

Research/Review

Political Participation in Nigerian Democracy: An Examination Of A Few Chosen Local Government Areas in Ondo State During The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: Voter Apathy and the Electoral Process.

Abalaka, J.N^{1*}, Ajiteru, S.A.R², Sulaiman T.H,³

¹ Universitas Mahkota, South America
e-mail : abalaka.james@yahoo.com

² Universitas Berprestasi Hubungan Internasional, Owo, P.M.B.1030 Owo Ondo, State Nigeria.
e-mail: ajiterudr.sheriffdeen@gmail.com

³ Universitas Mahkota, South America
e-mail: staiwohassan99@yahoo.com

* Corresponding Author : Abalaka, J.N

Abstract: This study examines the level of political participation among the populace and highlights the importance of elections as a key component of a democratic system. Scholars widely acknowledge that involvement in electoral processes serves as a primary indicator of how well a country has embraced the principle of social equality within the international framework. The study employed a mixed-method approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The quantitative instrument used was the Political Participation Attitude Scale (PPAS), while qualitative data were collected through the Focus Group Guide on Political Participation (FGGP). The research posed and addressed three core research questions. The findings reveal that 57% of respondents did not actively participate in political activities. Gender was found to influence levels of engagement; 30% of male respondents and 13% of female respondents reported active involvement in political activities, while 38% of males and 12% of females consistently participated in voting. Furthermore, the survey indicated that a majority of respondents (53%) lacked trust in their political leaders. Based on these findings, the study recommends that Nigeria urgently adopt both formal and informal political education strategies to enhance civic awareness and participation. Additionally, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is encouraged to develop mechanisms that will ensure broader voter turnout in the upcoming 2015 general elections.

Keywords: Democracy; Political activities; Political culture; Political participation; Popular will

Received: 17 Marchth 2025

Revised: 31 Marchth 2025

Accepted: 09 Aprilth 2025

Online Available : 11 Aprilth 2025

Curr. Ver.: 11 Aprilth 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open

access publication under the

terms and conditions of the

Creative Commons Attribution

(CC BY SA) license

([https://creativecommons.org/li](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

[censes/by-sa/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/))

1. Overview

Political participation, particularly in the form of voting or voter turnout, is one of the main indicators of the success of a democratic system in any country. However, the world is currently facing a decline in voter turnout, a phenomenon that has raised serious concerns among political scientists, researchers, scholars, electoral bodies, governments, and concerned citizens. The ongoing global conversation on this trend continues to intensify. While many are astonished by the sharp decline, some schools of thought have started to question the relevance and effectiveness of the concept of democracy itself in its current practice.

Several studies have shown that this decline in voter turnout is not evenly distributed across the globe. In fact, there is a significant disparity between developed and developing nations. Research has indicated that the highest rates of declining voter participation are found in developing countries across Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Abalaka, 2023). This condition raises fundamental questions regarding the integrity of electoral processes and the quality of democracy in these regions. Does this trend reflect growing public apathy, or does it reveal widespread disillusionment with a political system that no longer seems to represent the people's voice?

In Nigeria, declining voter turnout has become a persistent and complex issue. Over the years, the country's electoral process has been marred by various undesirable practices such as widespread fraud, vote rigging, intimidation of opposition and voters, state interference, ideological shallowness of the ruling elite, policy discontinuity, and political violence. All of these have contributed significantly to the growing political apathy among citizens. For instance, during the 2015 general elections, only 42.76% of registered voters officially cast their ballots, despite the charged political atmosphere and high public interest (INEC, 2015).

Interestingly, the 2015 general elections recorded the lowest voter turnout since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999. In earlier elections, participation rates were considerably higher: 69% in 2003, 52% in 1999, 57% in 2007, and 54% in 2011. The consistent drop indicates a growing trend of voter indifference across the country. This situation highlights the urgent need for strategic efforts to restore public trust in the electoral system, particularly through increased political education and electoral reform.

In this context, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria plays a critical role in reversing the declining trend. INEC is not only responsible for organizing free and fair elections but is also expected to take the lead in raising civic and political awareness. However, for the commission to carry out this role effectively, it must free itself from the influence of political elites and vested interests that are often believed to interfere with the integrity of the electoral process (Ajiteru, 2023). Without strong institutional reforms, efforts to increase voter turnout may remain ineffective

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Examining the degree of political engagement in a few chosen Local Government Areas in Ondo State, Nigeria, is the aim of this article. According to Abalaka (2023), the study also aims to determine the causes of political apathy in Nigeria as well as the degree of faith and trust that the populace has in their political leaders.

3. Approach

Design of Research

The nature of this study is descriptive. This study is being conducted using the survey design. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods was used to acquisition of the study's data.

Subject

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were used to gather the qualitative data. The focus group activities involved twenty (20) individuals. Participants were chosen from Ondo State's four local government districts. Participants are chosen based on the following criteria: education, gender, age, occupation, and local government region. The FGD included five (5) participants from each local government area. Also, one hundred (100) volunteers were employed to acquire the quantitative data. The subjects were chosen at random from Ondo State's thirteen (13) distinct wards. According to Ajiteru (2023), the subjects were individuals from various walks of life who were at least eighteen (18) years old.

Instrument

Two tools were created and utilized in the research. A questionnaire for quantitative data is the first tool. The Political Participation Attitude Scale (PPAS) is the name of the survey. There are two sections to this questionnaire. While Section B contains 23 elements about citizens' attitudes about politics and their participation in the political process, Section A deals with personal information. For qualitative data, the Focus Group Guide on Political Participation (FGGPP), the second tool, was employed. The purpose of the FGGPP was to gather information from participants regarding their political views and degree of political participation. Expert validity has been granted to both instruments.

Questions for Research

To direct the investigation, the following research questions were posed:

1. Will the participants in the democratic process exhibit a high degree of political engagement?
2. Will men participate in politics to a greater extent than women do?
3. Do the people believe and trust their political leaders?

Analysis of Quantitative Data

The produced research questions serve as the basis for the analysis of the quantitative data collected for this study.

Table 1: Subjects' Level of Political Participation

| S/N | ITEMS | AGREE | % | DISAGREE | % |
|-----|--|-------|----|----------|----|
| 1 | I am highly involve in political activities | 43 | 43 | 57 | 57 |
| 2 | I vote always | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| 3 | I play some roles in politics | 54 | 54 | 46 | 46 |
| 4 | Nigerian democracy gives room for mass participation | 31 | 31 | 69 | 69 |
| 5 | There are stringent conditions required for taking part in Nigerian politics | 87 | 87 | 13 | 13 |
| 6 | My parents/ relations are in support of my playing politics | 41 | 41 | 59 | 59 |

were very active in politics; 50% always voted; 54% participated in politics in some capacity; and 69% said that Nigerian democracy does not allow for widespread engagement; 59% of respondents said that their parents or other family members do not support them in their political endeavors, and 89% said that there were strict requirements to participate in Nigerian politics (Abalaka, 2023).

Research Question 2: Will men in the community participate in politics at a higher rate than women?

| S/N | ITEM | AGREE | MALE | % | FEMALE | % |
|-----|--|-------|------|----|--------|----|
| 1 | I am highly involved in political activities | 43 | 30 | 30 | 13 | 13 |
| 2 | I vote always | 50 | 38 | 38 | 12 | 12 |

Table 3 : Level of Political Participation by the Subjects

| S/N | ITEMS | AGREE | % | DISAGREE | % |
|-----|--|-------|----|----------|----|
| 1 | I am highly involve in political activities | 43 | 43 | 57 | 57 |
| 2 | I vote always | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| 3 | I play some roles in politics | 54 | 54 | 46 | 46 |
| 4 | Nigerian democracy gives room for mass participation | 31 | 31 | 69 | 69 |
| 5 | There are stringent conditions required for taking part in Nigerian politics | 87 | 87 | 13 | 13 |
| 6 | My parents/ relations are in support of my playing politics | 41 | 41 | 59 | 59 |

were highly involved in political activities; 50% always cast their votes; 54% played some roles in politics; 69% responded that the Nigerian democracy does not give room for mass participation; 89% believed that there are stringent conditions required for taking part in Nigerian politics and 59% responded that their parents/ relations are not in support of their playing politics Abalaka, (2023).

Research Question 2: Will there be higher level of political participation among male than female members of the community?

| S/N | ITEM | AGREE | MALE | % | FEMALE | % |
|-----|--|-------|------|----|--------|----|
| 1 | I am highly involved in political activities | 43 | 30 | 30 | 13 | 13 |
| 2 | I vote always | 50 | 38 | 38 | 12 | 12 |

Table 2 presents the gender analysis of the activities.

Also 38% and 12% of males and females' number of people that agreed with some statements in respectively were always involved in voting exercise.

the questionnaire. 30% of males and 13% of females Research Question 3:

Do the people have confidence responded that they were highly involved in political and trust in their political leaders

4. Conversation

The study's conclusions demonstrated that the sampled respondents' degree of political participation was low. Just 43% of the population was heavily active in politics. Furthermore, according to Ajiteru (2023), only half, or 50%, of the population routinely casts ballots. The qualitative report, which shows that the participants only enrolled and received voter registration cards, supports these conclusions. In the 2007 gubernatorial election, only around 10% of the participants in the qualitative study actually cast ballots.

This conclusion is further supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stifting Foundation's analysis of the 2011 general election, which found that only 35% of registered voters participated. According to Abalaka (2023), the fact that the majority of registered voters did not participate in both the 2011 general election in Nigeria and the 2007 Ondo State voting exercise is a barrier to democratic governance. This study also found that gender had an impact on political participation, with more men (30%) than women (13%) being highly involved in political activities and more men (38%) than women (12%) regularly participating in voting. Olojede (2020) noted that while the Nigerian constitution allows women to participate in the country's political life, evidence indicates that women have played a supporting role in politics. Ajiteru (2023). According to Akande (2017), women's involvement in Nigerian politics is primarily restricted to cooking for men at political rallies and party meetings, clapping, dancing, and belonging to the women's wing of political parties. According to Arowolo and Aluko (2020), women typically encounter strong opposition while trying to get involved in politics. They found that just 39.7% of spouses were able to let their wives take part in political activities. Additionally, they found that many of the female respondents thought politics would keep them from providing complete care for their family. Therefore, it was determined that the main reasons women refrain from entering politics are the necessity to take care of their houses, the dread of damaged households, and the need to raise careless children. Sulaiman (2023).

The majority of respondents (53%) did not trust their political leaders, according to the study's findings. The claim that political leaders were reliable was rejected by 53% of respondents. greater than 80% of participants in the qualitative research said they had little faith in their political leaders, which lends greater credence to this conclusion. The results of this survey support Sulaiman's (2019) earlier conclusion that public confidence in political institutions is still comparatively low. The degree to which South Africans trusted their leaders was examined by Mattes et al. (2018). They found that somewhat less than one-third (31%) trusted the parliament, and slightly more than one-third (37%) trusted the president. 25% of respondents had faith in the provincial government; the premier (28%) and Local Government, 24 percent. The study's conclusions showed that certain people are deterred from participating in politics by the manner Nigerian politics and government are conducted. Abalaka (2023).

Ojo (2014) claims that Nigeria held a number of general and regional elections between 1960 and 2011. Since these elections were not held in an environment conducive to electoral security, a review of Nigeria's political history since independence reveals that they were tainted by electoral violence. Less than thirty-five percent of voters supported the elected

legislative and executive branches in the 2011 election. Any government that is not elected by the majority of voters is not representative, according to Falade (2023).

A Conceptual Nexus of Election, Democracy and Voter Apathy

In reality, voter indifference is a subtype of political apathy, according to numerous academics like Powell (2017). Conceptually, political indifference is the reduction in a nation's citizens' political engagement. Voter indifference may only result from a larger phenomenon known as political apathy, since political engagement includes all aspects of the political system, including public opinion, policymaking, civic duties, and the election of political leaders, to name a few. However, since voter apathy is directly related to electioneering, that is the focus of our attention. Over the years, a number of academics have focused on voter indifference due to its increasing negative impact on nations' democracies in the global system (Ajiteru, 2023). The primary focus The importance of voter turnout in an election is then well-founded in the fact that a higher turnout suggests a reasonable participatory democracy, whereas a lower turnout suggests discontent with the political system, including the electioneering process, and the political class. In an attempt to identify the reasons behind Nigerian voters' lack of interest in the 2015 general elections, as well as to identify potential remedies for this issue, this article will first look at a summary of the general elections in question (Sulaiman, 2023).

Program for Structural Adjustment (SAP) Time Period

Nigeria's government started making deliberate policy efforts to reduce poverty during the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) era. The majority of Nigerians' quality of living deteriorated during the country's severe economic crisis in the early 1980s. By implementing SAP, the government made a concerted attempt to contain the situation. The living conditions of many Nigerians, particularly the poor, who were the most vulnerable population, were made worse by the SAP adoption. Because of this, the government created and carried out numerous programs to reduce poverty between 1986 and 1993. Additionally, during the 1993 phase of directed deregulation The government implemented further programs to reduce poverty between 1993 and 1998. The Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Better Life Programme (BLP), the People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN), the Community Banks (CB), the Family Support Programme (FSP), the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP), the Strategic Grains Reserves Programmes (SGRP), the Primary Health Care Scheme (PHCS), and the Guinea Worm Eradication Programme were among the initiatives during this time.

An Overview of the 2015 Elections in Nigeria

Another change occurred in Nigeria's quest for a democratic election free of any irregularities between March 28 and April 11, 2015; nonetheless, as the case the pursuit has not been fruitful, as it has been in almost every prior election. General Muhammadu Buhari, the nominee of the opposition All-Progressive Congress (APC), emerged as the new president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as a result of the elections. General Muhammadu Buhari, the APC's presidential candidate, is a Muslim from the Northwest of the nation and a former military leader. Buhari, who was running for office for the fourth time on a different platform, received 15,424,921 votes, or 54% of the total, compared to 12,853,162 votes, or 45%, cast for President Goodluck Jonathan. Buhari thus received almost 2.5 million votes and won. But it's enough to say that this isn't a broad margin in contrast to previous elections since the restoration of civil government in 1999 (DSM release, 2015). With roughly 225 seats won by the erstwhile opposition party, the APC, over 125 by the former ruling party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the APC became the majority party in the House of Representatives. According to the Nigerian Tribune (2015), the APC once again gained 60 Senate seats, while the PDP only managed 49. Additionally, Muhammadu Buhari's All Progressive Party (APC) ended the PDP's control by winning a landslide victory in elections for influential State governors. Two-thirds of the 36 states in the nation were won by the APC in the state

elections, as they took 19 of the 28 states (Nivedita, 2015). The incumbent, former President Goodluck Jonathan's party, PDP, since the end of the Military Rule in 1999 suffered its worst ever defeat in the 2015 elections in entirety Sulaiman, (2023).

It was expected that just 31,746,490 (47.08%) of the 67,422,005 registered voters will be eligible to vote in the presidential election. Again, even if 29,432,083 ballots were cast, it is sufficient to say that just 28,587,564 of those votes were legitimate. The final results of the 2015 elections, particularly the presidential race, differed significantly from previous elections due to a rise in voter disinterest and a few instances of anomalies. A sizable portion of the populace did not show up for the state elections on April 12th, as predicted by the electoral body and the politicians Abalaka (2023). For example, of the 5,827,846 registered prospective voters in Lagos State, where the lowest turnout was noted, very Sadly, just 1,495,975 persons cast ballots. This dissertation aims to critically examine the degree of voter apathy observed in the recently finished 2015 elections (Ajiteru, 2023).

Voter Apathy: The Experience of 2015

It is astounding how little attention has been paid to the national issue of voter apathy. The fact that there has been little to no actual research on voter apathy in Nigeria, even though it has been a feature of Nigerian transitional elections since independence, is mind-boggling. The primary justifications offered by the chosen respondents for not fulfilling their civic duty during the 2015 elections are carefully examined in this study. These justifications subsequently defined the suggestions made by the researcher in the latter section of this work. The findings are based on over 1,000 interactions with various Nigerians who are at least 18 years old. As stated correctly, this poll was carried out using questionnaires with Lagos residents between June 1st and June 15th, 2015. According to Abalaka (2023), the study used content analysis of the available data on elections, both past and present.

The national and state voter turnout trends were evaluated using the electoral agency, INEC, which formally publishes election results in the gazette. All of the aforementioned strategies were used in this study project's 2015 Voter Apathy Study. However, it should be noted that the sole purpose of the field study, which involved precisely 1,000 participants, was to determine the fundamental explanations for their lack of interest in the results of the elections that were held (Ajiteru, 2023). Six significant local government areas in Lagos state were chosen as the sites for this field study. Voter apathy will be traced from the pre-election period to the election cycle in order to address the previously mentioned main topic of this study. This suggests that we might better understand the underlying causes of voter apathy by critically examining the drop in public participation in pre-election processes. The following problems can be categorized within the pre-election stage of electoral apathy manifestation: participation in political campaigns, violence, political discourse, and mass voter registration (Sulaiman, 2023).

Apathy and the Pre-Election Phase

We would want to restate that our main worries during the pre-election phase of the electoral process' manifestation of apathy include things like mass voter registration, political campaign participation, violence, and political discourse. According to Bassey (2018), electioneering also entails attempting to influence or deter potential voters in an effort to obtain a party edge throughout the election process. Over the years, Nigerian political campaigns have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate the degree of political illiteracy of the candidates running for office. Pre-election campaigns in 2015 were similar to those in the past in that the political platforms of the parties were neither founded on ideology or any grandiose ideals, hence a large portion of Nigerians were disinterested in the political parties' campaigns (Sulaiman, 2019). The People's Democratic Party candidate President Goodluck Jonathan's Kaduna campaign rally garnered one of the most memorable low voter turnouts throughout the 2015 pre-election campaigns. According to the Punch newspaper (2015), the demonstration had the poorest turnout ever, with a 25,000-seat stadium not even half full as a result of many individuals avoiding it. This case, along with a number of others, showed that many Nigerians were disinterested in political campaigns

during the most recent election. Naturally, this was noted as one of the factors contributing to the low voter registration participation overall (Ajiteru, 2023).

Due to the disastrously low voter registration participation in 2014, the electoral authority was forced to repeatedly prolong the registration period, which resulted in people continuing to register weeks before the elections. During the pre-election period, numerous cases were reported nationwide. In actuality, the failure of voters to show up and pick up their PVCs as scheduled was one of the reasons the polls were ultimately postponed. Of the 64.8 million registered voters, only about 45.1 million had been issued PVCs, according to reports. Although there are a number of explanations for Nigeria's low voter registration participation, as we will explore in the next section, it is crucial to remember that apathy is the main cause of this, according to Abalaka (2023). It is understandable why, despite the nation's population continuing to grow, the overall number of people who have registered to vote has consistently fluctuated over time. The 2011 elections serve just a brief example of this; despite the logistical difficulties and other anomalies noted, there were over 73 million registered voters. Even though the number of people of voting age increased to 91,669,312 million from 81,691,751 million in 2011, just slightly more than 67 million people cast ballots in the 2015 elections. This was the backdrop against which the overall voter turnout percentage in the 2015 presidential election fell to 44% from 54%. in the elections of 2011 (fig. 2). This can only indicate that during electioneering, the failings of the electoral body and the political elites to win over the trust of the general populace of Nigeria have persisted. The mapping provided by ERM Sulaiman (2023) provides a clear understanding of the low voter registration turnout in the nation.



Key: White (No Data), Yellow (Medium), and Green (Low)

Figure 1 shows a mapped voter registration index as of January 9, 2015 (ERM, 2015).

This reflects the strong sense of indifference that many Nigerians had toward the national elections in 2015. Even though voter registration procedures are crucial to real voting, itself, people around the federation did not show up in sufficient numbers. It should be mentioned that this report was submitted at a time when the election day had not been moved from February 14 to March 28. According to the interpretation, a remarkable number of eligible Nigerians have declined to register to vote just a few weeks before the elections due to a sense of indifference (Sulaiman, 2023). Therefore, it is undeniable that among other reasons, the low voter registration turnout was a major factor in the electoral organization INEC's decision to postpone the elections by six weeks. According on the mapping index above, an incredible Only eight states plus the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, reported a medium voter turnout, while 26 states recorded poor turnouts. Due to the insurgency data for Borno state was unavailable Abalaka, (2023). Without a doubt, this data makes it easy to

predict voters' disinterest in the elections because, despite a discernible rise in the number of persons of voting age, many people did not participate in voter registration procedures (Ajiteru, 2023).

Phase of Election and Apathy

As with the earlier elections, the level of disinterest was undoubtedly more obvious during the actual 2015 major elections. Since the primary elections necessitated that eligible citizens leave their various locations to cast their ballots in assigned polling stations, it inevitably provides a chance to measure the degree of disinterest throughout the federation, which is known as voter apathy. We are about to examine the percentage of persons who choose not to cast ballots, even among those who successfully registered to vote, in the same way as we have examined the refusal of the populace to register for elections (Abalaka, 2023). This is the primary metric that we used to assess voter disinterest in Nigeria's most recent general elections. The presidential election, which took place on March 28 and featured 14 major political parties, was the inaugural election. Additionally, voters may choose who would represent them in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Two weeks following the presidential election, on April 11, 29 states held their gubernatorial elections (Ajiteru, 2023). Election turnout was the lowest in Nigeria's democratic history since 1999, as has been accurately stated, notwithstanding the electrifying impacts of the 2015 elections, which were actually regarded as the most costly elections ever held on the African continent. A significant portion of Nigerians felt that the elections had little bearing on their lives, as seen by the high level of voter indifference during the elections despite the country's growing population of voting age. Voter indifference can be operationalized for this study in the last Nigerian elections employing the widely recognized model. This study is able to arrive at the earlier conclusion that voter apathy was more common during the 2015 elections in comparison to other previous elections by calculating the total percentage of voter turnout in the most recent elections. Nonetheless, by dividing the total number of votes cast by the total number of registered voters, the overall percentage of the voter turnout can be determined. In the general election of 2015, 29,432,083 votes were cast overall, compared to 67,422,005 registered voters. We must then divide 29,432,083 by 67,422,005 to get our overall voter turnout percentage, which comes out to 43.65, or almost 44%. The overall percentage of voters that cast ballots in the 2015 Compared to 52% in 1999, 69% in 2003, 57% in 2007, and 54% in 2011, the general election's turnout of 44% is the lowest ever (see fig. 2).

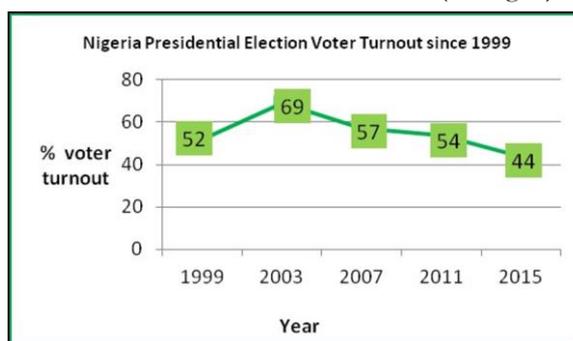


Figure 2: A graph that displays the approximate percentage of voters who have cast ballots in Nigerian presidential elections from 1999 to 2015 (CPP, 2015).

Nigeria's national electoral trend since the restoration of civil democratic rule is depicted in the above chart. In 1999, 52% of voters cast ballots, a percentage that many observers predicted would rise in future elections. Voter turnout in the 2003 presidential election was remarkable, with 69% of the population casting ballots, the greatest percentage the nation has ever seen. However, the voter turnout in the 2007 election dashed hopes for a further increase in turnout decreased to 57% even if the number of people in the nation who are of voting age increased (Abalaka, 2023). Thus, as the data shows, voter turnout has been declining from 2007 to the present. Voter turnout further declined to 54% in the 2011 presidential election. With a sharp drop in voter turnout to 44%, the 2015 presidential election was very different from previous ones. By examining the number of registered votes and the votes cast, which really determined our voter turnout, we can further support our understanding of voter apathy in the 2015 elections (see fig 3).

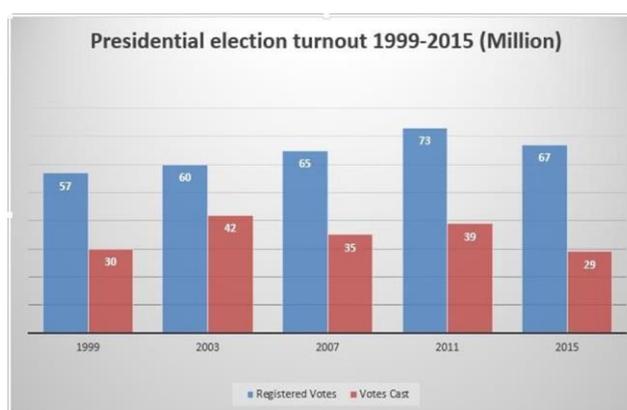


Figure 3: A bar graph comparing the total number of registered votes to the total number of votes cast in presidential elections from 1999 to 2015.

As we previously stated, voter registration is a crucial component of Nigerian elections since it guards against any kind of tampering or irregularities. However, we also pointed out that registration does not necessarily result in actual voting because people choose to register for various reasons (Ajiteru, 2023). The bar graph above shows that registering to vote does not guarantee that a person will actually cast a ballot. The five bar charts above show unfathomable differences in the number of registered voters and votes cast, yet this tragedy has received little to no attention throughout the years. Abalaka (2023). This is not to imply that the electoral body hasn't been attempting to reduce the nation's voter apathy, yet due to the body's inconsistency, none of these initiatives have resulted in any change. Beginning with the 1999 general election, only 57,938,945 million of the 108,258,350 million individuals in the country registered, or 57% of the total, as seen in the 1999 chart above. Only 30,280,052 million of the 57,938,945 million registered voters cast ballots, which is 30% of the total population, according to the chart. The number of registered voters rose to 60,823,022 million in the 2003 elections, while the number of votes cast, as shown in the 2003 figure as 42%, grew to 42,081,735 million out of an increased population of 129,934,910 million. However, in the 2007 elections, anyhow The overall number of votes cast fell sharply as a result of both the population growth and the rise in registered voters. Although there were 65,567,036 million registered voters out of 131,859,730 million individuals, the total number of votes cast fell to 35,397,627 million, or 35% of the total, as seen in the chart. With a population of 155,215,570 million and 73,528,040 million registered voters, the 2011 elections saw the same

phenomenon: only 39,469,484 million ballots were cast overall, or 39% of the total, as seen in the above 2011 chart. A high degree of disinterest was noted in the 2015 election, which undoubtedly became the most significant election in the nation's history since 1999. Among Nigeria's 181,562,052 million citizens, Only 29,432,083 million votes were cast overall, or 29% of the total, compared to 67,422,005 million registered voters. 2015 was the lowest number of votes cast since 1999.

Despite the overwhelming impact of the election, 2015 saw the biggest drop. The massive sums of money spent on campaigning, funding hate documentaries, and other related expenses failed to increase public political and voting engagement. Given the unprecedented drop in voter turnout in the 2015 presidential election, it is clear that a significant portion of Nigerians are feeling more apathetic than at any other point in the nation's history. It appears like voter indifference has spread like a disease infiltrating the Nigerian electoral process, to the extent that, should nothing be done, the country's seeming democratic systematization may completely collapse (Sulaiman, 2019). By examining the decline in each of the nation's geopolitical zones, the low turnout in the 2015 presidential election for this study can still be demonstrated. According to Abalaka (2020), the goal of this investigation is to provide light on the degree of apathy that is prevalent throughout the nation. As far as we can tell, the 2015 election saw a significant drop in voter turnout in every geopolitical zone except the Southwest (see fig.4) when compared to the 2011 results. Based on state-by-state examination, research indicates that only 13 of the 36 states plus the 50% of voters were able to cast ballots in the Federal Capital Territory. With only 26% of the vote, Lagos State had the lowest turnout despite being a reasonably tranquil state. According to Ajiteru (2023), this demonstrates the widespread indifference that many Nigerians have for the most costly elections in the continent's history.

| Zones | 2015 | 2011 approximate | |
|---------------|-------|------------------|------------|
| North Central | 43.07 | 49 | Decrease ▼ |
| North East | 45.22 | 56 | Decrease ▼ |
| North West | 55.09 | 56 | Decrease ▼ |
| South East | 40.52 | 63 | Decrease ▼ |
| South -South | 57.81 | 62 | Decrease ▼ |
| South West | 40.26 | 32 | Increase ▲ |

Figure 4: A table that compares the 2015 election to the 2011 election and shows the drop in voter turnout in every geopolitical zone except the South West.

Given that voter turnout declined significantly around the globe, with the exception of the South West, the table above provides additional evidence of voter apathy during the 2015 presidential election. The table shows that voter turnout in the North Central zone decreased from 49% in the 2011 presidential election to 43.47% in the 2015 election. Voter turnout dropped from 56% in 2011 to 45.22% in the North East zone, from 56% to 55.09% in the North West zone, and from 63% to 40.52% in the South East zone. The South-South zone was similarly impacted by the overall low voter turnout, as seen in the table, which showed a drop from 62% to 57.81% in 2015. But the only rise in voting turnout the South West zone, which strangely had the lowest turnout in the 2011 election, saw the highest turnout. Even though the zone had the second-lowest voter turnout in the 2015 election, behind the South

East zone, it saw a rise from 32% in 2011 to 40.26% in 2015. We would like to emphasize that there were a number of irregularities in the 2015 elections, including problems with the card reader, underage voting, riggings, violence, problems with the arrival of electoral officers, and materials. In light of this, the common belief that the election reflected the actual will of the populace was questioned in this study. In spite of the anomalies found in It is sufficient to say that there was not a single large-scale protest during the election, even though there were isolated protests in places like Rivers State and Edo States, to name a couple. This further highlights the nation's high level of voter apathy, according to Sulaiman (2023).

The Apathy of Voters According to Ajiteru (2023), the results and conclusions of this study are generally not shocking. In actuality, this study attests to the commonly accepted observation of Gallup, a democratic organization. According to a survey conducted by this organization in 2014 as the nation got ready for the 2015 elections, only 13% of Nigerians believe that elections are fair (see fig.5).

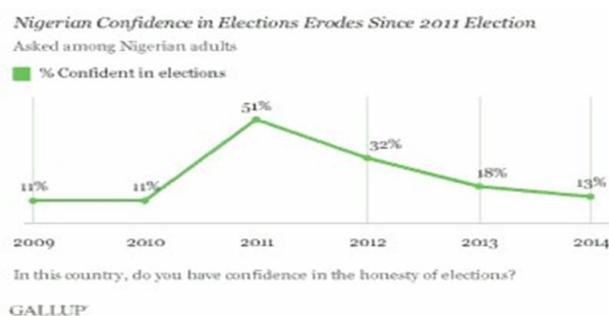


Fig 5: A chart put together by Gallup to determine the confidence of Nigerians in the honesty of elections (Gallup, 2014).

Many Nigerians have a cynicism about electioneering procedures because of their prior experiences with violence, intimidation, rigging, and other similar incidents. Most elections have been widely discredited throughout the years due to allegations of intimidation, murder, and voting tampering. The European Union monitors reported that the general elections in 2003 and 2007 were the worst they had ever seen. Given the historical inconsistencies, it is not surprising that a staggering proportion of Nigerians have little to no faith in the nation's voting processes. Actually, research by the Friedrich Elbert Stiffing Foundation showed that the main causes of voter apathy in elections include a lack of transparency, election-related violence, and politicians who break their campaign pledges.

throughout the nation (Odebode, 2021). Only 11% of Nigerians were found to have faith in the country's electoral processes in 2009, as shown in the above chart. The number rose sharply to 51% in 2011, but fell to 32% in 2012 and hasn't been resurrected since. It further declined to 18% in 2013 and to 13% in 2014, which was concerning for a nation that will soon hold a general election. At this point, we will examine the likely reasons why voters were disinterested in the 2015 elections. To support this discussion, we will offer suggestions that, if followed, could help reduce voter disinterest in Nigeria Abalaka, (2023).

Reasons for Voter Apathy In 2015

In discussing the various factors that contributed to the drop in voter turnout in the 2015 elections, it is important to note that, according to a Gallup poll conducted by the democratic institution, a significant portion of Nigerians had absolutely no faith in the nation's electoral procedures prior to the elections. These elements include individual, societal, environmental, and systemic factors. Although all of the factors will be covered in this discussion, it is important to remember that the contextual and systematic factors will receive the most attention because, as this paper argues, the individual and social factors are essentially the result of the previously mentioned factors. But it can't It is undeniable that each of these

elements influences the degree of voter indifference. Analyzing the contextual and systemic elements, our main concerns center on the electoral system and the political party system model, i.e., the problems that have arisen over time against voter turnout as a result of the nation's political and electoral systems' backwardness. Ajiteru (2023).

These elements are crucial to our comprehension of how the general drop in political engagement might directly harm public opinion toward electioneering practices. The contextual component focuses more on the metrics required to increase the extent to which voters perceive that various election results result in notable variations in the course and government's influence (IDEA, 2016). Because it has the ability to organically spark public interest, the election's completeness is likewise a pertinent issue in this perspective. Problems pertaining to the electoral system model are of primary relevance under the systematic factor. According to Sulaiman (2019), this component actually examines how INEC, the electoral body in this case, managed the pre-election and election procedures. To be honest, though, it is sufficient to say that INEC, the government, politicians, and the media are unquestionably the main causes of voter indifference in Nigeria (Abalaka, 2023).

The Inec's Role

It is undeniable that electoral bodies typically have the most important tasks to perform in reducing the indifference of voters. Surprisingly, INEC, the Nigerian electoral organization, has declined to step up to the plate, despite the fact that several electoral bodies around the world have taken the initiative in their respective nations. The nation's prospects for a succinct electoral reform have remained dim. The public's trust in the electoral processes has been impacted by the electoral body's incapacity, but not their refusal, to conduct and conduct elections in a credible manner. During electioneering times, the electoral body continuously faces the same issues, and rather than resolving them, they continue to worsen. The body's reality has been haunted by its incapacity to learn from past mistakes. A significant portion of the populace has become disenchanted with electioneering as a result. Numerous investigations have revealed that the majority of voters abstain from voting because they believe their votes are meaningless because INEC's actions have frequently resulted in numerous instances of irregularities. Ajiteru (2023). Voter registration during the 2015 pre-election period was marked by significant logistical difficulties, according to Sulaiman (2023).

Additionally, even prior to the actual voting, potential voters in their lots were sometimes turned away due to a lack of voter registration materials at the various centers, which sparked apathy. Many people expressed disapproval of the registration procedures' timeliness. In several states, the electoral board only allotted 48 hours for the registration process, notwithstanding the lack of registration officials. People in Jigawa, Kano, and a number of other Northern states had to march through the streets to call for the hours to be extended. The electoral body in Kano was compelled to add a full day to the registration period (Chioma, 2014). The incapacity to raise awareness was the most obvious factor in INEC's failure to increase voter registration participation. Voter education was inadequate, particularly in rural areas. The poor participation for card collection in general can be explained by the lack of tangible voter education to inform the public that PVC distribution was still ongoing. According to the ERM report, as of January 9th, no state in the federation had a high turnout of citizens during PVC dispersion (refer to fig. 6).



Key: White (No Data), Yellow (Medium), and Green (Low)

Figure 6: A geographical index of the number of citizens who participated in the PVC collection as of January 9, 2015 (ERM, 2015).

According to several reports, potential voters lodged a number of complaints against the election officials in charge of registration throughout the registration period. It was claimed that many of these authorities lacked the fundamental skills necessary to deal with small problems during the procedures. According to reports from Anambra, individuals had to make demands on INEC-qualified officials in Awka, Onitsha, and other locations (Ibrahim, 2015). According to this study, INEC was unable to guarantee that political parties in their campaigns adhered to fundamental high-minded topics to pique prospective voters' interest Sulaiman (2019). Many parties' campaigns were filled with hate speech and trivial topics, which essentially served as a means of deterring prospective voters from participating in the elections. Many people believed that these tactics were less or not grounded in reality (Abalaka, 2023).

The card reader issues also affected his wife and other well-known politicians throughout the federation, including former President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, who was running on the PDP platform. Numerous reports also claim that many of the electoral officials lacked proper training for the elections. Examples can be found in a number of states, including Ogun, Abia, Enugu, and Osun. In Osun, the overall quantity There were 1,378,113 million registered voters, but only 683,169 thousand of them received accreditation. Although 1,349,134 million people registered in Abia, only 442,538 thousand received accreditation. There were 616,112 thousand accredited and 1,381,563 million registered in Enugu. Additionally, only 1,678,754 million people in Lagos were accredited out of 5,827,846 million who registered. Based on these numbers, it is undeniable that a staggering number of people did not attend the polls due to problems resulting from the laborious voting process. Since elections were supposed to be over by 4 p.m., it is regrettable that the accreditation process did not start in the majority of polling places nationwide until 4 p.m. (National Daily, 2015). Activities in the majority of polling places lasted long into the night, according to Abalaka (2020). People's experiences during the presidential election thus provided a context for the poor turnout in the gubernatorial elections. Without a doubt, the aforementioned elements are among the main causes of the voter apathy that plagued the 2015 elections (Ajiteru, 2023).

Final thoughts

Nigeria has a low degree of political participation. The voting process and other political activities are not something that many Nigerians are dedicated to. According to this study, mass participation is not encouraged by Nigeria's political system or governance practices. This is due to the political culture that is characterized by violence, intimidation, manipulation, feelings, money politics, ignorance, corruption, deceit, and apathy. Nigerian women participate in the political process to a limited extent. Among the things that keep women from entering the political sphere are cultural barriers, household duties, financial limitations, and political apathy. Additionally, this study demonstrated that Nigerians lack faith in their political leaders. It was discovered that the majority of political leaders were self-centered and insensitive to the demands of the populace. After assuming political power, political leaders made promises that were never kept. The Nigerian political system is not firmly rooted in democratic and accountable governance, according to Sulaiman (2023).

Conclusion

Given the results of this study, it is advised that political education in Nigeria be provided immediately. The school system shouldn't be the exclusive venue for political education. To educate the public on the importance of actively participating in the political system, both official and informal methods should be used. To lessen the issue of gender disparity in Nigerian society, the women's fold must be intellectually strengthened. Enlightenment campaigns and financial assistance from governmental and non-governmental organizations can help advance the education of girls. Last but not least, the Independent National Electoral Commission ought to set up the necessary systems to guarantee widespread voter turnout in the general election in Nigeria in 2015. Throughout the entire electioneering process, INEC should be more open and unbiased. According to Sulaiman (2019), there should be no sentiment, partiality, fraud, violence, or intimidation during the election process. Anyone who disobeys election rules and procedures need to be held

accountable. This will increase political participation by restoring rationality and credibility to the voting process.

References

- 1) Abalaka, J. N. (2023). The impact of social media on voting behaviour in Nigeria: A study of selected voters in Lagos. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Education, Technology & Social Strategies*, 10(1). <http://internationalpolicybrief.org/journals/international-scientific-research-consortium-journals-2/intl-jrnl-of-innovative-research-in-edu-tech-social-strategies-vol10-no1-april-2023>
- 2) Ajiteru, S. A. R. (2023). The impact of social media on voting behaviour in Nigeria: A study of selected voters in Lagos. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Education, Technology & Social Strategies*, 10(1). <http://internationalpolicybrief.org/journals/international-scientific-research-consortium-journals-2/intl-jrnl-of-innovative-research-in-edu-tech-social-strategies-vol10-no1-april-2023>
- 3) Crewe, I., Fox, T., & Alt, J. (1992). Low voting in British general elections, 1966–October 1974. In D. Denver & G. Hands (Eds.), *Issues and controversies in British electoral behaviour* (pp. 18–30). Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- 4) Daily Independent. (2014, March 26). INEC decries low turnout for voter card collection in Nsukka. *Politics*, p. 12.
- 5) Lijphart, A. (2017). Unequal participation: Democracy's unresolved dilemma. *American Political Science Review*, 91(1), 1–14.
- 6) Loschky, J. (2015, January 13). Ahead of poll: Few Nigerians trust in elections. *Gallup World Polling*.
- 7) Materson, G. (2005). *Strengthening civic and voter education*. Conference report, Gaborone, Botswana.
- 8) Molutsi, P., & Singh, A. (2018). *Strengthening representative democracy, parliamentary and electoral systems and institutions*. International IDEA.
- 9) Mr. Irabor Michael (Personal communication, June 5, 2015), civil servant, age 54.
- 10) Mr. Jerome Osasona (Personal communication, June 10, 2015), artisan, age 49.
- 11) National Executive Committee (NEC), Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM). (2015, April 5). 2015 elections: Ruling party crumbles in historic election. Retrieved from [no URL provided]
- 12) Rakner, L., & Svasand, L. (2015). *Maybe free but not fair: Electoral administration 1994–2004*. C.M. Working Paper 5, Bergen, Norway.
- 13) Sulaiman, T. H. (2023). The impact of social media on voting behaviour in Nigeria: A study of selected voters in Lagos. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Education, Technology & Social Strategies*, 10(1). <http://internationalpolicybrief.org/journals/international-scientific-research-consortium-journals-2/intl-jrnl-of-innovative-research-in-edu-tech-social-strategies-vol10-no1-april-2023>
- 14) Wattenberg, M. P. (2012). *Where have all the votes gone* (Cambridge M.A. thesis). Harvard University Press.