

The History of Elections and Representations: Comparative analysis of India and Nigeria

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Abstract- This research conducts a rigorous comparative analysis of "The History of Elections and Representations" in India and Nigeria. Spanning the period from 2014 to 2019, the study explores crucial themes that influence the democratic processes in these two diverse nations. Through meticulous examination of political party dynamics, electoral acts, gender diversity, and the impact of political finance and violence, this research offers valuable insights into the intricacies of democratic governance. The findings underscore the importance of context-specific reforms and continuous monitoring to strengthen the democratic systems in both India and Nigeria.

Index Terms- Elections, Representation of women, Political Parties in India and Nigeria, Electoral Acts, Gender Diversity, Electoral Legitimacy

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Bharti and Ghose (2021), India has witnessed a consistent pattern of gender inequality in its electoral process since gaining independence with 80% (approx.) male candidates. Similarly, Nigeria has also experienced a significant male dominance in party leadership and membership, with a staggering 86.7% representation (Alabi and Famakinwa, 2017), since its independence. In India, out of the 98 presidents elected from 1885 to date (Ahmed et al., 2017) only a record of two female presidents of the senate were elected Sonia Ghandi (2019-July,2022) and Droupadi Murmu (2022 to date) (Yadav, 2023). Also, Indira Ghandi from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) became the female party leader and prime minister but even at that, the party claimed the position was a direct beneficiary of the former and first nationalist prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru (Basu, 2016), Indira's father who served as prime minister from independence to 1954 (17 years) under the same NCP that lasted four decades (40 years). Thus the status of women in India witnessed no significant changes in the positions of Ministerial appointments, Governorship, or Legislators elections in the general political party elections (Mishra, 2017; Arun, 2019).

The democratic processes in India and Nigeria, two of the world's most populous nations, have long captured the attention of scholars and policymakers. In the dynamic realm of electoral

politics, these countries have navigated diverse landscapes, encountering both opportunities and challenges. This research embarked on a comparative analysis that delves deep into the electoral histories of India and Nigeria, shedding light on critical themes that shape the fabric of their democratic systems. Hence, through meticulous examination, the researcher explored the influence of political party dynamics on electoral legitimacy, assess the merits of electoral acts in ensuring fairness and transparency, scrutinize perceptions and realities regarding the representation of women in political parties, and analyze the profound impact of political finance and violence on electoral participation and credibility. This research endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics that underpin elections and representation in these two dynamic democracies.

Research Questions

1. How political parties' choices reflects in the process of electoral legitimacy?
2. What mechanisms are in place, for these choices in the political parties?
3. What are the merits of electoral acts or legitimacy?
4. In view of electoral legitimacy envisaged, how credible and legitimate are the various 2014-2019 elections conducted in India and Nigeria?
5. What are the relevant perceptions of feminization of political parties'?
6. What aspects of parties 'electoral process hinders women representations?
7. How does political finance limits women electoral power or became a discouraging factor?
8. How do political party based violence deter interested female and male politicians in running for elections?
9. What are the limitations or factors influencing men and women in the political party context?
10. What challenges can be addressed in order to support the participation of women in the process?
11. How challenging is the period of puberty, pregnancy and child birth to female electoral participation?

The above objectives are part of the global concerns and discourse on the various forms of women marginalization in the political parties or electoral system. Feminists critiques claimed the questions of “whether or not women private life (of biology, childbirth and puberty clock) could affects their participation continue to leave an imprint in the mind of the public and political class. This would be investigated in this study

II. METHODS

The researcher has opted to employ a secondary qualitative technique in order to obtain information and examine the obstacles and customs that influence gender representation and electoral legitimacy within Nigeria and India. In order to gather data, various secondary literary sources were utilised such as academic publications, governmental reports, and pertinent documents. Systematic perusal of scholarly databases, official government websites, and other trustworthy sources was conducted by the researcher with the aim of identifying secondary sources that broached theoretical frameworks related to both electoral legitimacy as well as gender representation. Key search terms related to the research aim, such as "electoral legitimacy," "gender representation barriers," and "theoretical frameworks," were used to retrieve relevant literature. In addition, the utilisation of secondary qualitative data is a financially viable and time-saving alternative to primary data collection techniques. This method negates the requirement for new surveys or interviews and is particularly well-suited for investigating intricate social phenomena and comprehending the circumstances in which gender representation obstacles exist. Lastly, the data obtained from secondary literature and government reports was subject to content analysis, an organised approach to scrutinising qualitative information by assessing its content, themes, and patterns. Incorporating this method enabled the researcher to systematically sort and classify the extracted material from such literature and reports.

III. RESULTS

Political Party Dynamics and Electoral Legitimacy

In both India and Nigeria, political party choices exert a profound influence on the perceived legitimacy of electoral outcomes. Firstly, it has been mentioned by the study of Marcos-Marne et al (2020) that it is imperative to acknowledge the role of political party platforms and ideologies in shaping the choices presented to voters. Parties in both countries often differentiate themselves based on policy positions and promises. In India, Kumar (2021) has highlighted that the BJP has consistently advocated for a pro-Hindu, nationalist agenda, while Farooqui and Sridharan (2016) has mentioned that the Indian National Congress (INC) has historically adopted a more secular stance. In Nigeria, Abubakre, (2017) has stated that the All Progressives Congress (APC) has championed anti-corruption measures, while Thurston (2018) shed light that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has positioned itself as a proponent of economic development. The choices offered by these parties reflect not only their core principles but also the diverse interests and preferences of the electorate.

Secondly, as per the studies by Kirkland and Coppock (2018), and Buisseret et al (2022), party choices are inherently linked to candidate selection, a critical aspect of the electoral process. Another study by Rajah (2020) further highlighted that the credibility and legitimacy of elections hinge on the caliber of candidates fielded by political parties. Esselment and Bondy (2022) agreed with this statement and highlighted that parties are responsible for vetting and nominating individuals who are not only qualified but also possess the integrity to uphold democratic values. Consequently, Setälä (2017) mentioned that the quality of political party choices directly impacts the public's trust in the electoral process. Furthermore, it is essential to scrutinize the extent of intra-party democracy in candidate selection. In both India and Nigeria, concerns have been raised about the influence of party elites in determining candidates (Onah and Nwali, 2018; Fraga and Hassell, 2021). The opacity and potential biases within party decision-making can cast doubt on the legitimacy of elections.

Comparatively, while both countries feature multiparty systems, India's electoral landscape is characterized by a more extensive array of parties, each catering to diverse regional and communal interests. In contrast, Nigeria's political landscape is dominated by a smaller number of major parties that frequently engage in realignment.

Electoral Acts and Legitimacy

In India, it has been revealed by Bhat (2021), and Ahuja and Ostermann (2021), the Election Commission of India (ECI) oversees the implementation of electoral acts, with the Representation of the People Act, 1951 being a cornerstone legislation. The regulations and processes for conducting elections in India are delineated in various legal instruments, such as the Constitution of India, the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and the Election Commission Act, 1951. The said acts incorporate candidate eligibility criteria, campaign financing norms, and polling arrangements (Rajeev, 2020). As per Asher and Novosad (2017), India's electoral system is fortified by a robust infrastructure that deploys electronic voting machines (EVMs) and an extensive network of polling stations. Furthermore, Gitte et al (2023) have pointed out that the legal framework for conducting elections in India is firmly established in these legislative enactments. According to Sidhic (2021) and Achanta (2023), every Indian citizen aged 18 or above has a fundamental right to vote under the Constitution of India. Additionally, Iyer (2016) underscores that voter registration procedures as well as polling and counting methods are specified under the provisions of Representation of the People Act.

India's competence in conducting the world's most extensive democratic exercises with minimal errors is a manifestation of the effectiveness of aforementioned initiatives. Scholars like Vaishnav (2017), Ahuja and Ostermann (2021) have lauded the Election Commission of India (ECI) for their commendable efforts towards organising impartial elections. In the 2019 general election, ECI recorded an unprecedented voter turnout of 67.11%, which broke previous records in India's voting history (Pandey, 2021; Tiwari, 2023). However, there have been instances where ECI has received negative feedback from critics on their management of some elections. For example, the ECI was criticized for its handling of the 2017 Gujarat assembly election,

which was marred by allegations of voter fraud and intimidation (Ahuja and Ostermann, 2021).

During the election period of 2014-2019, India's electoral landscape exhibited robust democratic engagement (Prabhu, 2020). Numerical data by Behera and Dutta (2020) revealed a noteworthy voter turnout, with the 2014 Lok Sabha elections achieving a record-breaking 66.4% participation rate. Subsequent state assembly elections consistently recorded rates above 70%, indicating sustained public trust in the electoral process (Behera and Dutta, 2020). Exit polls conducted during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections suggested a clear victory for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) (Mitra et al., 2022). Moreover, international observer missions lauded the efficient conduct of elections, highlighting features like the widespread use of EVMs and the impartial oversight by the ECI (Mitra et al., 2022).

On the other hand, in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) administers the electoral process, guided by the Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) (Sule et al., 2017). This legislation addresses various aspects of elections, including voter registration, party registration, and dispute resolution. On the other hand, Ezugworie et al (2021) mentioned that, the legal framework for elections in Nigeria is set out in the Constitution of Nigeria, is National Electoral Commission Act, 2010. The legal framework for elections in Nigeria has been praised for its recent reforms as per Abubakar and Yahaya (2018), which have made it more comprehensive and transparent. The Electoral Act, 2022 as per Avwersuoghene and Efimova (2022), has introduced a number of new measures to improve the electoral process, such as the use of EVMs and the introduction of a new code of conduct for political parties.

One of the merits of Nigeria's electoral acts is their adaptation to evolving challenges, as evidenced by subsequent amendments (Obiefuna-Oguejiofor, 2018). Notably, the introduction of biometric voter registration and the use of smart card readers have contributed to enhancing the credibility of elections (Fatai, 2020). However, The INEC has been criticized for its handling of some elections. Alhassan (2018) mentioned that the INEC was criticized for its handling of the 2015 presidential election, which was marred by allegations of voter fraud and intimidation. Notwithstanding this fact, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has garnered acclaim for its endeavors to organize impartial elections in Nigeria. To illustrate, during the general election of 2019, INEC recorded a voter participation rate of 35.63%, which constituted the largest voter turnout ever witnessed in Nigeria's history (Agency Report, 2021). Moreover, Nigeria's electoral progress from 2014 to 2019 was characterized by a multifaceted storyline (Onapajo and Babalola, 2020). The data indicated a fluctuating voter turnout. While the 2015 presidential election saw a turnout of approximately 44% (Onuoha et al., 2020), the 2019 election experienced a decrease to around 35.6% (Ohazurike, 2020). Exit polls in Nigeria are less prevalent and reliable than in India, making it challenging to draw direct comparisons. In the 2015 election, exit polls by local organizations suggested a victory for the opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari (Oyebode and Orji, 2019).

International observer missions, including those from the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), noted positive aspects in Nigeria's 2015 and 2019 elections (Schöfberger, 2020). They commended the

peaceful conduct of the polls and the improvements in the use of technology for voter verification. However, they also raised concerns about incidents of violence, vote-buying, and logistical challenges (Schöfberger, 2020). These findings reflect a nuanced assessment of the credibility and legitimacy of Nigeria's elections during this period.

Comparatively, and also agreed by Sircar (2020) has mentioned that India exhibited a more consistent and transparent electoral process, as indicated by high voter turnout, reliable exit polls, and commendations from international observers. The widespread use of technology, like EVMs, contributed to this credibility. In contrast, Shuaibu et al (2017) stated that, Nigeria faced challenges in maintaining consistent voter engagement and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. The scarcity of reliable exit poll data and observer reports pointing to electoral irregularities suggested areas for improvement. In both countries, electoral credibility and legitimacy remain paramount concerns. While India's electoral mechanisms demonstrated resilience and efficiency, Nigeria experienced a more mixed performance, underscoring the need for continued efforts to enhance electoral integrity and public trust. These comparative insights emphasize the importance of context-specific reforms and continuous monitoring to strengthen democratic processes.

Women in Political Parties and Electoral Processes

In India, public perceptions regarding the feminization of political parties have evolved over the years. Traditionally, Gautam (2022), and Sultana et al (2022) have notified that Indian politics was male-dominated, with women's participation limited. However, Jaffrelot (2021), and Bose and Jalal (2022) shed light on the fact that perceptions have been gradually shifting with the emergence of prominent female political leaders. Figures like Indira Gandhi and more recently, leaders like Sonia Gandhi and Mamata Banerjee, have contributed to altering public perceptions about women's roles within political parties (Basu, 2016; Chaudhury, 2022). In India, several political parties have taken steps to promote women's participation, often through women's wings or dedicated quotas for female candidates. Chaudhury (2022) have further mentioned that Parties like the INC and the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) have been vocal proponents of women's empowerment within their ranks. The highest number of women candidates were fielded by the BJP (244) (Hankla et al., 2023), followed by the INC (55) (Spary, 2020) and the TMC (17) (Prodip, 2021). The states with the highest number of women candidates were Uttar Pradesh (159) (Biswas et al., 2023), Maharashtra (140) (Spary, 2016) and Bihar (125) (Kapoor and Ravi, 2021).

Also, the percentage of female MPs in the Indian Parliament has gradually increased but is still below 15% (Bektas and Issever-Ekinci, 2019; Ghosh, 2022). In the 2019 general election, Spary (2020) mentioned that women made up 14.4% of all candidates fielded by political parties. This was an increase from 10.8% in the 2014 general election. Spary (2020) further revealed that, of the 14.4% of women candidates, only 6.6% won their elections. This means that women won only 97 out of the 1,473 Lok Sabha seats that were contested in the 2019 general election.

Although there has been an increase in the number of women participating in Indian politics, public surveys have shown

that attitudes towards this trend are inconsistent (Dolan et al., 2021). While some acknowledge this progress, others remain skeptical about the genuineness of political parties' commitment to gender inclusivity (Avraamidou, 2022). This skepticism may be due to perception of tokenism where women are given symbolic roles within parties instead of actual decision-making power, which remains a significant concern (Niemann, 2016). Moreover, survey results have suggested that women's participation in politics is often considered a matter of representation rather than having substantial policy influence (Hughes and Paxton, 2018; Ellerby, 2018).

Cultural and societal norms have shaped public perceptions regarding the feminization of political parties in Nigeria, as reported by Uwa et al. (2018) and Nazneen (2023). The prevalence of gender biases has historically resulted in low levels of representation for women in Nigerian politics, as highlighted by Sajuyigbe and Fadeyibi (2017) and Afolabi (2019). Unfortunately, women's representation in the National Assembly continues to remain inadequate with less than 12% of seats held by them, according to Nwankwor and Adebayo's (2021). In 2019 elections, female candidates constituted merely 10.4% among all political party candidates fielded - a marginal increase from 8.8% during the 2015 election result. Out of these women candidates, only 4.4% were victorious as reported by Ugwu and Okoye (2022), exemplifying that just 117 out of the total contested House of Representatives seats were secured by them during the same year's general election results.

In Nigeria, the general viewpoint tends to be more skeptical regarding the inclusion of women in significant roles within political parties compared to India. While there is an increasing realization of the importance of women's participation, some quarters continue to resist the idea of women occupying prominent positions within political parties. Despite this, many political parties have been slow to implement measures that actively promote gender diversity. The APC and the PDP - two major Nigerian parties - have received criticism for not doing enough to encourage female participation (Akinkuotu and Agbu, 2019; Baruwa, 2020; Nwobi et al., 2023). It is noteworthy that the APC fielded a higher number (263) of female candidates than any other party, followed by PDP with 171 candidates and Social Democratic Party (SDP) with 55 candidates (Baruwa, 2020; Nwobi et al., 2023). The states with the highest number of women candidates were Lagos (94), Kano (57) and Oyo (55) (Baruwa, 2020; Nwobi et al., 2023). Internal party dynamics and resistance from male-dominated leadership structures have often hindered the feminization of parties.

IV. DISCUSSION

The influence of political party choices on the legitimacy of elections in India and Nigeria is profound as highlighted by Ashindorbe (2018), and Nwagwu et al (2022). Party choices reflect the diversity of interests and preferences within these democracies, shaping the character of electoral competition (Bellamy, 2018). In India, a multiplicity of parties caters to regional and communal interests (Vaishnav, 2019), while Nigeria features a smaller number of major parties (Falola and Agbo, 2019). The caliber of candidates chosen by parties directly impacts public trust in elections (Solihah et al., 2018). Transparency in

candidate selection processes and intra-party democracy is essential for enhancing legitimacy.

Electoral acts serve as the backbone of electoral processes, aiming to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability. In India, the Representation of the People Act, 1951, has contributed to a robust electoral infrastructure, characterized by high voter turnout and accurate exit poll predictions (Iyer, 2016; Gitte et al., 2023). The Nigerian Electoral Act of 2010, with its subsequent amendments, has progressed in its capacity to tackle electoral issues. However, worries about low voter turnout and questionable electoral practices continue to persist, as noted by Sule et al. (2017). The success of these acts depends on how well they uphold transparency, accountability, and effective dispute resolution mechanisms.

An emerging topic in both India and Nigeria is the perception that political parties are becoming increasingly feminized. India has witnessed the emergence of prominent female political leaders, contributing to shifting public perceptions (Jaffrelot, 2021; Bose and Jalal, 2022). However, skepticism about tokenism and genuine empowerment remains. In Nigeria, cultural norms and gender biases have historically limited women's participation, leading to more pronounced skepticism about the feminization of parties (Uwa et al., 2018; Nazneen, 2023). Data on women's representation reveals disparities, with some parties making strides while others lag behind. Continued efforts are needed to promote gender diversity within political parties to ensure not only representation but also substantive policy influence.

It has been highlighted by Ley (2018), and Krook (2017), political finance and violence play significant roles in shaping electoral outcomes and participation. In India and Nigeria, campaign financing regulations and the prevalence of violence during elections impact electoral credibility (Sule et al., 2017; Mitra et al., 2019; Daxecker, 2020; Oyewole and Omotola, 2022). India's extensive use of EVMs contributes to transparency. However, both countries face challenges in curbing political violence and ensuring fair campaigns. The deterrence of female and male politicians due to violence underscores the need for security measures (Krook, 2017). Moreover, addressing factors influencing men and women in the political party context is vital for fostering inclusive political participation.

V. CONCLUSION

This analysis of political party dynamics illuminated the pivotal role played by political party choices in shaping the legitimacy of elections. India's diverse multiparty system and Nigeria's major party dominance offer contrasting landscapes, yet the imperative remains universal: transparent and inclusive candidate selection processes are fundamental for upholding electoral integrity. Furthermore, the merits of electoral acts emerged as a cornerstone in our examination. These legal frameworks underpin the mechanics of elections and influence their credibility. While India has demonstrated an efficient electoral infrastructure, Nigeria faces persistent challenges, underscoring the need for ongoing reforms to bolster electoral transparency and fairness.

The theme of women in political parties and electoral processes revealed evolving perceptions and disparities in gender

representation. While India has made progress towards gender equality, Nigeria continues to struggle with deeply ingrained biases against women. It is imperative that both countries intensify their efforts not only to ensure female representation but also substantive influence in political decision-making. Furthermore, electoral credibility faces significant challenges from factors such as political finance and violence. It is vital to implement campaign finance regulations and security measures as critical components of preserving the integrity of elections in both nations.

In conclusion, this comprehensive study highlights that achieving democratic consolidation is a complex process marked by achievements and obstacles. As dynamic democracies, India and Nigeria find themselves at unique junctures in their histories. This analysis underscores the need for continuous reforms, context-specific solutions, and rigorous oversight to strengthen their democratic processes. As both countries strive towards building more inclusive, transparent, and accountable democratic systems, the lessons learned from this comparative study offer essential guidance. Ultimately, achieving credible and legitimate elections is not just a matter of national importance but serves as a testament to the resilience and vitality of democratic principles in an ever-changing world.

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