

# Voter Education by the Independent Electoral Commission and Political Awareness among Residents of South Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated voter education by the Independence National Electoral Commission and Political Awareness among residents of South – South Nigeria. The essence was to ascertain the level at which INEC’s voters education messages have been able to promote political awareness among residents to the South – South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Survey research method was used for the study while questionnaire was adopted as data collection instrument. The 30.221.345 residents of South – South Geopolitical Zone were used as the population of the study from where a sample size of 385 was drawn using the Australian National Bureau of Static online Sample Calculator. The multi staff Sampling Technique was used for the study while simple percentage were deployed in analyzing he collected data. Based on the analysis of data, findings revealed that INEC’s voter education materials are not very comprehensive to majority of the respondents. INEC’s voter education messages have not significantly promoted respondents knowledge of the practices that could lead to voiding of votes. Based on the finding, the study recommended that INEC should repackage its voter education materials in such manner that it will be well understood by the various categories of the citizens such as the blind, deaf and dumb, illiterates as men as the literates. INEC’s voter education messages should target the promotion of the knowledge of electoral act among the residents and knowledge of voting procedure in elections and how voiding at votes could be prevented.

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**KEYWORDS:** voter education, political awareness

## Background of the Study

Voter education is very fundamental to the existence of any democratic society. A democratic society without effective voter education is likely to face different challenges such as voter apathy and truncation of the democratic process by mischief makers Effective voter education is critical in raising the political awareness and participation levels of members of the society which ultimately engenders good governance and democracy.

Good governance and democracy are complimentary concepts in the lexicon of political economics. As a matter of fact, the latter precipitates the former. While good governance is all about accountability and sensitivity, democracy is all about representative participation. Viewed from a continuum, the common denominator across these concepts becomes the “people”. Invariably, democracy and good

governance represent participation by the people and sensitivity to the people - their yearnings and aspirations (Okon, 2013).

Democracy strives on inclusiveness. No democracy can be viable and endure without citizenship engagement with and in the political process. The central role people play in governance is the major factor that distinguished democracy from authoritarianism. The well-being of democracy is largely dependent on the trust of the citizens in democratic institutions. Only with such trust and confidence on the workability of democracy as a system of government do citizens invest and get involved in public affairs. It is thus incumbent in a democracy that conscious efforts are made to build popular trust in the electoral system and promote mass political engagement as a desideratum for

quality governance and government legitimacy. Education generally, and civic education in particular, is a way through which citizens' cognitive and affective orientation towards the political system is enhanced. Paradoxically, while electoral democracy is a political architecture that valorizes collective concern, its foundation is erected on individualistic capitalist disposition and survival of the fittest. As a consequence, the struggle for survival and the exploitation which characterizes capitalism erodes peoples trust in government and mitigates interest in public affairs. For this reason, socialization, mobilization and empowerment of citizens for political participation in a democracy through education is a major concern for any state desirous of a healthy democracy (Odukoya, 2014).

Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925), Germany's first democratically elected President, who experienced the turmoil of Germany's Weimar Republic, stated thus "Without democrats, there can be no democracy". This statement can also be interpreted to mean without voters, or without a sufficient turnout, there can be no true elections that would reflect people's preferences. Elections are nothing other than preferences aggregation. A low or lowest voter turnout would not be a true reflection of the people's preferences, but only that of a minority. And one may ponder if the minority should be given the man date to govern? The answer is clear but this can inadvertently happen if a majority displays nonchalant attitude. But a high voter turnout will not only make the result of an election more credible; it will also deter criminals from hijacking or sabotaging the electoral process, guarantee more impartiality and fairness, and increase the pressure on elected officials to live up to campaign promises (Olurode and Mättig, 2011).

The third wave of democratization in the 1990's led to the conduct of elections in many developing nations/countries. To a very large extent, elections and electoral processes shape the face of the bourgeois modern nation state. Elections provide the medium by which the different interest groups within the bourgeois nation state can take and resolve their claims to power through peaceful means (Iyayi, 2006).

There is increasing global realization that credible elections constitute a major factor in democracy, democratization and good governance. Elections in democracies play the vital role of ensuring representation of popular will and, subsequently, help to secure the legitimacy of the political system. It is worrisome, therefore, that there is at the same time global evidence of political apathy, the lack of

psychological involvement in public affairs, emotional detachment from civic obligations, and abstention from political activity. Understandably, therefore, there is ongoing concern to understand the sources and character of political abstention. Voter apathy, a subset of political apathy, has thus emerged as a major problem in mature and emerging democracies, settled and volatile societies, large and thriving economies, as well as small and troubled ones, among youth, women and other marginalized groups as much as among mainstream dominant interests (INEC & FES, 2011).

Voter apathy negatively impacts upon the electoral process and its outcome. Any serious effort at electoral reforms to bring about free, fair and credible elections must take into account the challenges of voter apathy. Thus, whenever INEC prepares for elections, it is imperative to study the nature, causes, dimensions and consequences of voter apathy, with a view to being adequately informed in designing future strategies to tackle its challenges in the Nigerian context. In a country trying to deepen democracy after a long history of authoritarian military rule, strategies for mobilising people for popular participation and effective engagement in the electoral process have to be well conceptualised and carefully designed. In doing this, peoples' perceptions and attitudes have to be studied, analysed, understood and taken into consideration (Jega, 2011).

Given the context and history of electoral democracy in Nigeria, an effective civic and voter education programme is required to promote national unity, nurture democratic culture, and prevent violence. Regular elections provide citizens with an opportunity to express their will and determine the direction of the government. To access this opportunity and make sensible choices, however, citizens must be aware of the purpose of elections, their voting rights and obligations, the dates and procedures of elections, and the range of electoral options. This gamut of activities falls within the sphere of civic and voter education. It appears that INEC recognizes the importance of civic and voter education to the successful conduct of elections in Nigeria. The Commission, along with its partners, formulates and implements a civic and voter education programme which emphasizes the integration of civic and voter education in school curriculum, prompt production and distribution of civic and voter education materials, and active engagement in advocacy and partnership with stakeholders (Orji, 2014).

If elections are regarded as the crucial mechanism for sustaining democracy, 'the vote' is certainly a key element of democracy. Citizens' participation in

terms of voting during elections is essential to a democracy and voting is viewed as one of the many ways in which citizens participate in democracy. Voter education must be linked to civic education, which inculcates political knowledge and culture, democratic values and participation, promotes tolerance and conflict prevention and links voting to broader democratic issues as well as have a longer term strategy outside of the electoral cycle. In other words, it must emphasize active citizenship. When properly implemented, voter education programmes can produce benefits such as confidence in the electoral process, increased participation and turnout at registration and elections, increased accessibility by making registration and voting more convenient for citizens, reduced wasted ballot papers and invalid votes, reduced incidences of vote buying and possibly even reduce the cost of elections in the long term (Hamman-Obels, 2014).

In every election, raising electoral awareness is necessary to ensure that all constituents (men and women alike) understand their rights, their political system, the contests they are being asked to decide, and how and where to vote. For an election to be successful and democratic, the citizens must understand their rights and responsibilities, and must be sufficiently knowledgeable and well informed to cast ballots that are legally valid and to participate meaningfully in all the electoral processes. Raising electoral awareness also entails the propagation of information, materials and programmes intended to inform the public about the particulars and procedures of the voting process for election. It involves providing information on who is eligible to vote; where and how to register; how electors can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included; what type of elections are being held; where, when and how to vote; who the candidates are; and how to file complaints (Ezechinyere, 2014).

Elections are in the spotlight more than ever, and voters and candidates receive information on the elections process from multiple outlets. The public needs a credible, accurate resource on which they can rely for everything from the most basic election administration information—such as where, when, and how to vote—to more complex issues such as eligibility. Election officials throughout the Nation can continue to be the ultimate authority on the election administration process to ensure that voters and candidates can successfully participate; moreover, electoral agency should be willing to use every tool available to deliver information to the public. Fortunately, modern communication tools make it easier and cheaper to reach large audiences

with election information (United State Election Assistance Commission, 2010).

Preparing for an election involves extensive planning. An efficient electoral body often has detailed policies and procedures for all aspects of the process, but the best policies and procedures are helpful only if they are well publicized. An election official's effort to educate and communicate with the public has a direct effect on the voters' chances of having a successful election experience. Getting started is sometimes the hardest part. An electoral body first, needs to define whom it serves. Who are the target audience? What are the most common questions the audience ask? How do the audience get their information? These questions and answers are the beginning of a communication strategy targeted at the electoral body's respective audience. An electoral agency that prepares well thought out messages ahead of time will increase efficiency and save resources—people and funding resources that are needed to make sure the election runs smoothly after voting begins. With the strategy, the agency will also encourage discipline and structure and may reduce the chances of inaccurate or unconfirmed information being delivered to the public. Of course, the election official always expects the unexpected and should be prepared to communicate about developing situations and changes or other unforeseen circumstances. Being prepared helps the electoral body to keep the public informed and minimizes interruptions during the election cycle (United State Election Assistance Commission, 2010).

In Nigeria, Section 2 (a) and (b), as well as Section 154 of the Electoral Act 2010 establish the power of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct voter and civic education. According to Section 2 of the Act, "In addition to the functions conferred on it by the Constitution, the Commission shall have power to: (a) conduct voter and civic education. (b) Promote knowledge of sound democratic election processes". This legal power of the Commission has often been interpreted to mean that the Commission has a principal responsibility to conduct voter and civic education. Consequently, other traditional agencies of civic and voter education expect the Commission to take the lead on this. Over the years, the Commission has been increasing its budgetary allocation to voter education. In spite of this growing budgetary outlay on voter education, the impact on knowledge of voters remains unclear. This raises a number of questions regarding the capacity of the Commission to conduct civic and voter education on its own, the appropriateness and reach of materials, the adequacy of the strategies adopted. It

also raises the issues of burden sharing and above all the need to understand how voter and civic education is carried out in other countries (Ibeanu, 2014).

A look at the strategic objectives of INEC's civic and voter education programme and the Commission's strategic communication programme of action for the implementation of its civic and voter education activities indicates that three major groups are the key targets. These groups are the general electorate, high-impact groups such as traditional and religious leaders, and marginalized populations like women and persons with disabilities. INEC attempted to reach the general electorate through public enlightenment, but this strategy faced many challenges including differences of access by urban and rural residents, and voters with different backgrounds, languages, religious beliefs, cultures, geographic accessibility, and literacy levels. Although an outreach approach that is focused on specific groups and extending to hard-to-reach areas is ideal in theory, it is not very practical in real terms. Leveraging the reach of high-impact groups can be effective and cost efficient, as this form of outreach uses an established network that people already trust. During elections, INEC utilizes high-impact groups in mobilizing the electorates for voter registration and the elections. INEC organizes town hall meetings and other events in which the Commission engages with high-impact groups. When a group mandate does not conflict with education messages or cause message distortion, the group may offer a highly effective channel of communication. More so, a key component of INEC's strategic communication programme of action on civic and voter education is the formulation and implementation of programmes that will ensure the participation of marginalized groups (orji, 2014).

The most important goal of voter education must be to raise the level of confidence and improve people's judgment about the electoral process, the election management body and, therefore, the value of the vote or ballot. The value attached to the vote is particularly important in a market democracy. In the same way the value of money signifies robustness of the market economy, so does the value of the vote signify the virility of market democracy. We may approach the value of the vote from three dimensions: promissory value, content value and psychological value. Promissory value of a vote refers to the promises made by those who ask for the vote to deliver the value of a vote on demand, in terms of programmes (manifesto) for which they have received the vote. The more these promises are kept, the higher the promissory value of a vote. This is akin to the

promise behind the issuance of paper money, whereby the Central Bank promises to pay on demand the equivalent of that money (Ibeanu, 2014).

An electoral body's first step in formulating a message for the people is to define the audiences. Most electoral bodies have two major audiences: the voters and the candidates. The media may also work to inform the public on a mass scale, but it is the key responsibility of the elections office to act as the official resource for accurate and timely election information. After the identification of the audiences, the agency can determine the kind of information voters and candidates want and the best ways to disseminate that information. One of the biggest challenges an election official faces is presenting and organizing a large amount of information in a logical, intuitive manner so that people can easily find the information they seek. One approach is to categorize all the available information into topic areas and then implement across multiple platforms, including Web sites, which have become the primary information delivery tool for many jurisdictions (United State Election Assistance Commission, 2010).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Voter education is no doubt, very important in an electoral process. This implies that effective voter education is important for the conduct and management of electoral processes. This is the basis on which INEC engages in voter education from time to time to communicate relevant messages to the people. If the people properly understand INEC's voter education messages such as where to register, who the contestants are, where to vote, how to vote, when to vote, etc, the electoral process is likely to be significantly successful.

At the heart of INEC's responsibilities is voter education. INEC is the body statutorily charged with organizing elections, and by extension educating citizens about voting and related matters. In many cases, the body plays harmonization and standardization roles by designing and producing materials, standardizing messages and harmonizing strategies. If INEC's efforts are positive and supportive, voter education is likely to be more effective (Ibeanu, 2014).

Voter education takes place to assist the election administration in its task of delivering a free, fair, efficient and cost-effective election. It encompasses the basic voter information that every voter must have in order to arrive prepared at the voting station and vote on the dedicated voting day(s). Voter education sensitizes the electorate on the importance of participating in elections. It provides the background attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge among citizens

that stimulate and consolidate democracy. During an election, this education will ensure effective organization and activism by citizens in support of parties and/or causes, behavior by citizens that is appropriate to a peaceful election, acceptance of results and tolerance of the competition and opposition. Indeed, an educated citizenry can even overcome inadequacies in administrative preparations for an election (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2016).

As part of the fulfillment of its constitutional mandate, INEC communicates vital electoral information through voter education engagements, with the ultimate aim of making the people to be well informed about the electoral processes as well as getting them to participate in the processes. Important information about the particulars and procedures of the voting process for election, eligibility to vote; where and how to register; how electors can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included; what type of elections are being held; where, when and how to vote; how to emerge as a candidate for the election, who the candidates are; and how to file complaints are communicated to the masses by the electoral body using different communications platforms (Ezechinyere, 2014).

In preparation for the 2019 general election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) through its Director Publicity and Voter Education, MrOluwole Osaze-Uzzi, said it would adopt strategic measures that would boost voter education in the country, ahead of 2019 general elections. The commission's director made the statement in Abuja in an interview with newsmen at the sidelines of the opening of a three-day workshop for Heads of Voter Education and Publicity units. He further stated that the commission knows the importance of communicating its policies and programmes to the stakeholders and that is why it was working to ensure that it communicates in an effective manner to increase the voter awareness. He said the commission wants to ensure that there is an increase in voters' awareness and their participation in our activities and future elections (Udo, 2018).

In the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, television, radio, newspaper, magazine, online platforms, workshops and seminars constituted some of the channels of communication platforms deployed by INEC for voter education. Apart from the use of English language, messages were also designed and communicated to the public in different indigenous languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and other minority languages to ensure that the uneducated and even the blind are well informed about the electoral process. This in line with Carter centre report (2013)

which maintains that greater effort should be made to ensure that voter education materials are comprehensible for illiterate, semi-illiterate, and blind voters.

In view of the above, it is imperative to find out from the masses how well INEC's voter education efforts have been able to raise their electoral awareness as well as their participation in politics. Consequently, the researcher investigated voter education by INEC and political awareness and participation among residents of South-South Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad aim of the study was to investigate voter education by INEC and political awareness and participation among residents of South-South Nigeria. The study specifically sought to

1. Find out if INEC's voter education materials are comprehensible among residents of South-South Nigeria.
2. Find out the level at which INEC's voter education messages have enhanced the knowledge of the Electoral Act among residents of South-South Nigeria.
3. Ascertain the extent to which INEC's voter education messages have promoted the knowledge of practices that could void votes among residents of South-South Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

In line with the research objectives of the study, the researcher shall address the following research questions

1. Are INEC's voter education materials comprehensible among residents of South-South Nigeria?
2. What is the level to which INEC's voter education messages have enhanced the knowledge of the Electoral Act among residents of South-South Nigeria?
3. To what extent have INEC's voter education messages promoted the knowledge of practices that could void votes among residents of South-South Nigeria?

### **Significance of the Study**

1. This study shall be beneficial to INEC as it shall enable the commission to know the effectiveness its voter education messages in raising political awareness among residents of South-South Nigeria. This implies that the study shall serve as a feedback mechanism to INEC in the quest to raise political awareness through well thought out voter education strategy.
2. Future researchers will find the study relevant as it will provide current empirical data in this area

of study. Expectedly, the study shall add to available literature. The study shall therefore serve as a valuable literature to future researchers who engage in similar studies.

3. Finally, institutions of higher learning (universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, etc) shall find this study relevant in the teaching and learning of political communication.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### An Overview of Voter Education

Over one million votes cast in the Nigerian presidential election of April 2011 were rejected during counting, mainly because the ballots were wrongly marked. Although the rejected votes constitute only 3.2% of all votes cast in that election, several observers have noted that the number is rather high and could have been markedly lower if voters received adequate voter education. This is even more serious considering that in some States like Niger, Jigawa, Sokoto and Yobe, rejected votes were over six percent of all votes cast. At the same time, since the 2011 elections, there have been precipitate declines in the turnout of voters in elections across Nigeria. Some of the elections have seen declines in turnout as high as 70%. For instance, the voter turnout in the Presidential election in Anambra State in 2011 was over 90%, but in the Governorship election of November 2013, the turnout fell to about 20%. Although this is higher than the turnout of about 15% in 2007, it is generally regarded as low. The same declining turnout was reported in the Edo and Ondo Governorship elections in 2012 (Ibeanu, 2014).

These twin problems of rejected ballots and declining turnout at elections are widely attributed both directly and indirectly to inadequate civic and voter education. Thus, numerous reports on the 2011 general elections call on INEC to strengthen voter education. Other issues that have been linked to voter and civic education in Nigeria include, 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 experienced in the aftermath of the 2011 general elections was partly due to negative mobilization by political leaders and by implication inadequate voter education (Ibeanu and Mbah, 2012: 25). What then is voter education?

The term voter education is generally used to describe the dissemination of information, materials and programmes designed to inform electorates about the specifics and mechanics of the voting process for a particular election. Voter education in this regard, involves providing information on who is eligible to

vote, where and how to register, how the electorate can check the voters list to ensure they have been duly included, what type of elections are being held, where and how to vote, who the candidates are and how to file complaints. ([www.un.org/womenwatch/osag/wps/publication/cha-pter5.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osag/wps/publication/cha-pter5.htm) cited in Okon, 2015).

Voter education generally describes the propagation of information, materials and programmes intended to inform voters about the particulars and procedures of the voting process for election. It involves providing information on who is eligible to vote; where and how to register; how electors can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included; what type of elections are being held; where, when and how to vote; who the candidates are; and how to file complaints. Civic education on the other hand is a more far-reaching concept. It attempts to convey knowledge of a country's political system and framework, which might include information on the system of government; the nature and powers of the offices to be filled in an election; the principal economic, social and political issues facing the nation; the value of democracy; the equal rights of women and men; and the importance of peace and national reconciliation (Ezechinyere, 2014).

Voter education is as simple as it sounds, but its importance cannot be overlooked. It is defined as informing the public on their democratic rights, election procedures, election registrations, candidates and all the issues concerning elections. At its core, voter education is an enterprise designed to ensure that voters are ready, willing, and able to participate in electoral politics. It has been assumed that this entails election literacy and confidence that the electoral process is appropriate and efficacious in selecting governments and promoting policies that will benefit the individual voter (Agyiri, 2012).

Voter Education is the process by which citizens are educated on how to register and vote, develop a sense of civic duty to participate in the electoral process, and learn to respect the out-come of legitimate elections. The role of voter education in any electoral process cannot be under estimated. It is very important that voter education is given in order for elections to be successful. Voters are ready, willing and able to participate in electoral politics when enough education had been given (NDI, 1999; Akintyo, 2010; Gadana, 2015).

Voter education takes place to assist the election administration in its task of delivering a free, fair, efficient and cost-effective election. It encompasses the basic voter information that every voter must have in order to arrive prepared at the voting station and

vote on the dedicated voting day(s). Voter education sensitizes the electorate on the importance of participating in elections. Voter education provides the background attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge among citizens that stimulate and consolidate democracy. During an election, this education will ensure effective organization and activism by citizens in support of parties and/or causes, behavior by citizens that is appropriate to a peaceful election, acceptance of results and tolerance of the competition and opposition (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2016). Throwing more insight on voter education, the Electoral Knowledge Network (2016) asserts thus;

Basic voter education typically addresses voters' motivation and preparedness to participate fully in elections. It pertains to relatively more complex types of information about voting and the electoral process and is concerned with concepts such as the link between basic human rights and voting rights; the role, responsibilities and rights of voters; the relationship between elections and democracy and the conditions necessary for democratic elections; secrecy of the ballot; why each vote is important and its impact on public accountability; and how votes translate into seats. Such concepts involve explanation, not just a statement of facts. Voter education requires more lead time for implementation than voter information and, ideally, should be undertaken on an on-going basis. This type of information is most often provided by election authorities and civil society organisations.

Civic education deals with broader concepts underpinning a democratic society such as the respective roles and responsibilities of citizens, government, political and special interests, the mass media, and the business and non-profit sectors, as well as the significance of periodic and competitive elections. It emphasizes not only citizen awareness but citizen participation in all aspects of democratic society. Civic education is a continual process, not tied to the electoral cycle. Voter information and voter education, however, may be part of larger civic education endeavours. Civic education may be carried out through the school and university system, through civil society organisations, and perhaps by some state agencies, although not necessarily the election authority (Electoral Knowledge Network, 2016).

Civic education has a broader concept and is aimed at conveying knowledge of a country's political system and context. Civic education might include information on the system of government; the nature and powers of the offices to be filled in an election; the principal economic, social and political issues

facing the nation; the value of democracy; the equal rights of women and men; and the importance of peace and national reconciliation (Bjork, 2005, cited in Agyiri, 2012).

A broader engagement is civic education. Civic education and voter education are organically linked and yet distinct. Civic education could be broadly defined as inculcating in citizens those skills, values and behaviors that are thought to be necessary for a stable and effective democracy. Its broad goals are three fold: a) To introduce citizens to the basic rules and institutional features of democratic political systems and to provide them with knowledge about democratic rights and practices; b) To convey a specific set of values thought to be essential to democratic citizenship such as political tolerance, trust in the democratic process, respect for the rule of law, and compromise; and c) To encourage responsible and informed political participation—defined as a cluster of activities including voting, working in campaigns, contacting officials, lodging complaints, attending meetings, and contributing money. Voter education on the other hand could be considered as a subset of civil education, focusing more specifically on the role of the citizen as a voter. This will include knowledge around several issues including the duties and obligations of a voter, voting procedure, political parties and candidates, electoral offences, counting procedures, the responsibilities of the election management body and mandate protection. Indeed, voter education is designed to equip the citizen with knowledge about the entire gamut of the electoral process (USAID, 2002; cited in Ibeanu, 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was used to carry out the study. The choice of this research method was predicted on the nature of the study which involved eliciting responses of residents of south-south Nigeria on the subject of investigation. Winner and Dominick (2005 P.17) notes that studies concerning Public Assessment, perception o response on the issued and many impact studies definitely require the survey design.

The residents of the South-South Zone constituted the population of the study. A breakdown of the population of the zone according to the 2006 population census shuns: Akwa Ibom has 3,902.05. Bayelsa has 1.704.515, Cross River has 2.892.998, Delta has 4.112.445, Edo has 2.176.947 while Rivers has 5.198.716. This implies that the Zone has a total population of 19,987.662

To ensure the population is up to date to year 2022 the researcher did a projection using an annual growth

ratio of 3.2 percent as recommended by the United Nations Development Programmed (UNDP). The projection formula provided that  $PP = GP \times Pi \times I$

Where PP = Projected Population

GP = Given Population (as at last census)

Pi = Population Increase Index

I = Period between the given population and year of study

Thus  $PP = 19.987.662$ ,  $Pi = 3.2\%$  or  $0.032$ ,  $2006 - 2022 = 16$

$PP = 19.987.662 \times 0.032 \times 16 = 10.233.683$

Going by this projection, the population of South – South geographical Zone increased over the last sixteen years after the 2006 census by 10.233.683. When added to the population, it gave  $19.987.662 + 10.233.683 = 30.221.345$ . Based on the Projection, the Population of the study, therefore 30.221.345.

Due to the Largeness of the population size for the study, the researcher systematically selected a manageable but representative sample size for the study. In determining the sample size Australian National Bureau of Statics online sample size calculator shall be used with a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 0.05.

**Sample Size Calculator**

Confidence Level:  95%  99%

Confidence Interval (%):

Population size:   
Do not use commas

Sample size needed:

#### Steps:

1. Confidence Level: Click desired level
2. Confidence Interval: Enter %, such as 4.9 or 5.0
3. Population: Enter size if finite; otherwise, leave blank.
4. Hit calculate button

#### Return to Wimmer Dominick

Going by what is on the calculator, the sample size was 385

The sampling procedure that was used for this study is the multi-stage sampling technique. Osuala (2005, p.134) asserts that “it is a sampling technique where more than one stage of selection is used... Clusters are often geographical areas such as local government, wards or institutions, such as schools, hospitals and employee... A three-stage sample has three separate stages of selection, for example,

selection from states, local governments, and then wards.” This technique, which is also known as multi-stage sampling calls for the use of several sampling methods or stages of a particular method in ensuring true representation, especially when the population is large and complex (Chukwuemeka, 2002, p.111). In line with the above, the stages of sampling technique that will be used for this study are presented below:

**Stage one:** Cluster sampling technique was used to categorise the six (6) States of the zone into six clusters. The States are Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers State

**Stage two:** In the States are local government areas, the purposive sampling technique was used to select the State Capital of each of the States on the basis of media concentration and easy accessibility. This implication is that Uyo was studied for Akwa-Ibom State, Yenagoa was studied for Bayelsa State, Calabar was studied for Cross-River State, Benin City was studied for Edo State while for Rivers, Port-Harcourt was studied.

**Stage three:** In the selected States were individuals. The researcher purposively administered the instrument on only those who were exposed to INEC’s voter education messages.

Sequel to the research design chosen for the study, the researcher used questionnaire as the measuring instrument. The instrument is considered very appropriate because it helped to generate data that were very expedient in addressing the research questions of the study. The instrument were divided into two-sections-A and B. Section A constituted questions that were helpful in eliciting the demographics of the respondents while section B contained questions that aimed at eliciting responses which helped in addressing the research questions.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents with the help of seven research assistants. After administering the questionnaire, the researcher as well as the research assistants waited for about 6 minutes to collect the administered copies from the respondents. There was also provision for interpretation of the questions in indigenous languages to respondents who may not be able to communicate in English language.

At the end of the administration and collection of copies of the instrument, the generated data were analysed using simple percentages and presented in tables with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. This statistical package would be very helpful for the analysis of the collected data. As already indicated, it shall be carefully deployed to properly analyse the collected data including the test of the hypotheses.



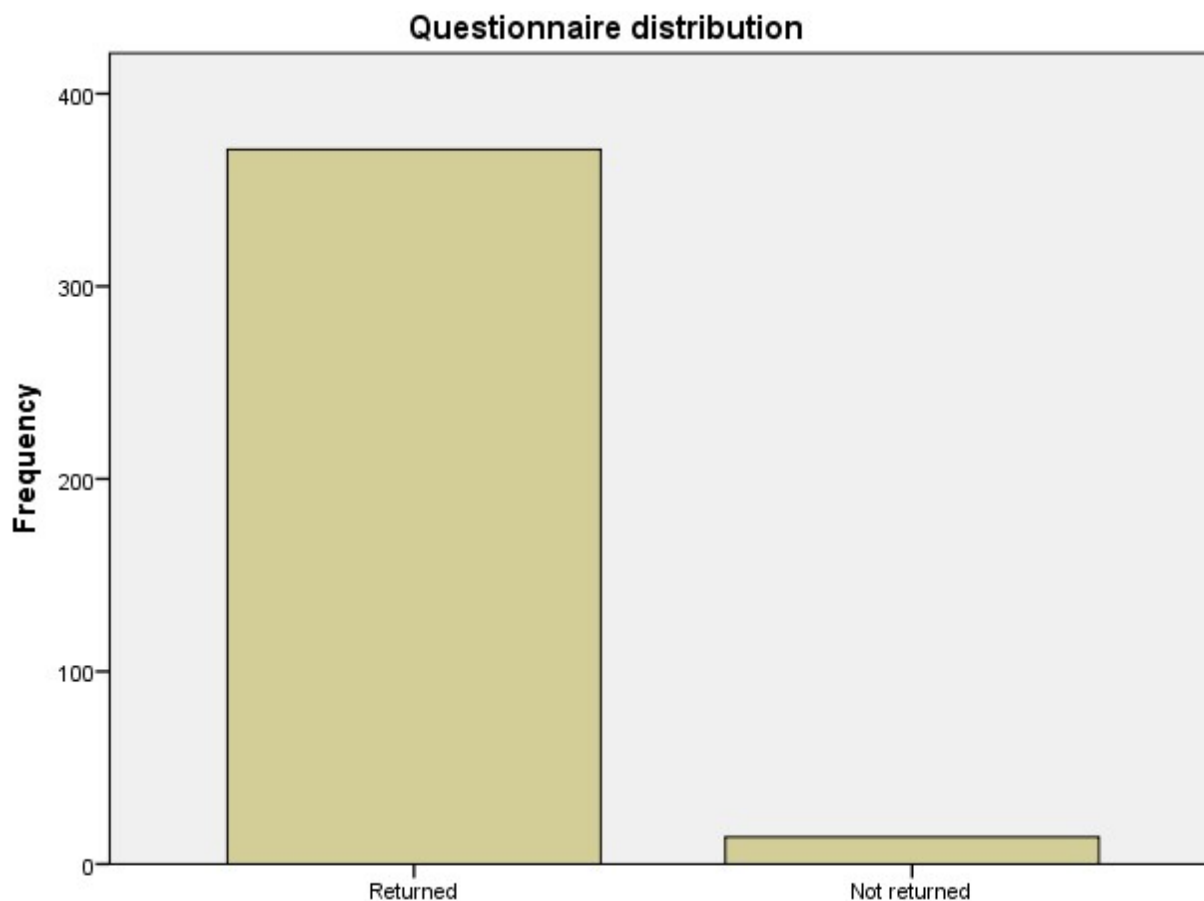
**DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Data presentation**

The data collected were analysed and presented below

**Table and Chart 4.1.1: Questionnaire distribution**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Returned	371	96.4	96.4	96.4
	Not returned	14	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

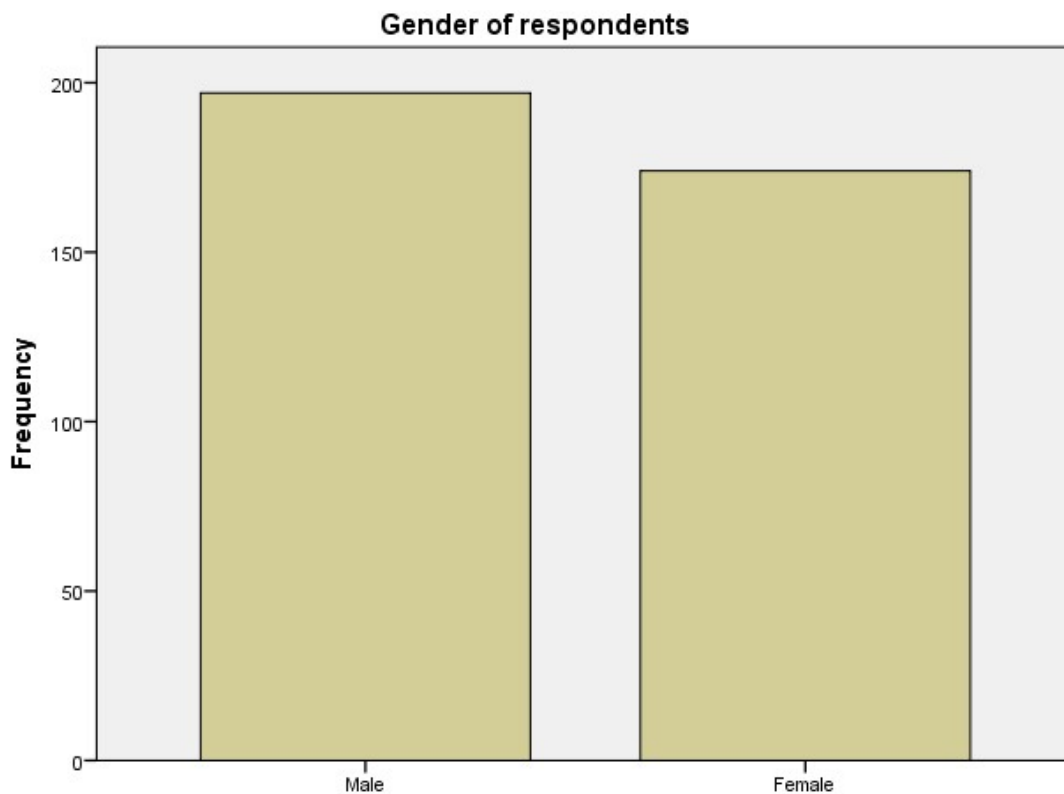


**Questionnaire distribution**

The above table and chart (4.1.1) show that 371 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. A total of 371 copies representing 96.4% were returned while 14 copies representing 3.6% were not returned. Consequently, the returned 371 copies were used for the study.

**Table and Chart 4.1.2: Gender of respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	197	53.1	53.1	53.1
	Female	174	46.9	46.9	100.0
	Total	371	100.0	100.0	



**Gender of respondents**

Table and chart 4.1.2 above show that 197 respondents representing 53.1% were male while 174 respondents representing 46.9% were female. The implication is that male respondents were more than the female.

**Table and Chart 4.1.3: Age brackets of respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-30	143	38.5	38.5	38.5
	31-40	171	46.1	46.1	84.6
	41-50	53	14.3	14.3	98.9
	51 and above	4	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	371	100.0	100.0	

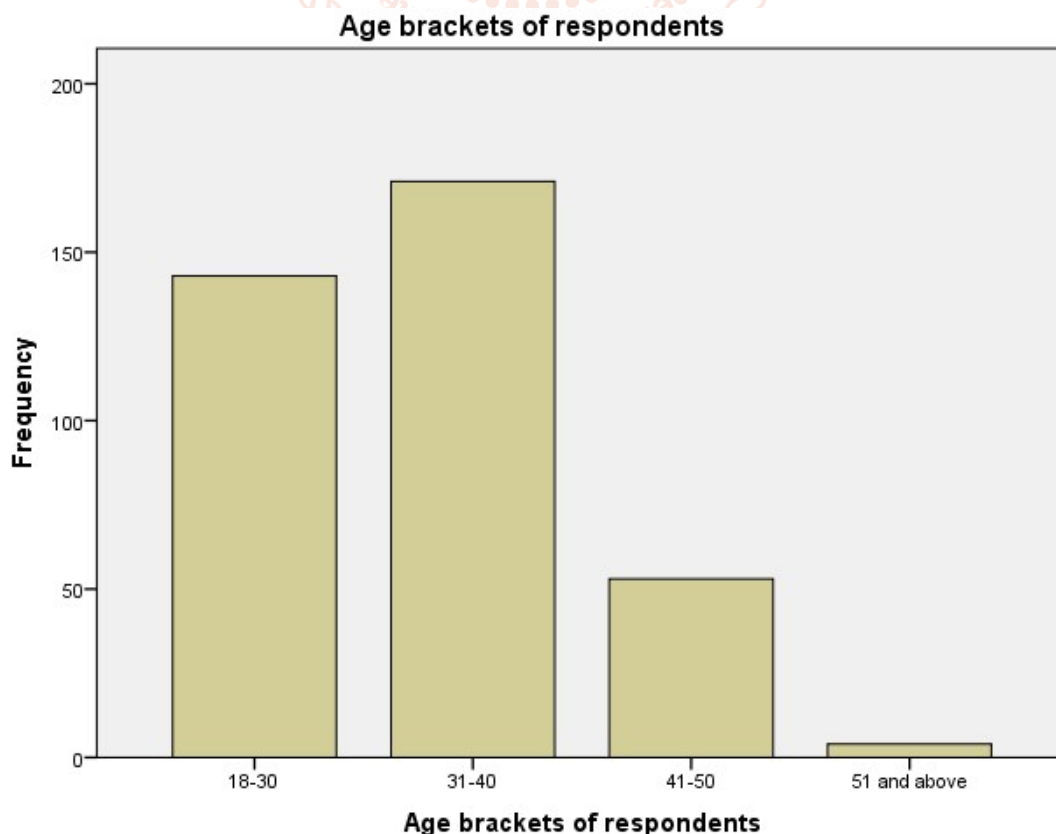


Table and chart 4.1.3 above show that 143 respondents representing 38.5% were in the age bracket of 18-30, 171 respondents representing 46.1% were in the age range of 31-40, 53 respondents representing 14.3% were in the bracket of 41-50 while 4 respondents representing 1.1% were in the range of 51 and above.

**Table and Chart 4.1.4: Marital Statuses of respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	202	54.4	54.4	54.4
	Married	161	43.4	43.4	97.8
	Divorced	2	.5	.5	98.4
	Widowed	6	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	371	100.0	100.0	

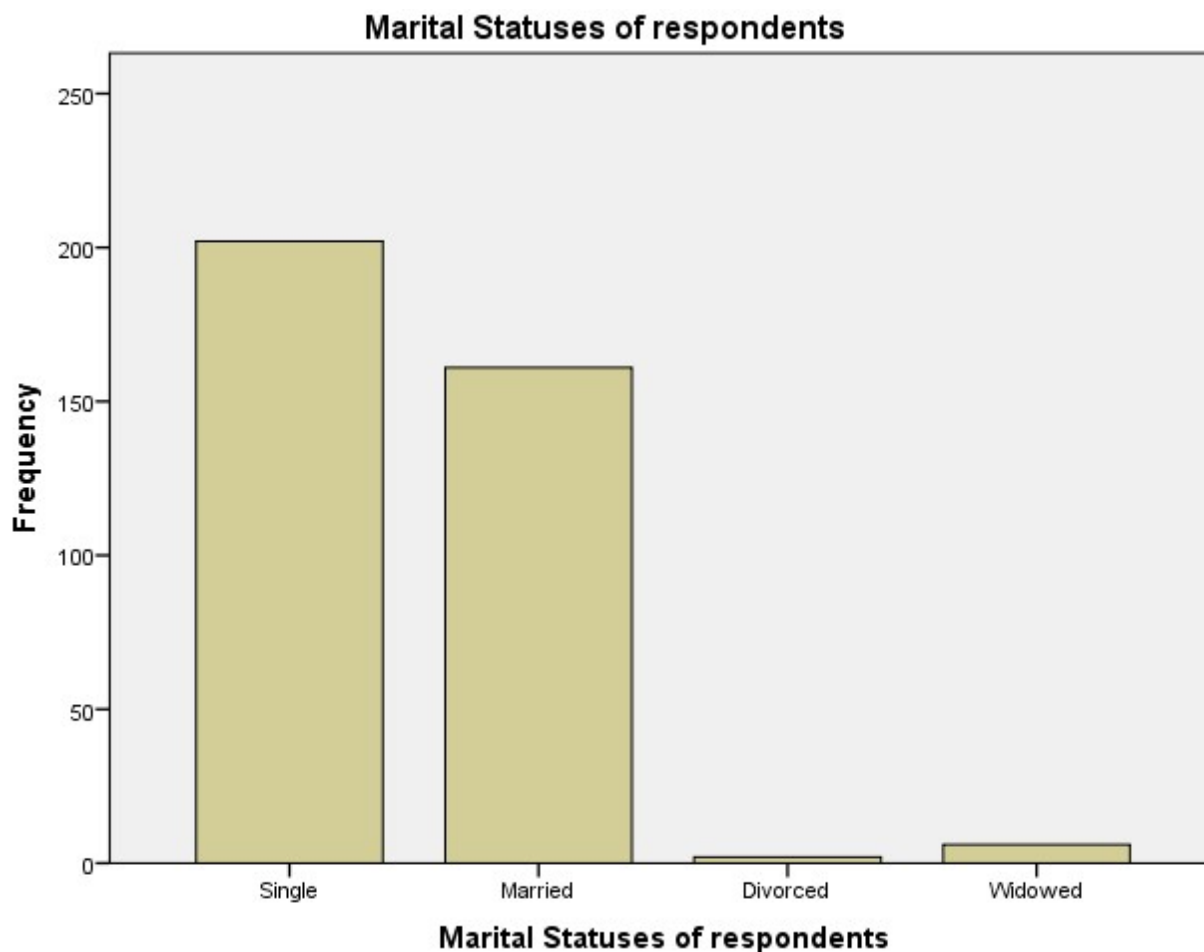
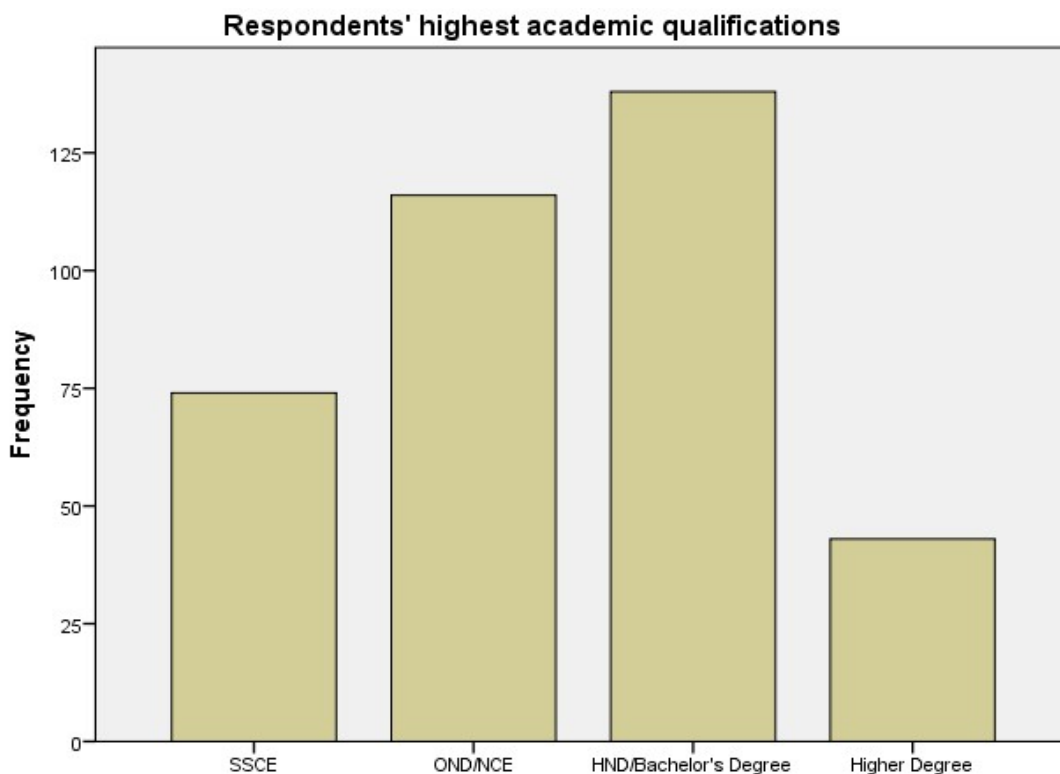


Table and chart 4.1.4 above show that 202 respondents representing 54.4% were single, 161 respondents representing 43.4% were married, 2 respondents representing 0.5% were divorced while 6 respondents representing 1.6% were widowed.

**Table and Chart 4.1.5: Respondents' highest academic qualifications**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SSCE	74	19.9	19.9	19.9
	OND/NCE	116	31.3	31.3	51.2
	HND/Bachelor's Degree	138	37.2	37.2	88.4
	Higher Degree	43	11.6	11.6	100.0
	Total	371	100.0	100.0	



**Respondents' highest academic qualifications**

Table and chart 4.1.5 above shows that 74 respondents representing 19.9% were had senior secondary certificate as their highest academic qualifications, 116 respondents representing 31.3% had either OND/NCE, 138 respondents representing 37.2% had either HND/Bachelor’s Degree while 43 respondents representing 11.6% had higher degrees.

**Table and Chart 4.1.6: Respondents' occupation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed	66	17.8	17.8	17.8
	Business	45	12.1	12.1	29.9
	Civil/public servant	170	45.8	45.8	75.7
	Student	79	21.3	21.3	97.0
	Artisan/craft	11	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	371	100.0	100.0	

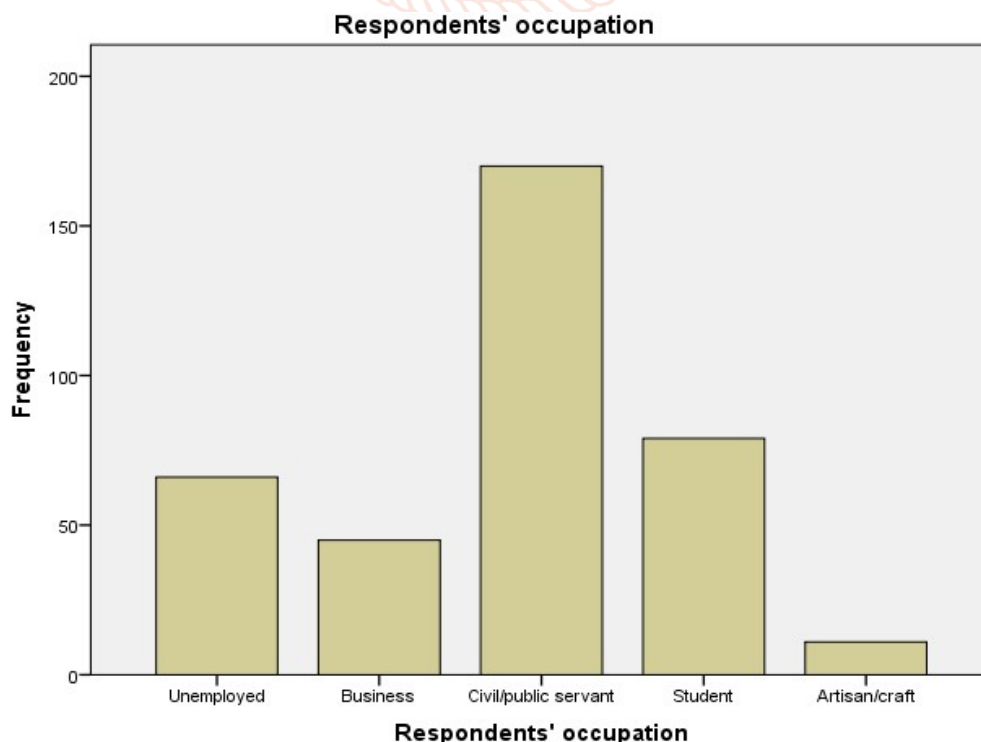
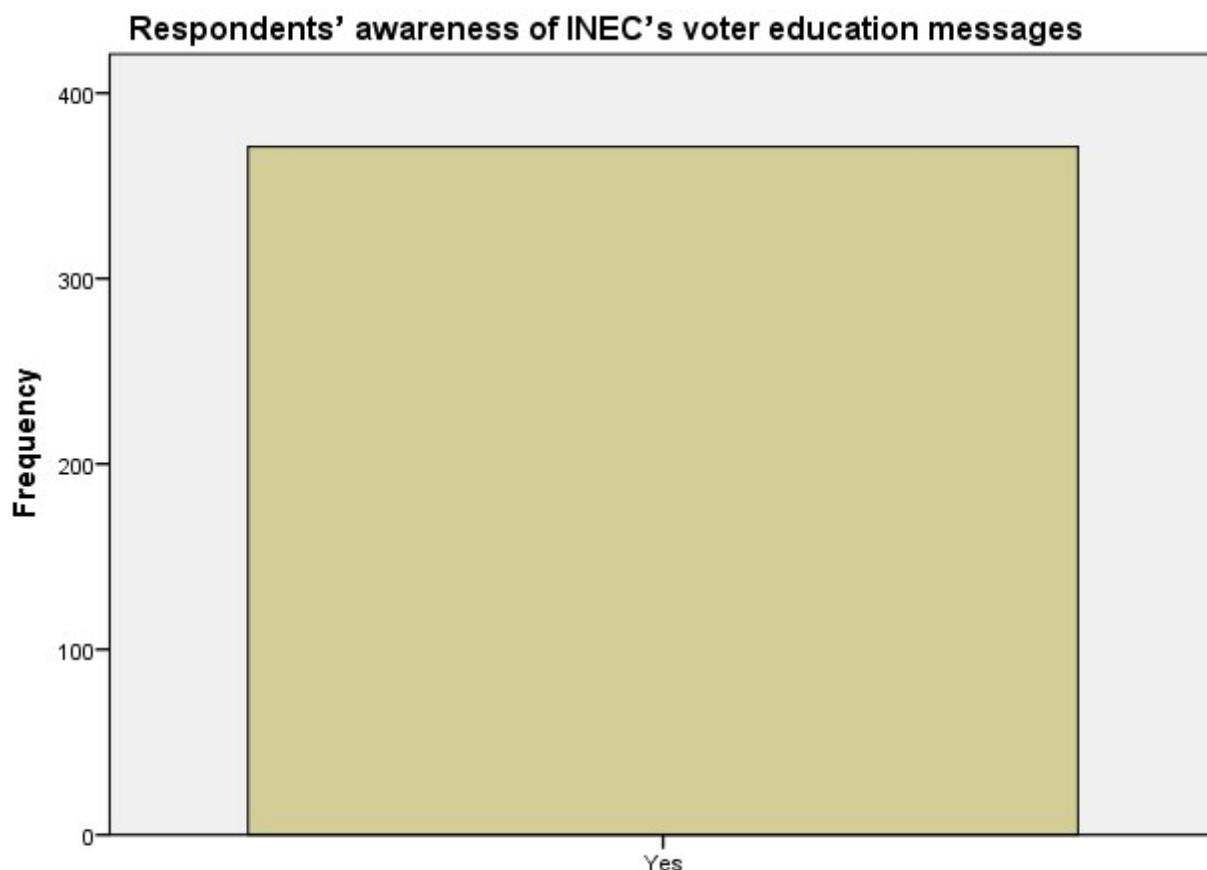


Table and chart 4.1.6 above show respondents' occupation. From the table and chart, 66 respondents representing 17.8% were not employed, 45 respondents representing 12.1% were into business, 170 respondents representing 45.8% were civil/public servants, 79 respondents representing 21.3% were students while 11 respondents representing 3.0% were artisans/craft persons.

**Table and Chart 4.1.7: Respondents' awareness of INEC's voter education messages**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	371	100.0	100.0	100.0
	No	0	0	0	0
	Not sure	0	0	0	0
	Total	371	100.0	100.0	



**Respondents' awareness of INEC's voter education messages**

Table and chart 4.1.7 above show the responses of respondents on whether they are aware of INEC's voter education messages. Data in the table and chart show that all the 371 respondents representing 100% are aware of INEC's voter education messages.

**Table and Chart 4.1.8: Frequency of respondents' exposure to INEC's voter education messages**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Everyday	268	72.2	72.2	72.2
	Once in a while	88	23.7	23.7	96.0
	Not sure	15	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	371	100.0	100.0	

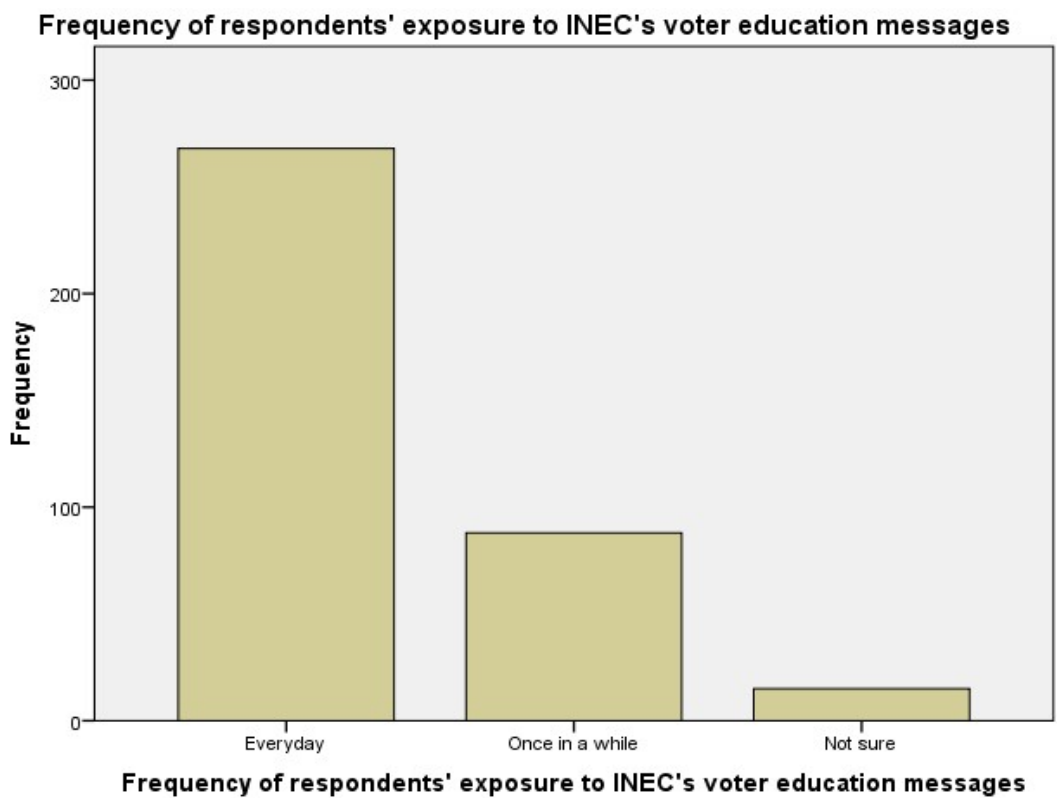


Table and chart 4.1.8 above shows the responses of respondents on the frequency at which they are exposed to INEC’s voter education messages. It shows that 268 respondents representing 72.2% were exposed to the messages everyday, 88 respondents representing 23.7% were once in a while exposed to the messages while 15 respondents representing 4.0% were not sure of their frequency of exposure to the messages.

**Table and Chart 4.1.9: Respondents' understanding of INEC's voter education materials**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very understandable	37	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Not too clear to me	269	72.5	72.5	82.5
	Not understandable at all	61	16.4	16.4	98.9
	Not sure	4	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total		371	100.0	100.0	

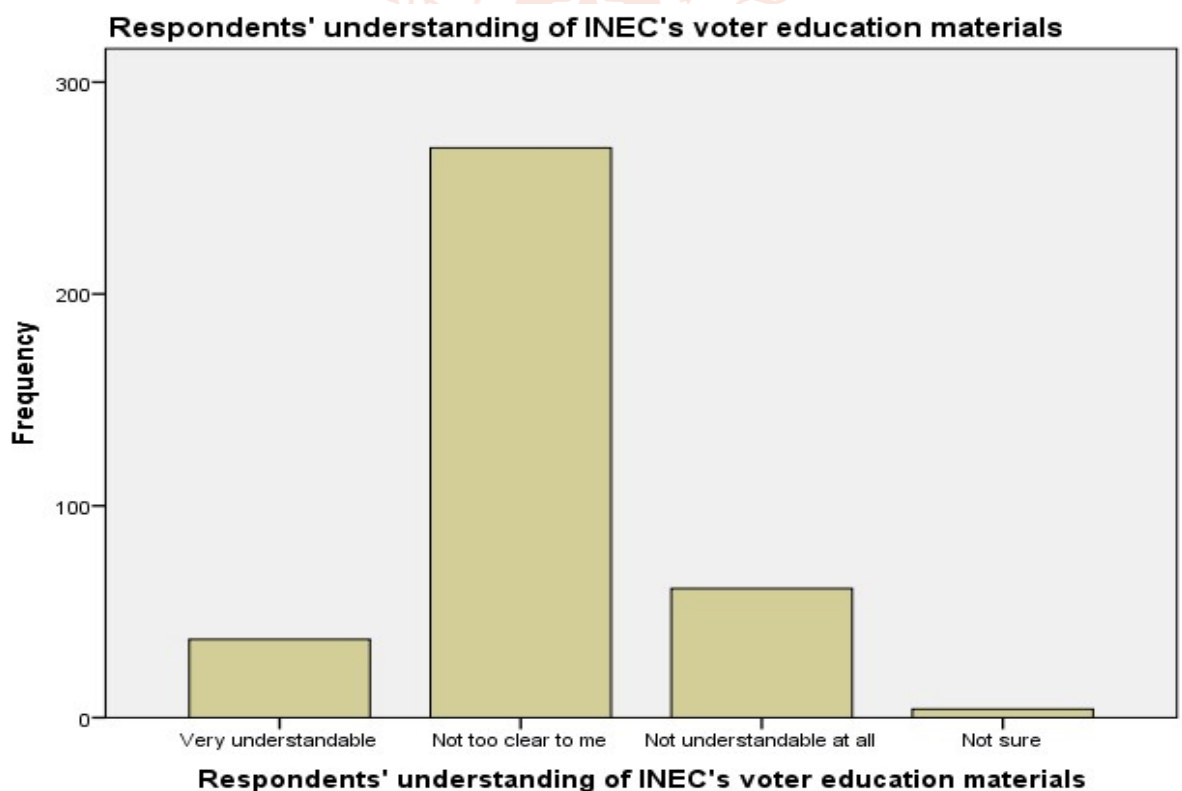
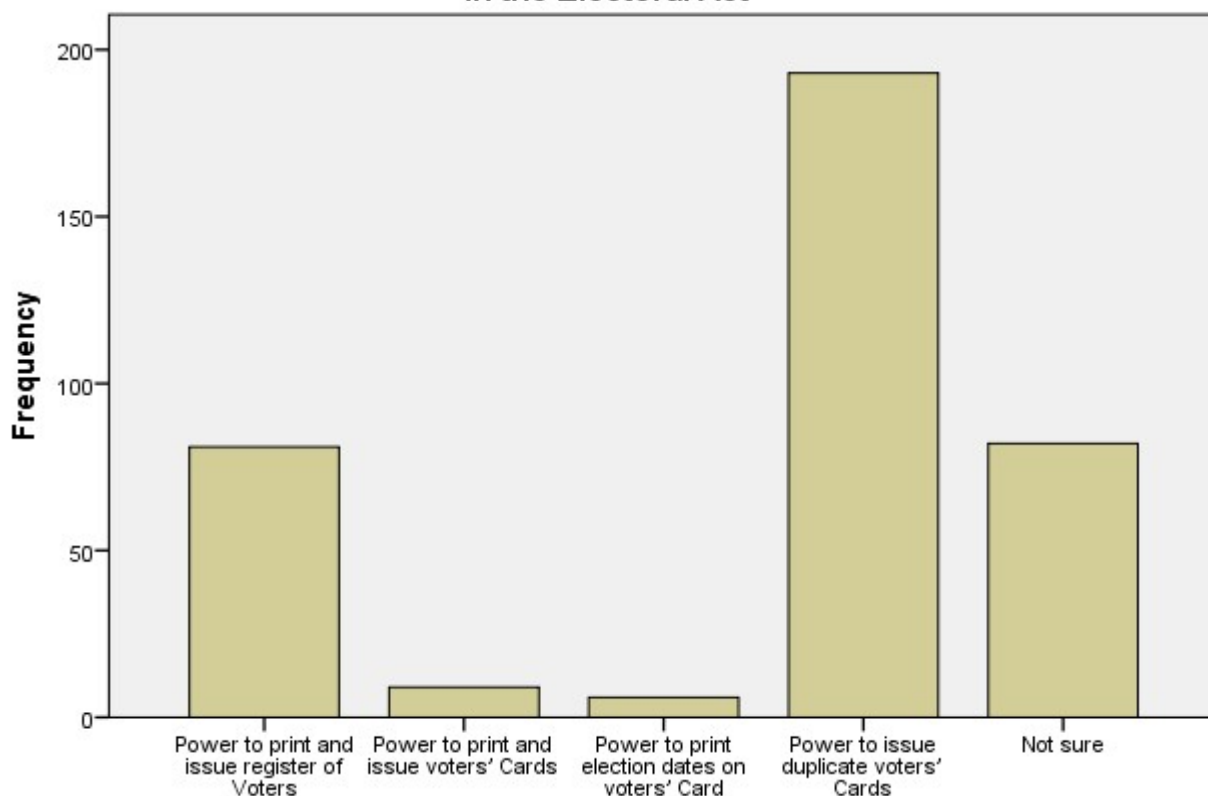


Table and chart 4.1.9 above shows the respondents’ understanding of INEC’s voter education materials. The table and chart show that 37 respondents representing 10.0% indicated that the materials are very understandable to them, 269 respondents representing 72.5% said the materials are not too clear to them, 61 respondents representing 16.4% stated the materials were not understandable to them at all while 4 respondents representing 1.1% were not sure of their level of understanding of the materials.

**Table and Chart 4.1.10: Respondents' knowledge of INEC's powers on voter registration as provided for in the Electoral Act**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Power to print and issue register of Voters	81	21.8	21.8	21.8
	Power to print and issue voters’ Cards	9	2.4	2.4	24.3
	Power to print election dates on voters’ Card	6	1.6	1.6	25.9
	Power to issue duplicate voters’ Cards	193	52.0	52.0	77.9
	Not sure	82	22.1	22.1	100.0
Total		371	100.0	100.0	

**Respondents' knowledge of INEC's powers on voter registration as provided for in the Electoral Act**



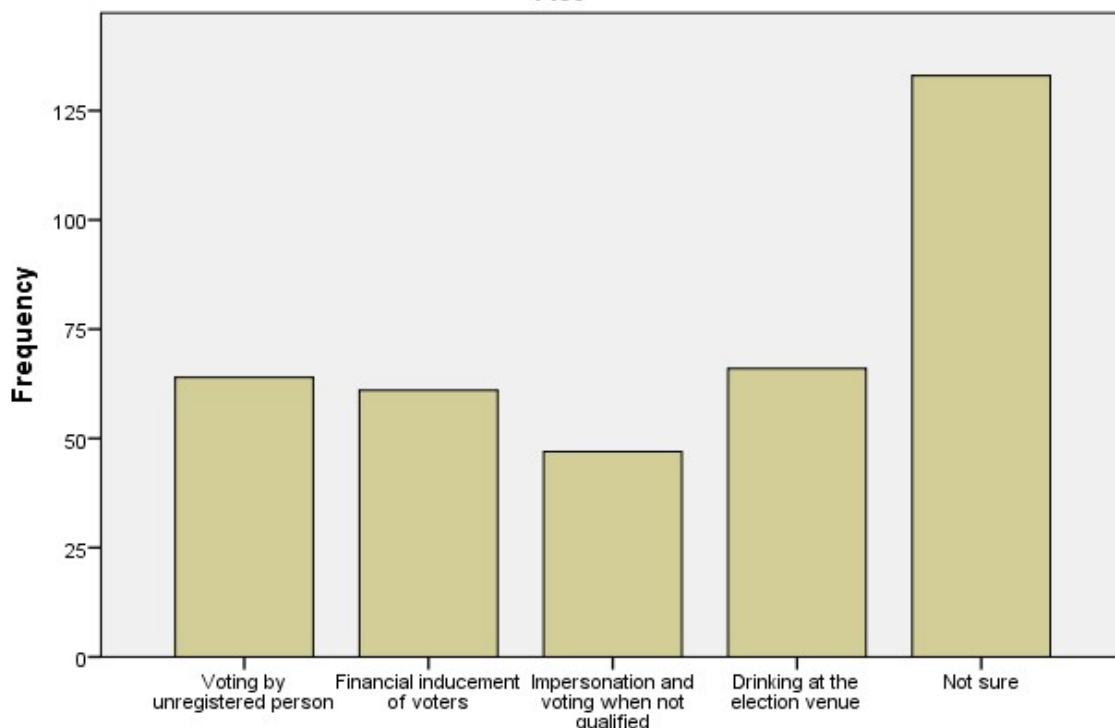
**Respondents' knowledge of INEC's powers on voter registration as provided for in the Electoral Act**

Table and chart 4.1.10 above shows the respondents’ responses on their knowledge of the powers of INEC in voter registration as provided for by the Electoral Act. The respondents were asked to identify the option among INEC’s voter registrations powers that is not empowered by the Electoral Act. Data in the table and chart indicate that 81 respondents representing 21.8% indicated power to print and issue register of voters, 9 respondents representing 2.4% stated power to print and issue voters’ cards, 6 respondents representing 1.6% indicated power to print election dates on voters’ card, 193 respondents representing 52.0% power to issue duplicate voters’ cards, while 82 respondents representing 22.1% were not sure.

**Table and Chart 4.1.11: Respondents' knowledge of the electoral offences as contained in the Electoral Act**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Voting by unregistered person	64	17.3	17.3	17.3
	Financial inducement of voters	61	16.4	16.4	33.7
	Impersonation and voting when not qualified	47	12.7	12.7	46.4
	Drinking at the election venue	66	17.8	17.8	64.2
	Not sure	133	35.8	35.8	100.0
	Total		371	100.0	100.0

**Respondents' knowledge of the electoral offences as contained in the Electoral Act**



**Respondents' knowledge of the electoral offences as contained in the Electoral Act**

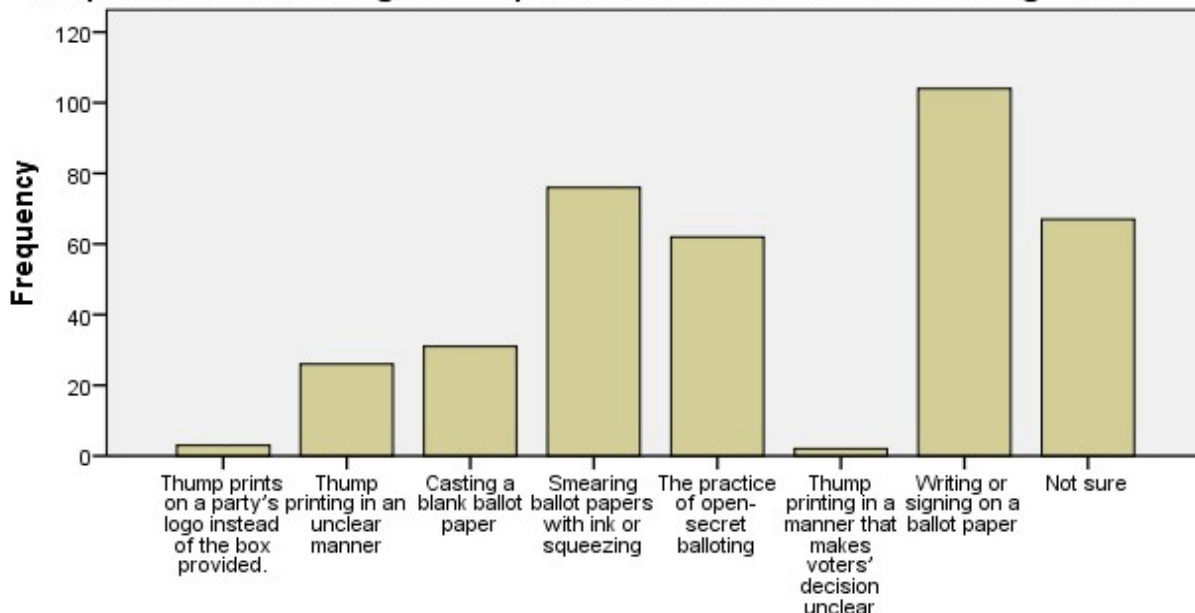
Table and chart 4.1.11 above shows the respondents' knowledge of the electoral offences as contained in the Electoral Act. The respondents were asked to identify the option that is not provided for by the Electoral Act. Data in the table and chart indicate that 64 respondents representing 17.3% indicated voting by unregistered person, 61 respondents representing 16.4% stated financial inducement of voters, 47 respondents representing 12.7% indicated impersonation and voting when not qualified, 66 respondents representing 17.8% said drinking at the election venue, while 133 respondents representing 35.8% were not sure.

**Table and Chart 4.1.12: Respondents' knowledge of the practices that could lead to voiding of votes**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Thump prints on a party's logo instead of the box provided.	3	.8	.8	.8
	Thump printing in an unclear manner	26	7.0	7.0	7.8
	Casting a blank ballot paper	31	8.4	8.4	16.2
	Smearing ballot papers with ink or squeezing	76	20.5	20.5	36.7
	The practice of open-secret balloting	62	16.7	16.7	53.4
	Thump printing in a manner that makes voters' decision unclear	2	.5	.5	53.9
	Writing or signing on a ballot paper	104	28.0	28.0	81.9
	Not sure	67	18.1	18.1	100.0
Total		371	100.0	100.0	



**Respondents' knowledge of the practices that could lead to voiding of votes**



**Respondents' knowledge of the practices that could lead to voiding of votes**

Table and chart 4.1.12 above shows respondents' knowledge of the practices that could lead to voiding of votes. A total of 3 respondents representing 0.8% stated thump prints on a party's logo instead of the box provided, 26 respondents representing 7.0% stated thump printing in an unclear manner, 31 respondents representing 8.4% said casting a blank ballot paper, 76 respondents representing 20.5% indicated smearing ballot papers with ink or squeezing, 62 respondents representing 16.7% stated the practice of open-secret balloting, 2 respondents representing 0.5% indicated thump printing in a manner that makes voters' decision unclear, 104 respondents representing 28.0% indicated writing or signing on a ballot paper while 67 respondents representing 18.1% stated that they were not sure.

**Discussion of Findings**

The research questions were carefully addressed using relevant the data presented in various tables and charts above

**Research Question One: Are INEC's voter education materials comprehensible among residents of South-South Nigeria?**

This research question was put forward to find out from the residents whether the INEC's voter education materials they are exposed to were understandable to them. Data in table and chart 4.1.9 above were used to address this research question. The table and chart show the respondents' understanding of INEC's voter education materials. A total of 37 respondents representing 10.0% indicated that the materials were very understandable to them, 269 respondents representing 72.5% said the materials were not too clear to them, 61 respondents representing 16.4% stated that the materials were not understandable to them at all while 4 respondents representing 1.1% were not sure of their level of understanding of the materials. The implication is that INEC's voter education materials are not very comprehensible to majority of the respondents. In line with this finding, Ezechinyere, (2014) found that INEC's voter education materials were not very clear in Ebonyi State.

**Research Question Two: What is the level to which INEC's voter education messages have enhanced the knowledge of the Electoral Act among residents of South-South Nigeria?**

This research question sought to ascertain the level at which INEC's voter education messages have promoted respondents' knowledge of the Electoral Act. Data in tables and charts 4.1.10 and 4.1.11 above were used to address this research question. Table and chart 4.1.10 shows respondents' knowledge of the powers of INEC in voter registration as provided for by the Electoral Act. The respondents were asked to identify the option among INEC's voter registrations powers that is not empowered by the Electoral Act. Data in the table and chart indicate that majority of the respondents (193 respondents representing 52.0%) wrongly indicated the power to issue duplicate voters' cards. Further to ascertaining their knowledge of the Act, the respondents' knowledge of the electoral offences contained in the Act was ascertained. Table and chart 4.1.11 above shows the respondents' knowledge of the electoral offences as contained in the Electoral Act. The respondents were asked to identify the option that is not provided for by the Electoral Act. Data showed that majority of the respondents (133 respondents representing 35.8%) could not identify correct option. This implies that

INEC's voter education messages have not significantly promoted respondents' knowledge of the Electoral Act. Udo, (2018) found that INEC's voter education efforts have only poorly influenced the knowledge of the Electoral Act.

### **Research Question Three: To what extent have INEC's voter education messages promoted the knowledge of practices that could void votes among residents of South-South Nigeria?**

This particular research question focused on the extent to which INEC's voter education messages have promoted the knowledge of the practices that could lead void votes. Data in table and chart 4.1.12 above were used to address this research question. The table and chart show respondents' knowledge of the practices that could lead to voiding of votes. A total of 3 respondents representing 0.8% stated thump prints on a party's logo instead of the box provided, 26 respondents representing 7.0% stated thump printing in an unclear manner, 31 respondents representing 8.4% said casting a blank ballot paper, 76 respondents representing 20.5% indicated smearing ballot papers with ink or squeezing, 62 respondents representing 16.7% stated the practice of open-secret balloting, 2 respondents representing 0.5% indicated thump printing in a manner that makes voters' decision unclear, 104 respondents representing 28.0% indicated writing or signing on a ballot paper while 67 respondents representing 18.1% stated that they were not sure. The implication is that INEC's voter education messages have not had any significant effect on respondents' knowledge of the practices that could lead to voiding of votes. Accordingly, Godana, (2015) did a study on the Influence of Voter Education Approaches on Elections Outcome in Isiolo North Constituency, Isiolo County, Kenya, and found that the voter education messages have not adequately made the residents to know how to prevent their votes to be voided.

### **Conclusion**

In line with the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that INEC voter education messages are yet to effectively herald the desired results which among other things are promotion of knowledge of the Electoral Act, knowledge on the voting procedures in elections including appropriate casting of ballots as well as effective political participation which among others include participation in voter registration, membership of political parties, contesting for political offices and proceeding to cast votes during elections.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. INEC should repackage its voter education materials in such manner that it will be well understood by the various categories of the citizens such as the blind, deaf and dumb, illiterate as well as the literate.
2. INEC's voter education messages should target the promotion of the knowledge of the Electoral Act among the residents so that including knowledge of voting procedures in elections and how voiding of votes could be prevented.
3. There is also the need for INEC to design well thought-out voter education strategy that will engender effective political participation among the residents. This could be done by designing messages aimed at engendering participation in voter registration, membership of political parties, contesting for political offices and proceeding to cast votes during elections.

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