the extent to which NTA has educated Enugu State residents regarding amendment on the issue of overvoting?**

The issue of over voting has been a controversial issues in Nigeria’s electoral system. This necessitated the current amendment on overvoting as it is currently in the electoral Act. This formed the basis on which this research question was raised to find out whether NTA has effectively educated the masses on the current amendment. The data presented in table 4 above were used to address this research question. The data showed that 280 respondents representing 75.1%indicated that the extent of NTA’s promotion of public education on overvoting is low. Kasanga (2022) did a study on broadcast media promotion of public education on the electoral laws amendments in Uganda. It was revealed that the broadcast has not effectively educated the public on the issue of overvoting.

#### **Summary of findings**

The findings of the study are hereunder summarized;

1. NTA has significantly educated the respondents on the amendment that allows the use of technology in the conduction of elections.
2. NTA has highly educated the respondents concerning the electoral Act amendment on the duration of campaigns by political parties.
3. The extent of NTA’s promotion of public education on the publication of dates for elections by INEC is low.
4. The extent of NTA’s promotion of public education on overvoting is low.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it is safe to assert that the Nigerian Television Authority has been involved in public education on the electoral Act including the amended sections of the Act but the station has not effectively educated the public on all crucial aspects of the amendments done so far. As revealed by the study, aspects such as publication of dates for elections and education on overvoting are yet to be effectively communicated to the public by NTA which negates the fulfilment of its social responsibility function of effectively informing the public about new the emergence of occurrences such as the amendments of the country’s electoral Act.

#### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been suggested based on the findings of the study;

1. NTA should intensify efforts in the promotion of public education on the publication of dates for elections by the election management body.
2. NTA should also give adequate attention to effective promotion of public education on overvoting.
3. Further studies should focus on print media to establish print media efforts in this regard.



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