

Research/Review

Impact And Reasons For The Apathy In The 2019 General Elections: The Part Played By Inec, Problems, And Nigeria's Future.

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Abstract: These tests assessed the electorate's degree of disinterest in voting. It investigated the reasons behind voters' indifference to voting. It also established the voting remedies disinterest from the viewpoints of the voters and, lastly, investigated how factors including socioeconomic position, political party affiliations, and educational attainment affected the voters' degree of voting apathy. The survey research design was used in the study. Using a purposive sampling technique, 350 electorates from seven faculties at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife made up the sample size. Before being used, a tool called the Voting Apathy Questionnaire (VAQ) was created and verified. Three hypotheses were investigated and confirmed, and three research questions were posed and addressed. Among other things, the results indicated that 50.3% of voters were indifferent to voting. Additionally, the degree of voting indifference among the electorate was significantly influenced by educational levels ($\chi^2 = 161.969a$, $p < 0.05$). Rational Choice Theory was selected as the theoretical underpinning, and the study used both survey research design and secondary sources of data collection as information gathering techniques. The results showed that low levels of education and illiteracy are associated with poor political and voter education, particularly when it comes to the fact that the majority of voters (roughly 50%) fail to pick up their permanent voter cards and are therefore unable to be accredited to vote; that Nigerian politics is another factor, as it is known as a bitter and acrimonious politics; and that because elected officials have failed to fulfill their campaign promises, the electorate has lost faith in the government and finds it difficult to participate in the electoral process.

Keywords: Elections, electorates, causes, remedies, democracy.

1. Overview

In Nigeria's political process, voting indifference has recently come to seem like a harmless problem. Every government's goal is to create and carry out policies that benefit its people, but it is also the people's right and duty to choose their representatives by casting ballots. Elections serve as the political cornerstone of a country. In many regions of the Federation, voter turnout for the 2019 General Elections was comparatively low. The average voter turnout in the 2019 presidential election was 37.4%, despite the significance of the race. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported that around 16.58 million Nigerians were eligible to vote in the general elections between 2015 and 2019, according to Orjime (2019). for the first time. However, the 2019 General Election had the fewest voters since the start of the Fourth Republic in 1999. 52.3 percent of registered voters cast ballots in 1999; this number rose to 69.1 percent in 2003, but then fell to 57.4 percent in 2011 and 43.6 percent in 2015 (Orjime, 2019). It dropped to 37.4 percent in 2019 (Sahara Reporters, 2019). Scholars and pundits have ascribed this phenomena to voters' indifference, which was made worse by the federation's unprecedented levels of violence and security issues in every region (Abalaka, 2023).

Election conduct and participation are essential components of a democratic society. Therefore, according to Dalton (2007), quoted in Abalaka (2023), a functioning democracy depends on the participation of its population in the political process. Voting, in their opinion, is the most significant and acknowledged way for citizens to get involved. Therefore, it is remarkable that, in most democracies, including Nigeria, electoral

Received: 10 Marchth 2025

Revised: 25 Marchth 2025

Accepted: 09 Aprilth 2025

Online Available : 11 Aprilth 2025

Curr. Ver.: 11 Aprilth 2025



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attendance continues to decline despite the clear significance of voting during elections (Ajiteru, 2023). The practice has compelled politicians in Nigeria who are keen to win over the few voters to engage in vote-buying. According to Ojo (2018), vote-buying tainted Nigeria's election results. He used Ondo and Ekiti States as examples, whose elections were severely tainted by vote-buying. Furthermore, the future of Nigerian democracy is now in danger due to the indifference of voters. This is the case because elections may be interpreted as a means of disciplining elected authorities by threatening to reappointed (effect of accountability), a means of guaranteeing the appointment of qualified candidates for public office (impact of legitimacy), and a means of reflecting the voting behavior of the majority of voters (effect of representation). In order to secure reelection, the accountability effect forces elected officials to concentrate on their responsibilities to the public (Agaibe, 2023). Elections are therefore viewed as a tool that forces elected officials to act in the public interest and answer to and for the people. Voting is a crucial requirement that holds elected authorities accountable and responsible to the people, according to Uchenna et al. (2018) and Ajiteru (2023).

According to Wojtasik (2018), elections serve seven fundamental purposes. These include the selection of political elites, the delegation of political representation, and the validation of individuals in power, authority management, political accountability, political program development, and public opinion reconstruction. Therefore, it is clear that voters' failure to cast a ballot undermines democratic governance since it shows that they have renounced their rights, responsibilities, and duties to participate in the selection of the political entity's future leaders. Therefore, elections would not provide politicians with an incentive to create policies in a scenario where a sizable section of the populace does not cast ballots. Ajiteru (2023) and protect voters' interests Sulaiman (2023). Abalaka (2023) looked at the causes and instances of Nigeria's problems with national insecurity. The report emphasized the government's initiatives to fight the violence and suggested that the antiterrorism law be strictly enforced in order to punish those who commit such horrible atrocities that have the potential to destabilize the country. Nigeria faces a number of security issues, including armed banditry and cattle rustling in the north-west, herdsmen attacks in the north central, and Boko Haram in the northeast. There are remnants of insurgency in the South-South region of the country, along with the threat of kidnapping. Many people in the Southeast were deterred from voting by the violence that IPOB had planned. One may claim that during the 2018 governor's elections in Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo States during the 2019 Presidential and Gubernatorial Elections in March, 2019 Sulaiman, and in Ekiti and Osun States during the 2018 Gubernatorial Elections.

2. Problem Statement

The fact that there appears to have been a notable drop in Nigerian electoral turnout over the years is now quite concerning. 52.3% of registered voters cast ballots in the 1999 elections, according to an analysis of official records taken from the INEC website. This percentage increased to 69.1% in 2003, then fell to 57.4% in 2011, 43.6% in 2015, and only 34.74% of registered voters cast ballots in the recently concluded 2019 presidential elections (INEC, <https://www.inecnigeria.org/all-about2019-generalelections>). The News Organization of According to the same report, Nigeria's 2019 general elections saw 34.75% of voters cast ballots, representing 26,614,190 electorates. Additionally, 33.18% of the 82,344,107 registered voters cast valid ballots, representing 27,324,583. These results led to INEC's final decision, which resulted in Muhammadu Buhari being declared the winner of the presidential and national assembly elections on February 23, 2019. The scenario above paints a dismal picture of Nigerian democracy and voter turnout, particularly when one considers that the country's population is estimated to be around 200 million people. It is assumed that elected politicians chosen by the vast majority of voters will govern the affairs of the state of Nigeria, yet the Voters are disillusioned and permit a small number of inactive politicians to decide on matters affecting the majority of the population (Sulaiman, 2023).

Once more, politicians who are elected do not reflect the views and values of the majority when there are extremely few voters. As a result, voter apathy has been likened to a

form of political despair in which one feels powerless and incapable of influencing significant events. Based on this, this paper examines voter apathy and considers how INEC might increase voter turnout in the country's election process. Ajiteru (2023).

The following are the study's particular goals:

- a. To identify the causes of the electorate's lack of interest in voting in the general elections of 2019.
- b. To investigate how voting apathy affects the voters on Nigeria's democratic growth.
- c. To determine INEC's contribution to Nigeria's democratic growth by lowering voter apathy.

3. Conceptual Explanations

Every study makes valuable attempts to elucidate a few fundamental ideas that serve as the primary focus of this paper's discussion. This will provide the study a better insight. We shall clarify a few of these ideas in this study;

a. Apathy of Voters

Political apathy is thought to be a subtype of voter apathy. When eligible voters abstain from voting in a nation's general or public elections, it is known as voter apathy. Voters may appear disenchanted with politics or politicians in general outside of election season. believed that a measure of voter indifference might be the proportion of voters who are registered to vote as well as the election turnout. In other words, the proportion of people of voting age who cast ballots on election day, whether they are registered or not. Voting apathy starts with a person's general lack of interest in and knowledge of politics, elections, and government. This makes it harder for that person to understand the importance of universal suffrage and the advantages and disadvantages of new policies, and ultimately prevents them from voting in a general election. Sulaiman (2019) states that voting indifference manifests as reservations, limitations, and rejection of the electoral system.

b. General Election Results

This could be referred to as the democratic emblem. That is democracy's beauty. It allows for the costly and thorough handling of political issues. It has a big impact on the selection of administrations. Without elections, contemporary representational governance is not possible. The expansion and evolution of representative democratic governance are closely linked to elections. It is the most reliable way to determine if a democratic government is in place or not. Excitation, conflict, contest, triumph, defeat, ambiguity, curiosity, conjecture, hopes, and fears are all evoked by it. However, a few fundamental components must be present regardless of the context in which the term "election" is used:

1. To replace predefined political vacancies, an election typically involves a larger number of voters choosing fewer candidates.
2. Because voters have options, elections imply a degree of choice to choose from a variety of programs or a number of people.
3. Additionally, elections imply that each voter exercises their right to vote separately from other voters.

c. Conceptual Clarifications

Some or all of the acknowledged members of society may view elections as an established process for selecting office holders. Scholars, statesmen, and a wide range of individuals in and out of the government circle have recognized and accepted elections as a valid and acceptable process by which potential candidates for public office are either elected or rejected by the people (Sulaiman, 2023).

d. Voters

A body or group of eligible adult people who select representatives for them in the government is referred to here. In Nigeria, the nation's constitution or laws states that a person must be at least eighteen (18) years old in order to be eligible to vote.

Drawing from the aforementioned analysis, this paper aims to ascertain the extent of voting behavior among the electorate, identify solutions to voting apathy from the viewpoints of the electorate, and investigate the impact of variables like socioeconomic status, political party affiliations, and educational attainment on the degree of voting apathy among the electorate. A country that demands government of, by, and for the people should be concerned with voter participation since it is a true instrument for sustainable democracy. In Nigerian politics, the situation differs from what many voters believe. Show political indifference to voting through conversation and engagement. Therefore, this study Sulaiman (2023) aims to empirically explore the electorate's attitude about voting and how it contributes to sustained democracy.

4. Results and Discussion

The following are the study's goals:

1. Assess the electorate's degree of disinterest in voting;
 2. Investigate the reasons for voters' indifference to voting;
 3. Ascertain, from the viewpoint of the electorate, the solutions to voting apathy; and
- IV investigate how the electorate's degree of voting indifference is influenced by factors like socioeconomic position, political party affiliations, and educational attainment.

5. Questions for Research

The study was intended to be guided by the following research questions:

1. What percentage of voters are disinterested in voting?
2. What factors have been shown to contribute to voters' indifference to voting?
3. In the opinion of the electorate, what are the solutions to voting apathy?

Theories

The following theories were put to the test:

Ho1: The degree of voting apathy among voters is not significantly influenced by educational background.

Ho2: The degree of voting apathy among voters is not significantly impacted by political party membership.

Ho3: The degree of voting apathy among voters is not significantly influenced by socioeconomic position.

6. Approach

A survey research design was used in the study. Staff members, both academic and non-academic, made up the population as Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates in IleIfe, Osun State, Nigeria. For this study, survey research (observation method) was used. Witness accounts of events and their occurring are the focus of the observation method. Media coverage and television broadcasts of events related to the subject of debate (electoral affairs) are also included in this. Additionally, secondary data was used to supplement survey study. Here, pertinent literature was examined from a variety of sources, including periodicals, textbooks, online resources, and quarterly publications. A simple random selection procedure was used to select 350 participants from the university. 50 individuals were purposefully chosen from the seven chosen faculties with the understanding that they must have at least one NCE and have some degree of education have been actively involved in Nigerian politics and voting. Administration, agriculture, the arts, education, science, social science, and technology are among the seven faculties. The researchers created a tool called the Voting Apathy Questionnaire (VAQ). It is divided into three pieces. Section A focused on the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, including their socioeconomic level, political party affiliations, and educational qualifications. In Section B, respondents were asked to score their agreement or disagreement with 15 items with four possibilities about the reasons behind voting apathy.

The lowest possible score is 15 points, and the highest possible score is 60 points. Ten items with four possible cures for voting apathy were included in Section C. These ranged from

I really disagree with this statement. According to Ajiteru (2023), the lowest point is 10 and the highest is 40.

A sample of 50 individuals, including academic and non-academic personnel as well as undergraduate students from another Federal University in a different state, who were specifically chosen based on their political party affiliations and voting interest, was used to test and validate the instrument. The instrument's internal consistency and construct validity were established using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, which came out to be 0.84. To help administer the instrument, three research assistants received training. Frequency, basic percentages, bar charts, and chi-square statistics were used to examine the data. Sulaiman (2023).

Findings

First Research Question: To what extent do voters not care about voting?

Table 1 displays the results of a descriptive analysis of the data gathered on electorate voting apathy in order to address this research issue.

Table 1: A descriptive examination of voters' degree of indifference to voting

S/N	Level of voting apathy behaviour	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low	101	28.8
2.	Moderate	176	50.3
3.	High	73	20.9
	Total	350	100.0

The descriptive analysis of the degree of voting apathy among the electorates in the research area is displayed in Table 1. According to the respondents' perceptions and the table, there is a moderate amount of voting apathy among voters, at 176 (50.3%).

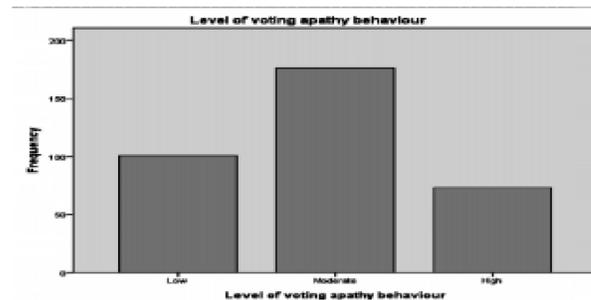


Figure 1: Bar graph illustrating voters' degree of indifference to voting

Second Research Question: What factors have been shown to contribute to voters' lack of interest in voting?

The results of a descriptive analysis of the data gathered on the reasons why voters were not voting in order to address this research question are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: A descriptive examination of the reasons why voters are not participating in elections

S/N Causes of voting apathy	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1. Unfulfilled political promises	230	65.7
2. Thuggery and political intimidation.	310	88.6
3. Bad governance.	285	81.4
4. Illiteracy and ignorance.	230	65.7
5. Rigging.	310	88.6
6. Unfair governmental policies.	285	81.4
7. Marginalization.	255	72.9
8. Victimization of political opponents.	230	65.7
	255	72.9
9. Unfair distribution of resources	310	88.6
10. Lack of accountability	255	72.9
11. Delay and denial of justices	285	81.4
12. Poverty	310	88.6
13. Corruption	230	65.7
14. Religious constraints.		81.4
15. Insincerity of the electoral commission.	285	

The descriptive analysis of the factors contributing to voting apathy among the electorates in the research area was presented in Table 2. As the table shows, 230 (65.7%) of the electorate in the research area cited unmet political promises, the persecution of political rivals, religious restrictions, illiteracy, and ignorance as reasons for their lack of interest in voting. Additionally, 285 (81.4%) emphasized that poor governance, unfair governmental policies, poverty, and the electoral commission's insincerity are other factors that contribute to voting apathy, while 310 (88.5%) stated that rigging, lack of accountability, corruption, thuggery, and political intimidation are additional factors. In the same vein, 255 (71.9%) noted that issues contributing to voters' indifference to voting include marginalization, unequal resource distribution, and the denial of justice within the field of studies Sulaiman, (2023).

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of educational qualifications on the level of voting apathy among the electorates.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis of the influence of educational qualifications on the level of voting apathy among electorates

Qualifications	Level of voting apathy			²	df	Sig.
	Low f(%)	Moderate f(%)	High f(%)			
NCE	5(1.4)	35(10.0)	8(2.3)	161.969 ^a	8	.000
BSc/BSc. Ed.	28(8.0)	71(20.3)	65(18.6)			
MSc.	23(6.6)	63(18.0)	0(0.0)			
MPhil.	31(8.9)	7(2.0)	0(0.0)			
PhD.	14(4.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)			

(² = 161.969a, p < 0.05)

The findings in Table 3 demonstrated that the degree of voting apathy among voters is significantly influenced by educational background ($\chi^2 = 161.969a$, $p < 0.05$). As a result, the null hypothesis which holds that educational attainment has no discernible impact on voters' degree of apathy is now disproved. The findings suggested that the degree of voting apathy among voters in the research area is influenced by educational attainment (Ajiteru, 2023).

Hypothesis 2: The degree of voting apathy among voters is not significantly impacted by political party membership.

Table 4: Chi-square investigation of how political party affiliations affect voters' political indifference electorates.

Political parties	Level of voting apathy			χ^2	df	Sig.
	Low f(%)	Moderate f(%)	High f(%)			
APC	39(11.1)	64(18.3)	44(12.6)	28.149 ^a	6	.000
PDP	35(10.0)	62(17.7)	29(8.3)			
SDP	15(4.3)	28(8.0)	0(0.0)			
ADC.	12(3.4)	22(6.3)	0(0.0)			

($\chi^2 = 28.149a$, $p < 0.05$)

Results in Table 4 shows that there is a significant influence of political party affiliation on level of voting apathy among the electorates ($\chi^2 = 28.149a$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant influence of political party affiliation on level of voting apathy among the electorates is hereby rejected. The results implied that political party affiliation have influence on the level of voting apathy among electorates in the study area.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of socioeconomic status on level of voting apathy among the electorates.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis of the influence of socioeconomic status on level of voting apathy among electorates

Status	Level of voting apathy			χ^2	df	Sig.
	Low f(%)	Moderate f(%)	High f(%)			
Lower class	31(8.9)	59(16.9)	20(5.7)	23.026 ^a	6	.001
Working class	36(10.3)	70(20.0)	39(11.1)			
Middle class	18(5.1)	39(11.1)	14(4.0)			
Upper class	16(4.6)	8(2.3)	0(0.0)			

($\chi^2 = 23.026a$, $p < 0.05$)

The findings in Table 6 demonstrate that socioeconomic status has a significant impact on the degree of voting apathy among the electorates ($\chi^2 = 23.026a$, $p < 0.05$), thereby rejecting the null hypothesis that socioeconomic status has no significant impact on the degree of voting apathy among the electorates. The findings suggested that socioeconomic status is a determinant of voting apathy among the electorates in the study area.

7. Discussion

The study's findings showed that the electorates in the study area exhibited a moderate level of apathy, and that the most important factors in predicting voters' apathy in Nigeria were thuggery and political intimidation, rigging, lack of accountability, and corruption. The electoral constitution's insincerity, poor governance, poverty, unfair policies, marginalization, delays and denials of justice, and unequal resource allocation, on the other hand, were all ranked highly. These results were consistent with those of Wojtasik (2018) and Okeke (2014), who believed that the legitimacy, accountability, and representative effect of elections were threatened when people did not use their right to vote. However, voters' attitudes toward voting would be very neutral in a situation where voting could ensure the three effects. This seems to be the case in Nigeria, where election turnout has been declining since 1999. Nonetheless, it was discovered that by enhancing voters' viewpoints, a more optimistic outlook on elections could be worked out. A reorientation program for voters, assurances of voters' safety to and from the polling places, frequent mass mobilization, the implementation of good governance, free and fair elections, easing concerns about political marginalization, the necessity of independence and an unquestionable judiciary, and fostering trust in the government are all predisposing factors to increase political participation. This result is consistent with the viewpoint of academics Sulaiman (2023).

The results of the hypothesis showed that the degree of voting apathy among the electorate was significantly influenced by educational background. This result supported the findings of Lijphart's (2017) study, which showed that voter turnout favored those with greater education and wealth over those with less. This result implied that individuals with Voting and political participation were valued more by those with higher levels of education than by those with lower levels of education and literacy. The degree of voting indifference among voters was also found to be influenced by political party identification. Wojtasik (2018) and Okeke (2014), who highlighted the election's functions based on the ruling political parties, corroborate this conclusion. People with political ties who either strongly support or vehemently oppose government policies may be to blame for this. According to the third hypothesis, voting indifference was influenced by socioeconomic position. Voters' financial well-being or lack thereof has a significant impact on how they vote. Therefore, Wojtasik (2018), who provided various voting typologies, is supported by this finding (Abalaka, 2023).

8. Conceptual Structure

This work adopts the Rational Choice Theory, which was proposed by George Homans in 1961. The rational choice theory's premise is that the total behavior of society is the sum of the choices made by individuals, each of whom makes their choice based on their own preferences and the constraints (or choice set) they face. At the individual level, rational choice theory states that the individual chooses the action (or outcome) that they most prefer; when actions (or outcomes) can be evaluated in terms of costs and benefits, a rational individual chooses the action (or outcomes) that provides the maximum net benefit, i.e. A person must have a preference. Regarding theoretical importance to this study, rational choice theory is important for comprehending the fundamental causes of voters' disinterest in voting in Nigeria's political process. Voting or not voting is a personal preference that an individual can exercise by selecting the option that best suits their needs. When deciding whether or not to cast a ballot in a general election, voters are presumed to consider the information that is currently available, the likelihood of certain events, and the possible costs and benefits. They are also expected to act consistently in selecting the course of action that they believe is best for themselves. Ajiteru (2023).

Voting is therefore a logical decision made by voters based on their preferences for the costs and benefits in light of the information that is now available on the overall electoral process. There is no question that the degree of political indifference in the country's electoral processes would significantly decline if voters were given sufficient information and motivation to cast their ballots. Abalaka (2023).

9. Review of Empirical Data

Factors Mitigating Women's Political Participation in Nigeria is the title of a study. The goal of the study was to determine the underlying theory for Nigeria's declining female leadership and political engagement rates. According to the report, these reasons limit women's involvement in Nigerian politics; in Northern Nigeria, the "purdah system," which is a system of house isolation of the fear of crime and electoral violence in Nigerian politics, poverty, low self-esteem, ignorance, lack of confidence in other women, cultural stereotypes, religious barriers, and a lack of funds are the main obstacles to women's effective participation in politics. These factors include the fact that a large portion of Nigerian women are not as financially strong as their male counterparts, because a large portion of them are illiterate; that family responsibilities and childbearing also prevent women from participating effectively in partisan political activities, as many of them are involved in childbearing; and, finally, the fear of crime and electoral violence.

registration costs that are detrimental to traditional practices and that the majority of women cannot afford. The recommendations included: ensuring gender equality in relation to political positions by incorporating it into political party constitutions as a directive of state policy; eliminating societal attitudes that promote male dominance and female subordination; empowering women economically and educationally, as well as removing other socio-economic barriers to women's political participation; completely eliminating some offensive traditional practices against women, such as the "purdah system," etc.

Although the results are appropriate, the study lacked methodology, findings consequences, and suggestions. It was criticized for the aforementioned flaws. An additional investigation entitled "Electoral Systems and Problems" pertaining to representation and voting. The goal of the study is to identify the barriers that prevent voters from casting ballots and choosing representatives who will effectively represent them. He views a person's right to vote as their franchise. According to him, why has franchise created controversy since it is the electorate's right to vote? He asserted that all individuals are affected by government rules and regulations, and that everyone should decide what affects everyone. Therefore, granting some people the right to vote entails excluding others from representation. He also declared that the most commonly recognized kind of franchise in use today and throughout the world is that all adult citizens should have the ability to vote without facing any kind of discrimination. religion, race, caste, creed, wealth, language, domicile, color, sex, culture, and philosophy, with the exception of those who are excluded because they are minors, foreigners, non-resident citizens, criminals, insane, etc. The minimum age in several nations, such as Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States, is eighteen. France and Switzerland use 21 and 20 years, respectively. In this regard, all citizens who reach adulthood are granted the right to vote, unless they fall into one of the excluded groups. According to Sulaiman (2019), these exclusions discourage willing Nigerian voters or foreigners from casting ballots during elections.

According to the survey, the question of whether or not women should have the ability to vote has been a contentious issue. The dispute asserts women's suffrage are:

- a. The universe of women is limited to homes and hearts.
- b. Because the majority of the women lack literacy and are often conservative, they will abuse their right to vote and support inept candidates.
- c. Tension and conflicts will arise in their homes and families if the women vote against their husbands' wishes.
- d. If women were granted political rights, they would lose their feminine attributes and virtues.
- e. Opponents of women's suffrage also contend that because women are physically weaker than men, they cannot carry out civic tasks in the same way.

Women's participation in the electoral process has been significantly limited by these issues and restrictions. Nevertheless, even though the study by As it may appear, several disagreements were created as a result; the study lacked a theoretical foundation,

methodology, study implications, and suggestions. Having thoroughly examined this work thus far, the researchers have made an effort to talk about

- a. The pattern of indifference to voting in Nigeria's general elections from 1959 to 2019.
- b. The Reasons for Nigerian Voters' Indifference to the 2019 General Elections. The effects of voter apathy on Nigeria's democratic development are discussed in iii.
- c. The Independent National Electoral Commission, or INEC, and its role in reducing voter apathy for the advancement of Nigerian democracy.

A. The Trend of Indifferent Voting in Nigeria's General Elections

Historical analysis of Nigerian voting patterns reveals that there have been varying patterns in the amount of turnout during the nation's general elections. First of all, the general elections of 1959 represent a significant turning point in Nigeria's electoral history. This is due to the fact that, in anticipation of achieving political independence in October 1960, the first general elections were held on December 12, 1959. 7,189,797 (75%) of the 9,043,404 registered voters cast ballots. This turnout, which was considered outstanding, has been attributed to administrative initiatives by local and regional authorities that encouraged voters to cast ballots, as well as social and political pressures. They believed that even though the regions implemented administrative measures to encourage voting, the results of those efforts varied in terms of their effectiveness. As an example, when Lagos, and the Federal Capital Territory at the time, recorded 76.2% overall Abalaka, (2023).

However, voter turnout has been less spectacular since the general elections in 1959. The 1979 elections, for instance, saw low voter turnout at every stage, with 34% of voters casting ballots in the presidential race, 28.8% in the Senate, and 30.7% in the House of Representatives. Even while the 1983 elections saw a slight improvement in turnout, it was still extremely low; for instance, only 25,430,096 of the 65,304,818 registered voters or 38% of the total cast ballots in the presidential election [32]. In 1992, 39% of voters cast ballots in the senate, and 37% in the 1993 presidential election. There is an explanation for the low turnout by the General Ibrahim Babangida administration's seemingly never-ending transition program and high degree of inconsistency, which tended to erode public confidence in the transition (Abalaka, 2023).

INEC registered 57,938,945 voters before the 1999 general elections, but only 30,280,052 of them cast ballots, or 52.3% of the total. In the 2003 elections, however, the voter turnout increased to 69.1%. There were 60,823,022 registered voters in INEC that year; 42,018,735 of them cast ballots, of them 39,480,489 were valid and 2,538,246 were invalid. He also revealed that there was a 16.8% rise in turnout in 2003. According to INEC records, there were 61,566,648 registered voters in 2007. Of those, 35,419,262 voters, or 57.4%, were claimed to be been put to the vote. This indicated an 11.04% decrease in voter turnout. In the 2011 presidential election, when INEC had 73,528,040 registered voters, only 39,469,484 of them showed up for the poll, with 38,209,978 legal votes and 1,259,506 invalid ballots, further lowering the voter turnout to 53.7%. This indicated a 4.36% decline. Similar circumstances occurred in 2015, when just 29,432,083 voters—or 43.6% of the 67,422,005 registered voters—turned out to vote. There were 844,519 illegitimate votes and 28,587,564 valid votes that year, a 10.1% decrease.

Lastly, out of the 82,344,107 registered voters, only 34.75% of voters cast ballots in the 2019 general elections, representing 28,614,190 electorates (the News Agency of Nigeria, 2019).

The statistics above are summarized below;

Table 6: Summary of voter Turnout in Nigeria's General Elections, 1959 – 2019

Elections	Registered voters	Turnout	Percent
1959 General Election	9,043,404	7,189,797	75.50%
1979 Presidential Election	48,633,782	16,846,633	34.00%
1979 Senate Election	48,633,782	12,532,195	25.80%
1979 Reps Election	48,633,782	14,941,782	30.70%
1983 Presidential Election	65,304,818	25,430,096	38.00%
1983 Senate Election	65,304,818	Na	Na
1983 Reps Election	65,304,818	Na	Na
1992 Senate Election	36,923,571	14,716,074	37.00%
Reps Election	36,923,571	15,329,670	41.00%
Presidential Election	37,826,460	14,321,963	37.00%
1999 Presidential Election	57,838,945	30,280,052	52.30%
1999 Senate Election	57,838,945	24,386,427	42.11%
199 Reps Election	57,838,945	23,573,407	40.70%
2003 Presidential Election	60,823,022	42,018,738	69.10%
2003 Senate Election	60,823,022	29,995,171	49.30%
2003 Reps Election	60,823,022	30,386,270	50.00%
2007 General Election	61,566,648	35,419,262	57.4%
2011 General Election	75,528,040	39,469,484	53.7%
2015 General Election	67,422,005	29,432,083	43.6%
2019 General Election	82,344,107	28,614,190	34.75%

Source: Sulaiman, (2023), INEC (2019), The News Agency of Nigeria (2019).

B. The Justification or Contributing Factors to Voter Apathy in Nigeria's General Elections

Several explanations have been put out by academics to explain why voters in Nigeria's general elections continue to be disinterested in casting ballots. Write that the election's results show a high level of voter indifference and that this is due to voters' lack of political knowledge and education, which is consistent with their low level of literacy and education. He bemoaned the fact that, due to insufficient mobilization by INEC, political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the media, about 50% of registered voters failed to pick up their permanent voter's card and were thus unable to be granted the right to vote. Voter education in Nigeria is undoubtedly still at a very low level. The majority of due to their lack of literacy, the populace may believe that they have no reason to participate in the democratic process because they are unaware of the complexities of politics. noted that Nigeria's participation in the 2019 General Elections demonstrates illiteracy.

The most concerning is that, particularly in certain states like Rivers, Benue, Akwa Ibom, Kano, and Kaduna, among others, intimidation, harassment, violence, arson, maiming, and other incidents caused widespread anxiety during the 2019 Nigerian general elections. Political thugs and security guards have been used to harass and intimidate voters, instilling fear in the hearts of eligible voters, as part of Nigeria's acrimonious political culture. Many people get disinterested in politics as a result. Some individuals think that because politics is violent, participating in it could result in the loss of one's life or property. believed that poor governance had appeared in every aspect of Nigerian life. In addition to not being really representative of and sensitive to the concerns of the people, many Nigerian leaders are not answerable to the people. The welfare of their immediate family, relatives, region, ethnic or sectional background, and few acquaintances is what most closely resembles them. Nigerian voters and citizens are suffering; every day, a large number of people are slain without cause, property is damaged, and billions of naira are either stashed overseas or diverted from the state coffers to private domains. People are less concerned with political matters as a result of this circumstance. These have been shown in Nigerians' waning desire to register and cast ballots from 1999 and the present (2019).

C. The consequences of voters' indifference to voting on the evolution of Nigeria's democracy

It is challenging to start down the path of growth in nations where voting rights are still restricted to a certain extent. Due to a complete lack of transparency and public trust in the government's policies and operations, these nations may have to deal with considerable public dissatisfaction. Statistics during the past 20 years (1999-2019) have revealed that the majority of electorates in Nigeria, whose individuals are granted the right to vote regardless of their sex, class, occupation, etc., do not cast ballots, even when they have been registered with the nation's electoral authority. The general public believed that the result of this is that the general public is unable to connect the underdeveloped state with their lack of involvement in the election process. It is untrue that, despite multiple democratic administrations, the typical Nigerian still makes less than \$1 per day, while a select few elected officials have luxurious lives. These elected officials have become wealthy and powerful enough to be able to influence the political and legal systems in order to hold onto their positions of authority. The majority of Nigerians and electorates wonder why they should cast a ballot when they know it would not be counted. The electorate is still unaware of the relationship between the amount of political plunder and the rate of underdevelopment who transferred authority to that person. As a result, dissatisfaction with the system leads to no involvement. According to Abalaka (2023), the political culture of Nigeria has not allowed for the establishment and maintenance of true democracy.

D. The Independent National Electoral Commission's Function in Reducing Voter Apathy for the Advancement of Nigerian Democracy

Scholars have investigated attempts to offer potential tactics for eliminating or slowing the trend of voting apathy in Nigeria. Therefore, any effort by INEC to reduce voter disinterest for Nigeria's democratic development should concentrate on important issues such as holding transparent and credible elections, educating and orienting voters, being genuinely independent, providing sufficient voting materials, hiring and training qualified staff, and improving procedure for voter registration, carry out a campaign to educate the public, supply sufficient security, uphold law and order, and refrain from interfering with the election process. Therefore, the above-mentioned difficulties are highlighted;

1. Security Provision

One of INEC's most important tactics for reducing voter indifference is providing sufficient security prior to, during, and following the elections. Due to potential insecurity, the majority of voters abstain from voting on election days. It is argued that providing security for the populace, particularly during electioneering, is a fundamental component of a democratic government and one of the foundations for its existence. The absence of danger or relative freedom from violence and unjustified violations is known as security. The demand of the electorate, particularly in relation to the state's security of people's lives and property both during and after elections. At the expense of the Nigerian people, the military forces in Nigeria have been engaged in defending the political elite rather than the populace. Furthermore, Nigerians are dissatisfied with the system as a result of the military's incapacity to protect them during the pre-election and post-election crises that have shook the nation, which therefore leads to apathy about voting. Ajiteru (2023).

2. Maintaining Justice

As noted, it is more than a highway robbery on a bigger scale unless the state is a society that exists for moral reasons and is bound together by moral bonds. It is based on these pillars.

Finally, even while military security is essential and a fundamental that the rule of law, which is the accepted norm in any country, is ingrained in many communities. It should be mentioned that Nigeria is composed of various ethnic groups, each of which has its own set of cultural norms and standards for behavior. Justice and equity are consequently necessary because of the presence of these ethnic people as a nation. The supremacy of the law, equality before the law where all men are equal, and rigorous observance of fundamental human rights are necessary for the rule of law, which is shared by all

democratic institutions, including Nigeria, to be considered just. The idea that the law is supreme suggests that the wealthy, those in positions of authority, and political godfathers are not above the law. Furthermore, it guarantees the protection of the people's basic human rights. The dignity and worth of every person in the nation are determined by their human rights. The rights to life, human dignity, personal liberty, the right to a fair trial, the right to privacy and family life, the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and the freedom of speech are all considered fundamental human rights. In addition to guaranteeing these rights, the state's existence is supposed to constantly advance and defend them.

3. Safety of Liberty

To assure voter participation, everyone in the nation must have their liberty protected. Similar to the concerns about justice and security, whether Nigeria is offering and It is another matter entirely to defend the rights and freedoms of every individual. This is due to a lack of strict adherence to the rule of law. Therefore, as was previously mentioned, rather than the law being supreme, there are some people who are above the law, and Nigerians observe the fundamental human rights and other rights of the privileged few because of their wealth, power, or influence rather than the rights of all individuals. Voter turnout is threatened by circumstances such as these (Sulaiman, 2023).

4. Economic Welfare Provision

The state has a crucial role in ensuring the economic well-being of the populace in addition to providing for security, justice, and liberty. Here, welfare refers to the standard of living and well-being of living for the people. Nigeria must promote its unity, power, and independence in order to guarantee a good living. The presence of the state is supposed to preserve the wellbeing of the populace, as the country is known as the richest black nation in the world due to its crude oil, favorable climate for agriculture, and expanding market. Nigeria's unity, strength, and self-reliance—the nation's fundamental elements—should be the foundation for the state's (government's) supply of economic welfare. Nigerians everywhere will have the freedom and capacity to live in different regions of the country if it is founded on strong national unity. In the North, the Ibo man from Eastern Nigeria is free to reside and conduct business. The South is a safe place for Northerners to dwell. These are essential to the country's survival and play a crucial role in gaining access to financial well-being. Additionally, because of the government's investment in her citizens, Nigerians are expected to be self-sufficient. The nation's output rises and, in general, people no longer rely on the government for their daily sustenance when the state invests in human capital.

In conclusion, INEC's top priority will be to hold a credible and transparent election. These include making sure that voters are properly informed, ensuring that INEC is independent, providing sufficient election materials, hiring, training, and retraining qualified employees, and enhancing the voter registration procedure. The government ought to offer equal assistance to According to Abalaka (2023), INEC should fulfill its electoral pledges, conduct public education campaigns, guarantee sufficient security for voters, prevent corruption, uphold social order, and refrain from interfering with the election process.

10. Finally

In order to promote and encourage voter engagement in the political process, this research looked at voting indifference in Nigeria. The study identified a number of issues that deter people from actively participating in the political process. Therefore, this study ended by describing some constructive actions that the state (government) and INEC will do to boost the electorate's (people's) readiness to take part in the Nigerian election process. According to the survey, poverty was rising and voting apathy was moderate. leveled electorates to permit inducements to impact their decision. The study also found that a person's degree of political apathy, particularly between the opposition and the ruling party, is determined by how attached they are to that party. Additionally, it was evident that, despite the significance of elections, voter indifference would significantly impact the country's progress (Abalaka, 2023).

11. Suggestions

Restructuring the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to guarantee its independence is necessary. Socialization of students through the teaching of practical social studies and democratic behavior in civics at the junior secondary school level is necessary to reduce political violence. Workshops and seminars must be held for instructors of Civics and social studies to enhance their ability to instruct voters' education, political engagement, and citizenship education. To better prepare students for their future civic responsibilities, the social studies curriculum should be expanded to include more emphasis on themes related to democracy, democratic government, political engagement, voter education, and peaceful dispute resolution techniques. Ajiteru (2023).

It is advised that more research be done on a number of topics related to voters' indifference, such as women's voting participation and ethnoreligious elements that can prevent voters from participating in elections. In order to prepare for a more democratic society in the future, students should be encouraged to take part in school elections. Sulaiman (2023) suggests that civil organizations and the National Orientation Agency should intensify their efforts to educate the public about the importance of improved democratic participation in upcoming elections.

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