

Electioneering, Party Politics and Development of Benue State, Nigeria, 2015-2023

Paul Mustapha Clement¹ & Ayande Great Aondohemba²

¹Department of Accountancy Federal Polytechnic Wannune.

²General Studies Department, Federal Polytechnic Wannune.

*Corresponding Author: Paul Mustapha Clement

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22746063>

Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>Arguably, electioneering and party politics constitutes essential attributes of democracy, this is particularly because it usually involves the process of electing qualified members of society into various positions of authority. This study examined the impact electioneering and party politics and the development of Benue State- Nigeria, 2015-2023. Planned behavior, social judgement and social identity theories were adopted as the theoretical frameworks in this study. The study employed cross-sectional survey design with a sample size of 2137 respondents generated using the Bill (2004) sample size determination formula, the instrument for data collection was questionnaires and other secondary sources. The sample size of the study is 400 using Taro Yamane Formula, Purposive sampling method was adopted in order to solicit necessary information from respondents who are knowledgeable or familiar with the topical issue under discourse. Data was analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency and simple percentages to analyze data. Findings however reveal that there exists a connection between electioneering, party politics and development, particularly in Benue State. it has been observed that the underdevelopment of the state is a result of the fact leadership plays the primary role of galvanizing available resources for the overall growth and development of the society. Thus, visionary and purposeful leadership is advocated as well as the institutionalization of decency and transparency in the democratic process.</i> Keywords: Electioneering; Party Politics; Political Development; Democratic Governance; Political Leadership; Electoral Democracy; Benue State, Nigeria.
Received: 09-07-2026	
Accepted: 17-08-2026	
Published: 14-09-2026	
Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited. Citation: Paul Mustapha Clement & Ayande Great Aondohemba. (2026). Electioneering, party politics and development of Benue State, Nigeria, 2015–2023. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(9), 94-101.	

Introduction

Political interplay in Benue State and indeed Nigeria is often characterized by inherent dynamics usually perpetuated under the guise or supervision of the election management body that is saddled with the constitutional role and responsibility as vested by the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (as amended).

As Democratic tenets, elections and party politics co-exist side by side with the involvement of the populace in the affairs of the state. Democracy; it has been established has a link with growth and development as opined by Jamo (2010) and Ugwu (2017) who have stated that Democracy stimulate development because it enhances a country's ability to engender development by providing basic Infrastructure such as portable water, Medicare, electricity, roads, schools and markets to mention a few.

Indeed, the Benue State developmental story or experience is largely attributed to the nature of party politics which usually involve the godfatherism factor vis a viz the high cost of electioneering which does not produce the best candidate in order to adequately allocate necessary resources and inputs for the betterment of all and sundry. Mbah, 2006 rightly relates the electoral system as the key to measuring the goals and values of the very system in question.

The attainment of any form of development, especially political development in a nation, depends on the electoral process, particularly the conduct of elections. This is because a credible election process tends to produce the right people with the right attitudes that can engineer the cause of development. Thus Abudlateef (2008) asserts that

the fact that Nigeria has not become an industrial giant can be traced to lack of free, fair and credible elections that should produce stable economic development.

The emergence of candidates in the electoral process is generally supposed to reflect the wishes of the citizenship. This situation makes emerging leaders accountable and responsible to the yearnings and aspirations of the people who elected them. This births the idea behind the social contract.

The major thrust of this paper therefore, is to examine the notion of electioneering, party politics and the Development of Benue State -Nigeria, 2015-2023.

Statement of the Problem

Since it's point of creation in 1976, Benue State has not been able to find it's bearing amongst the contemporaries in Nigeria in terms of having a leadership in place that would provide basic and essential amenities in order to transform the state in all facets, given the endowments in terms of mineral and physical resources accrued to it.

Benue State ranks very low in several ramifications, even with the internally generated revenue, allocation from the federation account and borrowings and these have necessitated the conduct of this research, in order to bring to bare the intricacies and problematics that have occasioned the underdevelopment of the State, which is believed to be hinged on the nature of electioneering and the conduct of party politics.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the nature of electioneering, party politics and the Development of Benue State -Nigeria, 2015-2023, while the specific objectives are stated as follows;

- i. To investigate the nature and character of elections and party politics and how such has affected the Development of Benue State.
- ii. To examine the prospects and challenges of development of Benue State.

Conceptual Framework

The understand this topic, there is the need to simplify some key concepts used in the research work.

Concept of Electioneering

Electioneering is the active, organized process of campaigning to influence voters in favor of a specific candidate or political party during an election. It encompasses activities like speeches, rallies, door-knocking, and media appearances, often regulated by law to ensure fair, uninterrupted voting.

Electioneering is simply campaigning for or against a particular candidate and/or political party in order to provide favourable votes. Fundamentally, electioneering is the intentional conveying of views to voters that will effectively convert parts of the electorate in Favor of a candidate or party. Using many tools and techniques, candidates and political organizations try to communicate their positions, attract voters in support of their cause, and convince the electorate to make a specific electoral decision.

Electioneering is commonly performed through televised campaign rallies and debates of opposing candidates seeking political office. Grassroots electioneering also involves localized party supporters working to engage directly with residents in their assigned constituencies, often going door-to-door to convince members of the public to Favor a particular candidate or political party. Another type of passive electioneering consists of physical displays of support for a candidate or party on the day of an election, such as wearing clothing with written campaign messages or carrying posters and other signs indicating one's political preference to the polling place.

Concept of Party Politics

Party politics refers to political activity, decisions, and discussions centered on the interests, agenda, and competition of specific political parties, rather than the broader national interest. It involves members aligning with a particular party's platform to gain power, often highlighting rivalry between political groups.

Concept of Development

Development is a multidimensional process involving positive, qualitative, and quantitative changes in economic, social, and environmental systems, aiming to improve living standards, dignity, and freedom of choice. It entails enhancing human capabilities, reducing poverty and inequality, and shifting from traditional to modern, sustainable systems.

Development is classified as 'human development' and other forms of development such as 'political development', 'economic development', 'social development' or 'cultural development'. All of these categories are interrelated but the phrase 'human development' stresses the aspects of development that directly matter to people. This accentuation is reflected in the following definition by the United Nations:

"The basic objective of human development is to enlarge the range of people's choices to make development more democratic and participatory." (UN, 2011).

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen views development as a notion of freedom; he defines it as "a process of expanding the

freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 2000, p. 3). Thus, Sen is focused on real freedom which people have in making their life decisions. The expansion of freedom is achieved through the removal of barriers to individuals’ capabilities and choices in their lives. These barriers to choice can be both material and non-material. Such impediments include poverty, insecurities, poor government, lack of infrastructure that hinders mobility, and the absence of access to water, food, and electricity. Indeed, the ability of people to take charge of their lives is one of the essential notions in Sen’s view of development. At the same time, it should be noted that economic and political development are not of secondary importance; rather they provide the framework for achieving the primary goal of real freedom.

Empirical Review

Godwin (2017) carried out a study on the influence of elections and party politics on the development process of Venue State- Nigeria. study provided an insightful examination of the influence of elections and politicking and the ability to galvanize available resources for the overall growth and development of the state and indeed Nigeria, specifically focusing on the period between 2015-2020.

Employing a content analysis approach, the research revealed that elections played a significant role in shaping the development outcome. The study highlights the challenge of having a stable leadership that would engender sustainable development.

Overall, the research provides insight into the roles of political actors during electoral processes and the extent to which their activities affect meaningful development in Benue State. The findings offer a greater comprehension of the patterns of voting, political participation, and the need for inclusive governance to mitigate the effects of electioneering and party politics on the state’s development process. In this regard, it is worth considering the recommendations of rotational governorship among the different parts of Benue State and an inclusive government, which can be seen as strategies for having equitable political representation and limiting the negative consequences of political competition and interaction for development within the state.

Similarly, Emmanuel (2020) assessed the relationship between successive governments and political behaviour in Benue State during periodic gubernatorial elections focusing on the influence of ethnicity and other social cleavages on the voting patterns in the state. The analysis laid bare the ethnic divisions, with special focus on Tiv–Idoma tension, as a major factor influencing political preferences and electioneering in the state. There was also a recognition of the limited influence of indigenous African

perspectives, which can be attributed to their internal diversity. The discussion therefore added to the growing discourse on the relationship between elections and political processes while raising further considerations on the extent to which democratic practice depends on the interaction of ethnicity, social divisions, and related political variables.

Together, the research highlights the complex relationship between electioneering, party politics, ethnicity, and other social cleavages in Benue State, Nigeria. It underscores the need to address divisive political and ethnic influences and embrace inclusiveness and a secular state as important pillars for the sustainability of democratic governance. Addressing these issues is pertinent not only to the consolidation of democracy in Benue State but also to the overall development and democratic stability of Nigeria as a whole.

Theoretical Framework

The study is supported by the Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Judgment Theory and Social Identity Theory. The Theory of Planned Behavior, proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1991; It is an appropriate theory to determine how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control impact people's intention and behaviors planned. In the framework of electioneering and party politics, this theory assumes that an intent to perform a specific electoral behaviour (like whether or not to vote according to ethnicity and which other determining factors) is shaped by three factors — personal attitudes toward the behaviour; perceived social expectations either for or against it; and perceptions of whether one can actually perform that behaviour (in this case voting).

One of the methods that can shed light on this is the social judgment theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961), which explains how people perceive incoming persuasive information in relation to their pre-existing positions. When applied with the study of electioneering and party politics, the theory aids us to understand how voters make sense out of political messages arriving at them through different media that they have access to; and how with regard to candidates, parties and electoral issues we form judgments based on what we hear in information gain. The way voters respond to persuasive appeals and thus the attitudes they develop, their preferences, and finally how they act in an election may be influenced by variables such as ethnic identities and endorsements from political leaders.

Another theory of personality type that touches on party politics and electioneering roles in the development process in Benue State, is Social Identity Theory (SIT), conceived by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. The theory highlights the importance of personal identification with social groups in

influencing attitudes, behaviour and decision making. We consider religious or ethnic identity as features of self-identity, where individuals are likely to identify with others with whom they share salient properties especially in the electoral context, such as ethnicity; and reveal their preferences for political parties politically. As such, social identity is a conceptual enframing that offers the basis of exploring the connections from ethnicity and electioneering to party politics choices as well as processes with respect to Benue State development.

Electioneering, Party Politics and Development in Benue State -Nigeria

Party politics has been defined by different scholars of democratic governance and critics of representative democracy from different perspectives. Generally, the definitions converge on the activities and functions of political parties, ranging from their formations and organizational structures to compliance with electoral principles (Awopeju et al., 2012). In other words, party politics is about parties as institutions of organization for people to take part in politics and get into government. As such, it is important for democratic practice because it offers a framework for organizing, presenting and pursuing political interests and options through elections.

Critics of representative democracy on the other hand view party politics as a situation in which democratically elected representatives find themselves at cross purposes with themselves – giving in to the pressures of the party structures instead of defending their individual convictions and the interests of their constituents. By contrast, Olaniyan as cited in Ademola (2009) views party politics as the activities of political parties in a democratic setting in which they contend for power via the electoral process. In other words, party politics occurs where electoral principles operate in a political system which acknowledges and recognizes citizens' rights to choose their representative people. Omilusi (2010) on the other hand takes a more realistic view of party politics as the activities of formal structures, institutions and organizations that contend with one another through elections to seize government personnel and processes with a view to influencing the allocation of a nation's scarce resources through institutionalized procedures. He further contends that the whole idea of party politics is about politics and administration of government.

It therefore follows from the above views that party politics is about the politics of contention for power by political parties and, by extension, the attendant rivalry, hostilities and electoral manipulations that such a situation implies. By the same token, the notion of party politics in the Nigerian context has led to the politics of elections which has long been a means for sections of the political class to

prolong their tenure in office. Thus, the outcomes of such elections have resulted in governance structures that are largely flawed – corrupt, tyrannical, unresponsive and non-adaptational – that barely serve the needs and aspirations of the people.

Party politics has further resulted in rigged elections in Nigeria. Election rigging is a veritable activity that begins with registration where political aspirants use inducements to woo registration officers and prospective voters. It further manifests in such practices as the withholding of election materials – notably ballot papers – from zones that are unfavourable to a given political party. It may also be found in the manipulation and falsification of election results through inducements to polling station officials, collation officers, and election officials. Further still, political parties, especially those in power use the police and other law enforcement agencies to harass, hurt, alienate, and stop would-be voters and detractors from political prominence and power.

Electoral crisis and violence are just some of the negative impacts of contentious party politics in Nigeria. Besides contributing to a number of governance failures in the country, partisan wrangling gives rise to avenues for electoral malpractice; hence unfair elections which tend to see the emergence of unpopular, corrupt and politically aggressive leaders who govern at the whim and fancy their political allies. The political system in Benue State has been increasingly characterized by a governance crisis as manifested by the widening gap between what the people want and what the government is able or willing to deliver. As a result of such a state of affairs, the citizenry's aspiration for a better and more prosperous Nigeria is often easily crushed or compromised leaving behind a politically polarized environment in which accountability and transparency are greatly compromised. These constitute a major impediment to social, economic and political developments in the country. Not to mention the fact that mass poverty constitutes a major obstacle to democratic consolidation in Nigeria which according to Ake (1994) is the democratization of disempowerment.

It is evident from successive regimes in Benue State that the nature and character of electioneering and party politics have largely inhibited the required growth and development of the state in several ramifications as can be clearly observed through the decayed infrastructural facilities and non-utilization of the means of production.

Methodology

This work dwells on the entirety of the population in Benue State but for the sake of the study, the state will be divided into the three senatorial districts. The reason for this choice is because of the prevalence of cases of underdevelopment

of several sectors of the society that have confined to rage unabated. It had a projected population of over 6.1 million according to National Population Commission (NPC) (2017). In this study, three senatorial districts were used.

Showing Sample Frame of Population for the Study:

S/N	Name of LGA	Population
1	Makurdi	100
2	Katsina Ala	100
3	Otukpo	100
4	Gboko	50
5	Kwande	50
	Total	400

Source: Field survey, 2026.

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane (1967) formula. This formula is used so that findings, analysis and conclusions can be reached. The findings can equally bring about generalization and be used as representative of the large population in Benue State. Below is the formula:

$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$. Where ; n: Signifies the sample size

N: Signifies the population under study E: Signifies the margin error.

Substitution:

$N = 1,364,800$

1 = Constant

$e = 0.005$

Therefore:

$1,364,800 / 1 + 1,364,800 \times 0.005(2)$

$= 1,364,800 / 1,364,800 \times 0.005 \times 0.005$

$= 1,364,800 / 1,364,800 \times 0.0025$

$= 1,364,800 / 3,412$

$= 400.$

Data Analysis:

Nature and Character of elections and party politics in Benue State.

Statements	Frequency and Percentage of Respondents									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
People are aware of the underdevelopment of Benue State.	150	41	111	31	34	9	52	14	17	5
The idea behind the nature of electioneering in Benue State.	160	43	80	22	42	12	46	13	37	10
Party Politicking.	170	46	69	20	40	11	43	11	45	12
Role of Inec/Bsiec.	72	20	50	14	35	10	180	50	20	6
Aspect of the judiciary	170	47	97	27	40	11	34	9	24	6

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The result in table 4.2.1 indicates 150 (41%) of the sampled respondents strongly agreed that people are aware of the development situation in Benue State, 111 (31%) agreed while 34 (9%) were undecided. The result further demonstrates that 52 (14%) strongly disagreed and 17 (5%) disagreed respectively. This implies that stakeholders are fully aware about the mission and objectives of elections. On the idea behind the birth of elections, 160 (43%) strongly agree, 80 (22%) agreed, 41(12%) were undecided while 46 (13%) strongly disagree and 37 (10%) disagree. This implies that the birth of the electoral and party politics was meant to enhance Economic backwardness and stagnation of Benue State.

As regards whether the people are knowledgeable about the activities of the respective players in the electoral

affairs, majority of the respondents representing 179 (46%) strongly agreed, 69 (20%) agreed, 40 (11%) were undecided, while 43 (11%) strongly disagreed and 45 (12%) disagree. More so, on whether electoral participants are responsible for the situation in Benue State, 72 (20%) strongly agree, 50 (14%) agree whereas 35 (10%) were undecided while 180 (50%) strongly disagree, 20 (6%) disagree. As to whether party politics is responsible for the underdevelopment of the state, 170 (47%) strongly agree, 97 (27%) agree, 40 (11%) were undecided, while 34 (9%) and 24 (6%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively. This shows that the perception of people/stakeholders are aware probable factors responsible for the nature of politicking and electioneering alike.

Prospects and Challenges of development in Benue State.

Statements	Frequency and Percentage of Respondents									
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Whether there are challenges of development in Benue State.	178	49	100	27	34	9	42	12	11	3
The challenge of electoral reform	162	44	78	21	42	12	46	13	37	10
Challenge of governance	170	46	75	21	35	10	43	11	45	12
Revamping of moribund industries.	72	20	50	14	35	10	160	44	40	11
Economic Viability of the State.	160	43	97	26	40	11	44	14	24	6

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The result, according to whether there are possible effects resultant from the challenge of development in Benue State, majority of the respondents 178 (47%) strongly agree, 100 (25%) agree, whereas 34 (9%) were undecided while 42 (12%) strongly disagree, and 11 (3%) disagree. As regards the plight of the citizenry, a significant number of the respondents representing 162 (44%) strongly disagree, 78 (21%) agree whereas 42 (12%) undecided, while 46 (13%) strongly disagree and 37 (10%) disagree. More so, on whether the challenge of economic reform constitute an effect, majority of the respondents 170 (46%) strongly agree, 75 (21%) agree whereas 31 (10%) were undecided while 43 (11%) and 45 (12%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively.

On whether the nature of governance of the state is contributory, 72 (20%) strongly agree, 50 (14%) agrees whereas 35 (10%) were undecided, 160 (44%) strongly

disagree and 40 (11%) disagree. On whether the economic viability of the state is threatened as a result of the situation, majority of the respondents 160 (43%) strongly agree, 97 (26%) agree whereas 40 (11%) were undecided while 44 (14%) strongly disagree and 24 (6%) disagree respectively. The result implies that Benue State is grossly underdeveloped as a result of the nature of electioneering and party politics.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the respective respondents have been presented according to the research objectives of the study. In the first objective, the research sought to ascertain the nature and character of electioneering and party politics in Benue State. Findings from the study revealed that people are much aware that the state is highly underdeveloped due to series of reasons This finding conform with the position of Shima & Wuese (2023); as they posit that they

collectively align with the principle of equity, fairness and justice as a panacea for sustainable growth and development within the state, region and Nigeria entirely.

In objective two, the study beamed its search light on evaluating the prospects and challenges of development in Benue State. Findings from the study indicate that there exists multi-dimensional issues such as non utilization of the means of production, systemic corruption, high level of poverty and unemployment, insecurity infrastructural decay, thereby negatively impacting on the entirety of the state. More so, the situation has seriously threatened to a considerable level the traditional status of the state designated as the food basket of the nation. This result is in agreement with the position of Akpede (2019), as he states that most co-existing states within the federation largely depend on the agricultural production within Benue for survival. It is postulated that the conflict should be curtailed timely in order to mitigate the crisis of hunger, starvation, mal-nutrition, diseases, ethnic uprising and death.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to experimentally verify the nature and character of electioneering and party politics and their implications for the development of Benue State. A special concern was the drastic decline in voter turnout observed in the 2019 and 2023 general elections, despite the voter education and enlightenment efforts of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the political parties. Despite the public's intense interest in the results of the elections, the overall turnout was significantly low, indicating that there are some fundamental challenges in Nigeria's electioneering processes that need to be addressed.

The diminishing relevance and credibility of the electoral process have discouraged a calibre of voters from participating in the elections. While the reduction in voter turnout in Nigeria is not uncommon, it is worrisome that the trend is likely to compromise the very essence of Nigeria's democratic processes if the appropriate safeguards are not put in place. Voter turnout has declined in consecutive elections, despite the country's growing population. This is an issue because it raises questions about the resilience of Nigeria's democracy and the commitment of Nigerians to democratic governance. The implications of the declining trend in voter turnout in Nigeria for the country's democratic governance processes cannot be overemphasized.

The factors affecting voter turnout cut across the entire election cycle. They range from election management and administration to political parties' organization and electioneering activities. In addition, social factors and other issues surrounding the election also affect voter

turnout. Collectively, these factors constitute the various electoral influences that could either motivate or demotivate voters, constrain or facilitate their participation in the election process, and thus determine the nature of the electoral process.

As this study shows, electioneering activities in Nigeria have not encouraged voters' participation in the electoral processes but instead turned away many potential voters. This is reflected in the abnormally low voter turnout in recent elections, as revealed by the research and documented evidence. Election observers have noted a palpable sense of disenchantment with the electoral process in Nigeria. This disenchantment has manifested itself in successive elections in various forms, including frustration with the rigours of the voter registration process and voting, isolated attacks and violence, electoral malpractices such as violence and fraud, and failure to deliver on election-related promises. Such difficulties undoubtedly affect voters' attitudes towards the elections and, by extension, the overall democratic governance in Benue State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the foregoing, the study recommends that:

- i. The credibility of elections is advocated in order to produce leaders that would produce engender sustainable growth and development.
- ii. The independent national electoral commission (INEC), the judiciary and political actors should promote the rule of law and transparency.

References

1. Amartya S. (2000). Women and political participation in Nigeria. *European Journal of Social Sciences*.
2. Akpede, J. (2019). Youth and political participation: tuned in or tuned out. *International IDEA*, Stockholm.
3. Ake, B. (1994). Lack of alternative leadership in democratic Malawi: some reflections ahead of the 2004 general elections. *Journal of Nordic African studies*.12(1), 1-22.
4. Awopeju, F e tal. (2012). Marketing in electioneering campaign.
5. BBC News, (2015, March 26). Nigeria elections: nation split in Jonathan-Buhari contest. Chioma, G., (2014, November 15). Permanent voter's cards, PVCs: how INEC failed Nigerians. *Vanguard Newspaper*, politics.
6. Daily Independent, (2014, March 26). INEC decries low turnout for voter card collection in

7. Emmanuel (2020). Low voting in British general elections, 1996-October, 1974. In D. Denver and G. Hard (Eds.), Issues and controversies in British electoral behaviour (pp. 18-30). Hemel Hempstead, Harvest Wheatsheaf.
8. Electoral Risk Management (ERM), (2015). ERM risk report for pre-election risk factors. Developed by INEC-ERM Team, 9th January, 2015.
9. Godwin (2017). Nigeria's historic 2015 elections: what does it means for the country and the continent? Indian Council District of World Affairs, Sapru House, New Delhi.
10. Jamo, O. (2010). Nigeria's democracy and the crisis of political instability; an audit of the electoral system. Paper presented at the 12th Anniversary lecture organized by the political and legislative powers bureau of Lagos state government in conjunction with the June 12 Coalition.
11. Olaniyan N., (2013, March 31). 50 killed in Saturday's elections; NHRC. Vanguard News,