

## IMPACT OF KADUNA STATE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION IN CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

By

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### ABSTRACT

*As par the 1999 constitution, the institution saddled with the responsibility of conducting election at the Local government level is the State Independent Electoral Commission. But unfortunately, the activities of these electoral bodies have been greeted and view with disappointment and regrets. This is unrelated to the Local Council elections that they have conducted since 1999 where the political parties in power always ends up winning almost all the elective slots. This was the case in Kaduna state as well until 2018 Local government elections where both the ruling political party and the opposition political parties shared in electoral victory and electoral loss. Such was also the case during 2021 Local Government Council elections. This was and is still in sharp contrast to what is existed in other States Local Council elections across the federation. It is against this backdrop that the study sort to find out the reason behind the uniqueness of Kaduna State Independent Electoral Commission (KAD-SIECOM) as regards to local government elections in Kaduna state Nigeria, the significant of KAD-SIECOM achievement on political evolution in the state, the sustainability of KAD-SIECOM success as regards to local government election in Kaduna state and using the KAD-SIECOM as a yardstick how a credible electoral management body should be in organizing free, fair and violence free elections. In achieving these objectives, the study adopted the system theory as the theoretical framework of analysis. The study finds out among others that the major behind this uniqueness and success of Kad-Siecom in conducting local government council election was the amendment to the laws regulating the activities of the Commission and the introduction of electronic voting machine in conducting the LG council elections using secondary method.*

**Keywords:** State, Independent Electoral Commission, Impact, Consolidation and Democracy.

### Introduction

Everywhere around the globe where local government areas were created, it was for the realization that, local government administration at the local level is the best way to bring and accelerate development much faster to the local communities (Matthew & Abdul, 2022, Godwin, 2018, Adeline, 2014, Wilson, 2011 % Arowolo, 2008). It is also meant to ensure local participation in the political and administrative processes of their communities and holding their representatives (political office holders) accountable for their actions and inactions (Etebom, & Junior, 2022, Kehinde, 2019, Abutudu, 2011, Fage, 2007, and Agagu, 2004). This is why Local Government Council's elections are held at a periodic interval to give the people the chance to elect, un-elect, re-elect these political leaders to ensure effective service delivery and this can

only be achieved through free and fair elections (Godwin & Sunday, 2023). It is through this said free and fair Local council election that the aspirants who the local people feel can bring about the provision of these services and can gain access to political positions in order to fulfil the social contract with the people.

There is no uniform approach in the world as to how these Local Government Councils' elections are conducted. While some countries entrusted this task to the central electoral body in charge of conducting nationwide election to conduct the Local Government Council's elections, others including Nigeria, entrust such task to a sub national electoral body purposely created for conducting elections at the Local government level (Matthew & Abdul, 2022, Johnson, 2017, Asaju, 2010).

Interestingly, Local Government Council election ab-initio did not take a uniform pattern during the early period of Local council's electioneering in Nigeria. The different regions that were in existence as at that time determined the method of administrating the Local Government Areas (Asaju, 2010, Obi, 2010, Ikeanyibe, 2009). Western region for example passes legislation in 1952 known as the Local Government Law that turn it into a modern form of grassroots self-government through elected representatives with fixed term of office (Inah, 2000). This legislature turned it away from the colonial system of native administration; a system that is run by traditional rulers, chiefs and elders. The Eastern region was actually the first region to introduce changes in the local administrative system through the introduction of the Local Government Law of 1950 (Amadi, 2000) which also provide for elected representatives with fixed term of office, hence, the changes in the Northern region of the country. The reform in the later region was not that of a radical shift in the colonial approach or framework was not totally discarded but retained with changes from sole native authority system 'where the emir act as the sole administration' to the Emir in council system (a system in which the Emir will be advised by his council but was not under any obligations to accept or work with the advice) (Massoud, 2013). The various reforms in these regions recorded minor success due to the fact that the various regional governments manipulated the election to ensure that their various political platforms dominated the electoral outcomes and activities of these Local Councils. In fact, the various regional premiers were as well the ministers of the local governments of their respective regions, and the inference from this is for them to have effective control over them ((Massoud, 2013).

This was the case until the military intervention into the Nigeria politics in 1966. Prior this period, we can strongly assert that the process that leads to the election of Local government representatives where applicable were anything but transparent and independent and this was as a result of the above stated fact (the interference of the electoral process by the regional governments).

The Local Government reforms of 1976 by the then military administration brought new light into the Local Government administrative system in the country and also introduced a uniform system of electing Local Government Council representatives (Etebom, & Junior, 2022, Ugwu, 2001 & Ajayi, 2000). The military preparation to return power to the civilian administration led to the conducting of Local Government Councils' election in 1976 by the military on non-party basis. But the intended wishes for the Local Government administration did not went as planned after the returned to the civilian government (second republic). The new government appointed caretaker committee which were made up of their party's faithful to run the affairs of the local government. This was only corrected with the returned of the military administration in 1983. The story went on like that even after the return of Nigeria to civilian

rule in 1999 where Local Government Council's election conducted by purposefully established State Independent Electoral Commission (SIECOM) across the country.

Generally, SIECOMs have been perceived in the negative light as it relates to strengthening of democracy in Nigeria. This is not unconnected with the fact that most SIECOMs across the country have organized elections at the Local Government level with ruling parties in the individual state of the federation often recording 100% electoral success and the opposition parties left in political bewilderment as was recently exemplified in the local government council's elections in Benue State (<https://guardian.ng>), Katsina State (See, the DailyPost, 2022/04/12), Ebonyi State ([APC wins all the seats in LG polls](#)), Oyo State (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com>), Delta State ([pdp clears all positions in Delta LG polls](#)), Sokoto State ([pdp clears sokoto Lg polls](#)) and Yobe State ([APC wins Yobe LG election](#)). In Kaduna state, similar tendencies exhibited themselves until the 2018 Local Government elections where both the ruling party and the opposition political parties shared in the electoral victories. Three years later (in 2021), similar scenario played itself yet again with opposition parties gaining even more strength and electoral victories against the ruling party, making the Kaduna case distinct from the rest of the country. It is against this background that this study is set investigates the following;

### **Objectives of the Research**

- i. To explain this uniqueness of Kad-Siecom.
- ii. To provide an insight into what credible election management body should be in organizing free, fair and violence free election.

### **Gap in literature**

In spite of the sizeable literature on electoral management bodies in Nigeria such as Wilson, (2011), Asaju, (2010), Arowo, (2008) & Amadi, (2000), Woleala Ekundayo, (2015); Wilson Goddey, (2013); Asaju K, (2010) among others. Most of these literatures on the subject matter are viewpoints based on generalization. Yawning gap still exist in the empirical study on State Independent Electoral Bodies; particularly Kaduna State Independent Electoral Commission and its impact in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria which is the focus of this study. This study examines the factors that made Kad-Siecom to stand out among other State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECOMs) across the country and how this can impact on the consolidation of democracy in the country.

### **Methodology**

This study obtained and relies on secondary sources of data such as textbooks, academic articles, journals, official government documents, newspapers and other online materials. Secondary data therefore is an account of a historical event or circumstance one or more steps removed from an original history.

### **Literature Review**

Elections are what defines democracy (Diamond, 2002), but the business of conducting these elections are not left at the mercy of just anybody but are handle by an organized institution established for the said purpose. The purpose of these institutions (electoral bodies) is not only to conduct elections but to also among others; registration of political parties, monitoring and supervising the activities of these political parties, registration, maintenance and updating of

voters register (Malcolm, Rebecca & Bruce, 2021, Holly, 2019, Okoh, 2005). This is in tandem with the modern way of administration and governance. This is why Ighodalo (2008), stated that the overall objective of establishing an electoral body is to ensure a viable electoral system and hitch free electoral management. Even though, the Nigeria constitution also made provisions for this modern way of administration, the reality of Nigerian Local government administration is quite different from what was envisage by the framers of the Nigerian constitution. Massoud, (2013), argued that the SIEC have the responsibility of conducting the local government elections but they are severely undermined in their capacity to deliver on free, fair and credible elections. According to him, this is mainly due to the present constructional provision which gives state governors the power to appoint Chairmen and Commissioners of the State Independent Electoral Commission. Ozohu and Paul, (2015), argued that Article 7 of the 1999 constitution empowers State governments to enact legislation with regard to “the establishment, structure, composition and functions” of democratically elected Local Government Councils but these provisions have been abused by State government. Wilson, (2013), is of the view that with the State governments appointing and controlling State Independent Electoral Commission, the impact is that in most cases, the Local Government elections are conducted based on the dictates of the party in power in the state, and not to satisfy the democratic will of the local people. According to him, the political party in government relying on the State government powers select those that would run the affairs of these Local Government Areas through election rigging and abuse of electoral processes. Onyekachi, (2016), argued that Local Governments are required to choose their leaders through elections but Instead of obeying this electioneering procedure of democratic governance as laid down by the constitution, it is being subverted with the appointment of caretaker committee by the State governors. According to him, this actions by the State governor denies the rural people the opportunity of exercising their democratic rights of voting.

As par the provisions of the 1999 constitution, Mu’azu, Ibrahim, Kabir, and Haruna (2017) argued that the affairs of the Local Government in Nigeria should be manned by duly elected persons based on the elections conducted by the State Independent Electoral Commission. But unfortunately, they contended, there is an adverse application of the said constitutional provision. According to them, looking at those that are saddled with the powers or responsibilities to run the affairs as chairmen of the Local Governments in Nigeria are not elected by the people but instead they are appointed by the State Governors. Citing as an example, on 2nd March, 2016, the Governor of Gombe State, Ibrahim Hassan Dan Kwambo while swearing in the Caretaker Chairmen he appointed said ‘they were appointed based on the powers conferred on him by Section 79, sub section (3) and (4) of the Gombe State Independent Electoral Commission (GOSIEC) and Election Amendment Law 2013. But the provision of the law said elected representative and not appointed representative. Wilson, (2013), argued that on several occasions, the States of Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers truncated the tenure of the democratically elected councils and replaced them with members of the ruling political party in the States, as caretaker committees. In most cases, the State governments decided not to conduct elections for the (Local) councils, as in the case of Anambra State which ran a caretaker system for over six years.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of analysis adopted for this research is the System Theory. The systems approach was originally in the biological and engineering sciences before it was adapted

to social sciences. As a matter of fact, it is regarded as a pioneering model of political analysis. The systems theory sees phenomena as components of an interrelated whole. The systems approach is primarily concerned with the analysis of a system in its entirety. As system here implies that something consisting of a set (finite or infinite) of entities among which a set of relation is specified, so that deductions are possible from relations to others or from the relations to others or from the relations among the entities to the behavior or the history of the system (Talcott, 1951). From the above, a system can be seen as a set of independent parts or components of a given entity. As a process, it involves relating with one another in an interdependent manner. It also entails interaction with the environment.

Any system is viewed as a set of interactions involving three phases, the input, conversion and output. As a framework for political analysis, the systems theory is rooted in the work of David Easton. In Easton's terminology, the political system receives inputs from the environments in the form of demands and supports; it produces outputs in the form of policies and decisions. The outputs flow back in to the environment through a feedback mechanism, given rise to fresh demand.

Easton characterized demands as the raw materials out which finished product called decisions are manufactured. He described supports as the energy in the forms of action or orientation enabling the political system to convert the demands into authoritative decisions and policies. Demands also may arise from any sources such as the politicians, administrators, opinion leaders and the people as in this case, the demand from these sources for introducing electronic voting.

### **Relevance of the Theory**

The relevance of this theory is based on the fact that it helps us understand that through taking the right policies (in this case for example the deployment of Electronic Voting Machines) by the system resulting from the demands made to the system by the people (the demand for conducting free, fair and credible elections) and supports (from the State government and other stakeholders), a system can function credibly and effectively. This is to say, the Kaduna State Independent Electoral Commission was able to meet the expectations of the people because it receives the right input, support and feedbacks from the general public, stakeholders and the State government.

### **Limitations of the Theory**

Some scholars criticized the approach for making things too mechanistic by using the term "input", "output", "feedback", "environment" and the like. The scholars argued that Easton and others have make use of the terms without suggesting a body of rules indicating how such an approach can be made use of so as to offer an empirical study of world politics.

The approach has also been criticized for its inability in the analysis of political power as well as in the analysis of mass political behavior such as voting.

### **SIECOMs and the Local Government Councils' Election in Nigeria**

Since the composition of States Independent Electoral Commissions across the states of the federation as the institution saddled with responsibility of conducting Local Government Councils election in the country as per the provision of the 1999 Constitution, their activities as regards to the said council elections have been marred in allegation upon allegation about their effectiveness and independency. The initial optimism of the people, that with the return of

Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, Local Government election will be conducted regularly and in a free and fair manner was dashed. This initial optimism was based on the provisions of the Nigerian 1999 constitution which made provision for democratically elected representatives to run the affairs of the Local Government.

The Constitution under Section 7 jointly with Section 8, stated that

*"The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every state shall, subject to section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under Law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils"*

In order to achieve the above objectives, Section 3, Part II of Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution provides for the establishment of State Electoral Independent Commission. Section 4 of the Constitutions defined its powers which include;

- i. To organize, undertake and supervise all elections to Local Government Councils within the state.
  - ii. To render such advice as it may consider necessary to the INEC on the compilation of and the register of voters in so far as that register is applicable to local government elections in the state
- Regrettably and despite the fact that the 1999 Constitution spelt out that the administration of the Local Government Areas shall be through representative government, realities have proven otherwise. Most of the State governments under which the constitution places the fate of these Local Government Council elections through their various SIECOM more often than not refuses to conduct these elections as envisaged in the provisions of the constitutions basing their actions on one excuse or the other and in some cases outrightly keeping mute on the matter. Some (State government) takes longer time than usual before giving the State Election Commission the go ahead to conduct the election. Even in this case (when they decided to conduct the election), the tenure of the elected Chairmen and Councilors (in most cases member of their parties) are not guaranteed. At the slightest misunderstanding or opportunities, the Local Government Councils are dissolved by the State government not minding the huge amount of resources that went into the electioneering process.

The inadequacies in the Nigeria 1999 Constitutions allows the State governments to get scot free with these undemocratic actions. For example, while Second Section 7(6) of the 1999 Constitution provides for a democratically elected Local Government Council, the same constitution was silent on the tenure of these elected representatives as it provided for the elected representatives of the other tiers of government. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Electoral Law under which the Local government elected officers were elected in 1999 (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions Decree No 36 of 1998) made provision for three years tenure.

### **The New Kad-Siecom and Political Evolution in Kaduna State**

The political journey in Kaduna state (prior to 2018) since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999 and especially with regards to Local government and Local government electoral process was not much different from the realities of what was and is still obtain in other States of the federation. Local government elections are supposed to be conducted on periodic time-frame as enshrined in the Nigerian 1999 constitution but almost all the States including Kaduna state have failed in this democratic obligation. In most of the democratic years of

Kaduna state since 1999, Local Government Areas have been administered by caretaker committees. caretaker committee are people who are made up of ruling political party loyalists appointed by the State governor with the connivance of the State Assembly (who are supposed to check this excesses of the State governor) to oversee the affair of the Local Government Areas not minding the fact that this was against the provisions of the constitution upon which the whole exercise of Local government administration is based.

Over the years, Local government elections rarely take place in the State as at when due and when they do, they are not only marred by mass election rigging but with dramatic and predictable outcome where the ruling political party wins almost all the contested elective positions. The conduct of these elections done in the fulfillment of constitutional provisions does not in any way guarantee tenure stability of the elected local council officials notwithstanding the fact that they are mostly of the same political party with the sitting State governor. This was exemplified in 2011 when the State government just before the governorship elections decided to dissolve the elected Local Government Councils in the State (<http://www.thenigerianvoice.com>). The argument and counter argument for and against that greeted this action of the State government led to court case which ended in the favor of those against the actions of the government but the State government working in hand with the State Assembly refuses to reverse its action.

The desire to stay clear of the above kind of controversy and provide free, fair and violence free Local government elections led to various amendments in the Laws establishing and regulating Kad-Siecom aimed at making it live up to the expectations and noble purpose for which it was established. The recent positive shift away by Kad-Siecom from the general norms that characterized SIECOMs across the country and the Local government elections they organized have put the Electoral Body on a different level altogether in term of conducting Local Councils elections and when sustain will not only ensure democratic development at the Local government level but will encourage and improve political participation by the people. Also, the Commission will serve as a reference point when it comes to Local Council elections in Nigeria and Africa in general.

### **The Elements of Credible State Electoral Management Body as displayed by Kad-Siecom**

In organizing free, fair and violence free election at the Local Government level, a credible State Independent Electoral Management Body should be independent of any authority in the conduct of its activities. This is to say that it must not be susceptible to the overriding influence and power of the government in power or the bigwigs of the ruling political party or any political dynasty. The State Electoral Management Body should ensure that its decision are not to satisfy the influences of any political party, government or its officials or any other interested parties in the electoral arena. This is because once this independency is lost, it then put into question the credibility of not only the state electoral management body but the entire electoral process.

A credible Electoral Management Body should be Transparent. A credible Electoral Management Body must conduct its activities as regard to all elections and electoral processes in an open manner. All the political parties and major stakeholders must be made aware of what by law they are entitled to know at every stages of electoral processes. Updates should be provided when changes are made to already known decisions as was done by Kad-Siecom on many occasions in the run up to the 2021 Local Councils' election. People and institutions (observers, political parties' agents, voters etc) must be able (by the level of transparency of the EMB and its

personnel) to determine and interpret the actions of electoral officials during the election process and question or seek for clarifications where necessary to which satisfactory response should be provided. This openness of the Electoral Management Body at every stages of electoral process is to make it possible to hold the electoral officers accountable for their actions or inactions which will in turn leads to reduction in electoral fraud, corruption and improve the electoral process. When State Electoral Management Bodies are open and transparent, it enhances its credibility in eyes of everybody concerned.

A credible State Electoral Management Body in conducting free, fair and violence free Local Council's election should be Impartial. It is pertinent for State EMB to be fair and give equal footing to all political parties contesting for elections at the local level and it should not give an undue advantage to any political party against others political parties, their agents or other interested stakeholders. This is to say it must be non-partisan and neutral in its electoral activities. After all the elections are not meant for ruling party alone otherwise, there won't be need for other parties participating in the local council election to begin with. Therefore, as an institution saddled with the responsibility of conducting impartial multi parties' election, it must treat parties and their candidates equally and conduct an impartial poll. This is because if the contesting political parties don't belief and trust in the impartiality of the State EMB in conducting election, the election outcome conducted by the electoral body will be question (and even subjected to embarrassing litigations) and the trust for the State EMB will be lost. It is therefore important for the state EMB to be transparent in the conduct of its activities in order to win and maintain the trust of the people.

Also, a credible election management body in conducting free, fair and violence free election should maintain high level of Integrity. The overall success or otherwise of an election at whatever level, be it at the federal, state or local council level largely depends on the uprightness of the electoral management body tasked with responsibility of conducting the election. In the hand of the electoral management body members, lies the degree of the purity or otherwise in the electoral process. The level of degree, the members of Electoral Management Body have on all freedom as regards to independence of actions and control over all essential process would determine the level of credibility of the electoral management body.

A credible electoral management body should have the element of accountability. Accountability is very essential so as to maintain the integrity and credibility of the electoral body in the eyes of every stakeholder involve in the electoral process. These include but not limited to political parties, governments, non-governmental organization in the democratic developmental chain. The electoral management body should be accountable to the institutions or even groups which are by constitution meant to oversee it activities (like the state or national assemblies) for its decisions and its sub-ordinates decisions or otherwise. This is very vital as it will drive home the conclusion among various stakeholders involved that the electoral body have nothing to hide and also that it operates within the parameters of laid down rules and regulations guiding the conduct of elections as set by the constitutions of the country. This is because without accountability, the electoral laws will not only be violation by the management and staff of the electoral management body but by others stakeholders outside the electoral management body such as political parties' or their agents.

A credible electoral management body should be efficient. Considering the huge amount of resources involve in conducting elections in terms of training, procurement of electoral materials and logistics among others needed for conducting free, fair and violent free elections, the EMB should ensure that the huge resources are geared towards ensuring an efficient electoral



process. An electoral management body that is efficient in every aspect of delivering credible election will no doubt earn the trust and confidence of political parties, the government (that is allocating these resources) and the public in general. A credible electoral management body should uphold professionalism in conducting its activities. Everything about it should be based on established code of conducted expected from it.

### **The Sustainability of Kad-Siecom Achievement in Respect to Local Government Council Elections**

In the sphere of human struggle against nature, every little positive achievement is not only greeted with celebration but also how to sustain and if possible build on that achievement. This is also the case in the sphere of electioneering process where every achievement towards electoral perfection is greeted with another effort of how to sustain it. Kad-Siecom have no doubt achieved a major breakthrough in the conduction of free, fair and credible election in the state which raises the question of how to sustain this breakthrough (that is) how to ensure that the future elections are even better than the one(s) already conducted? Painfully, there is no straight and forward answer to the question. Until the laws establishing the SIECOMs which in its provisions undermines the activities of these Commission by placing them under the control and manipulation of the State governments in terms of administrative capacity, financial capacity and political autonomy (factors or ingredients needed for conducting free, fair and credible election) are reviewed, then the sustainability of the achievement depends on the factors that ensure these achievements in the first place (that is) the support of the State government. Notwithstanding the fact that the State government have amended the State Electoral Laws to bring about sanity in the operations of the Commission, another government who for example might not share the same democratic values and commitments like the present government may try everything possible within its power to undermine these successes. These may include re-amending the electoral laws with the view of removing the adoption of technology in conducting elections, refusal to properly finance the activities of the Commission among other measures. We therefore hope that the future state government will continue to see the wisdom in upholding the democratic values by not doing anything that will undermine the Commission and the success it has recorded so far.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The recent trajectory of Local Government Councils' election as conducted by Kaduna State Independent Electoral Commission have taken a turn for the better and light up some hope for other SIECOMs in the country that in fact they can also get it right. This is due to the fact that not only is the process free and fair but also credible. This has given the window for the opposition political parties to not only partake in the elections (due to the trust they have in the system and the belief of them being treated fairly) but to come out victorious in some of the polls ([www.kadsiec.kd.gov.ng](http://www.kadsiec.kd.gov.ng)). This is in contradiction with the realities of other Local Government Council's election in other States of the federation where the ruling political parties win almost if not all the political slots available. What then explains the radical shift in the Local Government Councils electioneering in the state? We must at this junction commend the Government of Kaduna state which without its support both financially and policy wise as indicated by the Commission itself ([E-Voting: Kad-Siecom Praises El-rufai's Courage](#)), this will not have been achieved.

Also, the State government must be commended for giving the State Electoral Commission the breathing space to carry out its duties without the interference by government

officials or the ruling political party's' officials who may have interest in its activities. It is a gesture which by records no any other State government in the country is willing to give.

The following are some of the major findings that help in the new trajectory that set apart Kad-Siecom from other SIECOMs across the federation;

The first factor according to our findings is the law establishing the Kaduna State Independent Electoral Commission. It is a known fact and as indicated earlier that the 1999 Constitution mandates the State governments through its provisions to establish State Independent Electoral Commissions that will oversee the elections at the Local Government levels and much are left to the discretion of the states. Usually, the traditional methods, of voting both at the national, state and local levels are through the paper balloting system and this system have been exploited by politicians, through thump printing of multiple ballot papers or stuffing of ballot boxes so as to influence the outcome of the election. In a bid to deliver a credible election starting from the 2018 Local Government Council's election, the need for deploying technologically driven solutions into the electoral process arises which can only be achieve through amending the State Electoral Act (State Electoral Law No. 10 of 2012).

Subsequently, with the support of the Kaduna state government, the Kaduna State Electoral Laws were amended to give way for the deployment of technology by the Commission in conducting local council elections across the state. The provisions of this laws (State Electoral Law No. 2 of 2018) was the first of its kind in the history of electoral process in the country. This achievement was what energizes various stakeholders to intensify the clamor for Electoral Acts amendment both at the national and other states levels so as to incorporate the deployment of technology into the electoral processes.

According to our findings, another factor that made the Kad-Siecom to stand out from the rest of the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIECOM) in the country was the introduction and the use of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) in conducting Local Government Council election in the state which was only possible after the amendment of the State Electoral law No. 10 of 2012 as indicated earlier. The use of this technology is the first of such to be deployed in conducting election in the country both at the States and National level and second in Africa (Namibia). This radical shift not only check-mate to very large degree election rigging but ensure that the choice of the people is reflected in final result of the election. This may have explained why opposition parties win Local Council elections where they have a very strong local base and even at the polling unit of the sitting governor (See, the Channelstv, 2021/09/04). This will not have been possible with the manual balloting system where opposition parties will have been rigged out as was the case with other State's Local Government Council elections. Also, the introduction reduces the time frame of announcing electoral results as the results are printed out almost immediately after the election thus eradicating the room for electoral maneuver by politicians or their agents to influence the result between the hours of closing the election, collation of result and announcing the results which usually characterized the manual ballot papers voting system.

The study also found out that the selflessness and professionalism displayed by the top officials (the Chairman and the Commissioners) of State Electoral Management Body is another factor. This is because we cannot feign ignorance of the nexus that exist between conducting free, fair and credible elections and the institution that is saddled with such responsibility. The belief system (as regards to democratic values), conducts, integrity and the examples these officials set determines the success of any election. This may have explained why Saka, (2009), argued that the quality and credibility of elections depend greatly on the extent of competence

and viability of the electoral institutions. This point can only be appreciated if we factored in the notorious name the management of State Independent Electoral Commission across the country have earn for themselves in term of conducting Local Council elections in the country.

The study also found out that other staff of the commission plays a significant role in achieving this success. No matter how good and wonderful a machinery or technological gadgets are and if it is to be operated by humans, it will always be at their mercy. This is to say the operator can manipulate the machine to achieve a desire aim. It is against this background that the courage of the other Kad-Siecom staff must be appreciated. This does not however implied that all the staff under the Commission are of good professional conducts but the good conducts of the majority put to shame the sabotage effort of the few. To put this into clearer perspective, the staff may choose to deliberately input wrong configuration settings into the Electronic Voting Machine or look to ways to render the EVMs totally un-useable on the day of the election in order to sabotage the exercise on the day of election for rewards from political actors. In fact, some of such incidences were recorded during the 2021 Local Councils' election in the State however, they were few to have affected the general success of the elections but it shows it can happen.

### **Conclusion**

A credible election that is devoid of electoral fraud and electoral violence is very important and critical to the development of local government areas and this can only be achieve through free and fair election conducted by a credible electoral body task by the laws of the land of conducting the elections. Kaduna state independent electoral commission have shown itself to be willing, able and capable of carrying out this constitutional obligation through the various elections it has conducted since 2018 through deployment of innovative technology. The elections conducted by the electoral body in recent years have become a yard stick upon which other state independent electoral commission has been judged.

### **Recommendations**

It is our hope that this achievement will not make the commission to fall back and assume it has reach the peak of conducting credible elections since after all some challenges still abounds.

It is also our hope that Kad-Siecom will continue to seek more effective technological solutions towards delivering more credible Local Council elections in the State.

Other state governments across the country should follow the suit of Kaduna State government in giving the necessary support to their State Independent Electoral Commission through formulations and amendments of State electoral laws to be in line with modern pace of development in term electioneering.

State Independent Electoral Commission across the federation should emulate Kad-Siecom in conducting credible Local Council elections in their various States for accelerated Local government development in the country. It is not going to be an easy battle but with determination and credibility on their part, they can and will surely deliver on that.

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