

DO CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION-DAY EXPERIENCES MATTER FOR DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY?

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The upcoming 2019 national and state elections in Nigeria represent a milestone in the country's democratic trajectory. The elections mark 20 years since the re-introduction of democracy in 1999 which includes five uninterrupted cycles of multiparty elections. While these elections have been far from perfect, the last two held in 2011 and 2015 have been widely regarded as "free and fair." Moreover, the 2015 elections led to the peaceful turnover in political party leadership: a first in Nigeria's history. Over the last 8 years, my research agenda has focused on how multiparty elections in Nigeria and other African countries shape popular evaluations of political legitimacy including, trust in electoral processes and satisfaction with democracy. This research agenda has involved several fieldwork trips to Nigeria and resulted in the publication of two peer-reviewed articles.

It is on the basis of this active research agenda that I was invited by the Department of Political Science at the Federal University of Nigeria, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) to present my research on electoral integrity during their Faculty Seminar Series in May 2019. In addition to the research seminar, the visit to FUOYE gave me an opportunity to hold a one-day workshop on survey research methodology for graduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

My talk, entitled "Do campaign and election-day experiences matter for democratic legitimacy: Evidence from Nigeria's 2015 & 2019 elections" focused on how Nigerians' experiences during the campaign and election periods shape their perceptions of election quality and satisfaction with democracy. The paper posits a very straightforward theory in which voters' first-hand experience

during campaigns and elections provide information about a wide range of issues that can potentially undermine or enhance the electoral process. Direct exposure to one (or many) of these issues, be it positive or negative, may raise its salience, and prompt voters to consider this issue when making assessments of electoral integrity and the performance of the regime. Simply put, I contend that citizens have the cognitive capacity to develop their own evaluations of the integrity of elections based on personal experience with various stages of the electoral process. This position challenges the dominant perspective that citizens are not capable of assessing election quality, or that citizens' legitimacy attitudes are simply motivated by political bias (i.e. whether or not they supported a winning party or candidate in the elections).

To examine these propositions, I rely on two original nationally-representative surveys. The first survey was conducted after the March 2015 presidential elections. The second, will be conducted in March 2019 following the presidential elections scheduled for February, 2019. The findings from the 2015 survey indicate that experiences with manipulation, administrative irregularities and election observers are important sources of voters' election quality evaluations, even after accounting for voters' winner/loser status and media exposure. I find that experience with administrative irregularities, especially those associated with the use of the electronic voter-identification system seems to have the most consistent and substantively damaging consequences for voters' electoral integrity judgments.

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