



POLITICAL ALIENATION AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Adequate electoral participation in a democratic setting is essential to maintain legitimacy, credibility, and stability since democracy is about popular representation. However, from available data worldwide, Nigeria's inclusive, electoral participation is gradually but steadily on the decline. This study thus surveyed the perceptions of Nigerians on the factors influencing declining participation during elections. The study aimed among other things, to find out the reason(s) for the low turnout of voters in Nigerian elections, to investigate the nature of voter abstention and determine the relationship between alienation and voting in the Nigerian electoral process, especially, the 2019 general elections. A sample of 1,200 respondents was chosen from the selected local government areas of the six zones using the stratified random sampling technique. The simple percentages and Pearson's Correlation Coefficient statistical techniques were utilized to test and determine the degree of association intrinsic to the stated research questions. The findings showed that political alienation is caused by the political officials' failure to fulfil electoral promises, electoral fraud and political violence. Consequently, it is suggested that good governance should be ensured, perpetrators of election fraud should be penalized, while incidences of violence during elections should be mitigated.

Key Words: alienation, popular representation, voting behaviour, elections, consolidation of democracy.

INTRODUCTION

The factors that engender democratization and good governance in an enduring democracy are a robust electoral process and credible elections. An Election is a viable instrument for achieving adequate representation in government as well as the main instrument of political participation in

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democratic societies. There is however global evidence indicating low voter participation, signifying an emotional withdrawal, a detachment from public affairs and a reticent approach towards political activity (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1999, 2004). With this scenario, voter behaviour, a subset of political behaviour has become a foremost challenge in advanced and developing democracies. In the past years, concerns have been raised that the continuous low turnout witnessed globally at all levels of elections, is an indication of the disengagement of eligible voters from the political process (IDEA, 1999). This scenario may endanger the legitimacy of the political process; however, the degree, form, and intensity of the citizens' involvement in electoral activities have been subjected to heated academic debates (Raciborski 2011). Scholars, however, concede to the fact that attainment of a functioning and successful democracy would at least, require some level of involvement by the citizens to ensure the legitimacy of the political system (Dalton, 2007; Raciborski 2011). The consequent low levels of turnout by voters experienced worldwide and its implications for democratic sustenance have stimulated observations, comments, and investigations by commentators, political officials as well as scholars such as Franklin (2004) and Ellis (2004) who try to find out the factors responsible.

The continuous decline in voter turnout in Nigeria necessitated this study. The study posits that the abstention of voters in the Nigerian electoral process is due to alienation and thus put forward hypotheses to test this assertion. The study is novel for being the first (to the best of my knowledge) to be conducted on alienation and voter turnout in Nigeria. The study thus makes a significant contribution to knowledge by testing for the relationship between alienation and voting behaviour to determine the cause of voter abstention.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The Concept of Political Alienation

Political alienation is a relative term that connotes an enduring feeling of rejection and or estrangement from the existing political environment by a person. The politically alienated individuals desire to participate in electoral or voting activities but refrain from doing so because they feel that they are incapable of influencing the prevailing political environment. They feel that their interests are not respected and represented by political leaders (Glasberg& Shannon, 2010). The alienated individuals think that the ruling political elite do not work for their interests but themselves. The alienated see political leaders and office holders as not competent, selfish, or





corrupt and are thus, suspicious, hostile and sceptical of them. They believe that the political process as a whole is fraudulent; a betrayal of public trust and a charade (Campbell et al, 1954). Among several meanings that underlie the concept of alienation, that of ‘powerlessness’ which implies the erosion of freedom and control of the individual is most appropriate (Seeman 1959; Roberts 1987). Thus, “alienation can be conceived as the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his behaviour cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcement, he seeks” (Seeman 1959: 784). Roberts (1987) construes the notion of ‘powerlessness’ as resulting from a loss of self-worth, while powerlessness and self-estrangement are seen by (Seeman 1959; Korzeniowski, 1994) as the main alienation characteristics. Bowler and Donovan (2002) and Kim (2005) further describe political alienation as a mixture of the feeling of incapacity and loss of confidence in political institutions.

Olsen (1968) categorized political alienation into two main groups; these are political inefficacy or powerlessness and political discontentment or disappointment. According to Olsen (1968), political inefficacy is compelled upon a person by the political environment, while political disappointment is voluntarily chosen by him/her. Five typologies of political alienation have been put forward by Finifter (1970). They include **political powerlessness- a person’s feeling of inefficacy** to influence political or electoral outcomes; **political meaningfulness-** where the individual feels that political decisions and outcomes are not predictable and unclear; **political normlessness- which connotes the feeling** that norms and regulatory principles of electoral decision outcomes have been set aside; **political isolation- this is the non-appreciation by the individual of the common norms and shared values by society;** **political disappointment-**a loss of interest in political or electoral activity by the individual resulting from the ruling political elite misdemeanour.

The Concept of Democratic Consolidation

Osaghae (1999), opined that democratization connotes the procedure by which the doctrine, apparatus, and institutions of a democratically elected government are established and strengthened to become durable. Democratization is the process of moving away from authoritarianism to an established democratic system. Democratization is, therefore, a steady and step-by-step procedural growth of the political system. It is often linked to new democratic systems aspiring to acquire genuine values and ideals that define a durable democracy.

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Factors that account for “Democratic consolidation”

O’Donnell (1996), posits that “democratic consolidation” is regarded to have taken place when the following variables are said to be in place- a durable democratic process, observance of the rule of law, a Judiciary that is independent, open and competitive elections, a developed civil society, etc. Also, the citizenry must accept the democratic system as the required type of government thus, legitimizing it and avoiding the reversion to authoritarianism. “Consolidation takes place in five areas; civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus, and economic society” (Linz & Stepan, 1996: 7).

As a term, therefore, democratic consolidation represents a systematic and enduring process of achieving equality of opportunities by the citizenry in terms of partaking in the electoral and political system with the capacity to affect political outcomes. Thus, a situation where the citizens are alienated from electoral participation by factors inherent in the political system and governance would not translate to democratization or the consolidation of the democratic process.

An Analysis of Voter Turnout and Voting in Nigeria from 1999 to 2019

The voter turnout statistics in the 1999 general elections in Nigeria were not quite impressive; a total of 57,938,945 eligible voters were registered but only 30, 280,052 of these figures cast their votes, which represent 52.26% of voters registered by the INEC. In 2003, a total number of 60,823,033 voters’ were registered while 42, 018, and 735 voted to represent 69.08. These figures show a slight increase in the number that registered as well as those who voted as compared to the 1999 election figures. Thus, the voter turnout in 2003 increased by 16.8% compared to that of 1999. The general elections of 2007 recorded an increase in the number of registered voters which was 61,567,036; disappointingly, the total vote cast was 35, 397, 517, which represents 57.49%, about half the number of registered voters. The voter turnout of 2007, however, reduced by 11.6% compared to that of 2003 (IDEA, 2015; Abdallah, & Krishi, 2019). In 2011, the number of registered voters increased to 73,528,040 but, only a slightly significant 39,469,484 eligible voters exercised their franchise, representing 53.68%. The voter turnout of 2011 witnessed a further drop of 3.81% in the number of voter turnout as compared to the 2007 elections. The 2015 general election was not different from that of 2011, the number of registered voters was 67,422,005; the total votes cast dropped significantly to 29,432,083 representing 43.65%, i.e., less than half of the number of voters that registered. This figure represents a further decrease of 10.3% as compared to the 2011 elections. The 2019 general elections recorded a total of 82, 344,107 registered voters,

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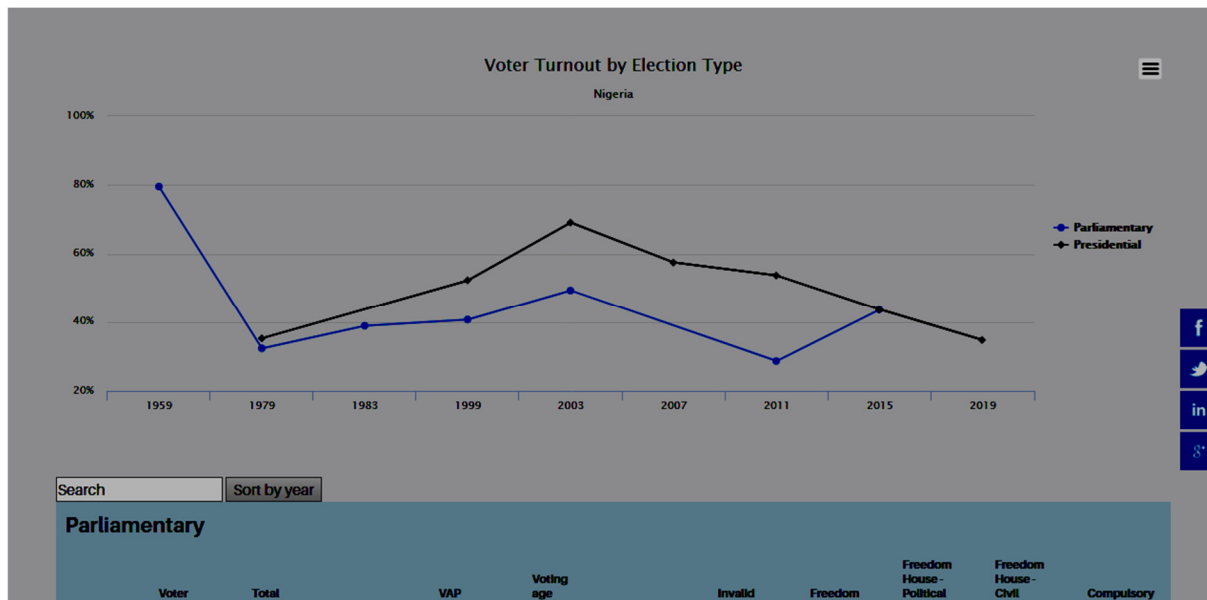




with a voter turnout of 28,614,190 representing **34.75%**. **This figure represents a further decrease of 8.90% as compared to the 2015 elections** (IDEA, 2015; Abdallah, & Krishi, 2019; Pulse.ng, 2019).

These analyses, therefore, show a gradual reduction in the rate of the turnout of voters from 1999 to 2019. The overall voter turnout figures were in the 50 and 60 percentages between 1999 and 2011, but reduced to 43.65% in 2015 and **34.75% in 2019**. Given that the credibility of these elections and the authenticity of the figures may be contestable, nonetheless, these figures are far from being impressive. Even though the voting-age population has been rising since 1999 (from 52.7 million in 1999 to 106 million in 2019), the voting age turnout has been on the decline (International IDEA Data Base, 2015, 2019; Ojetunde, 2019; Pulse.ng, 2019). These scenarios are tabulated in figure 1 and table 3 below.

Figure 1 Voter Turnout in Nigeria’s Presidential and Parliamentary Elections From 1959- 2019



Source: International IDEA Data Base, 2019

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The figure above shows the voting turnout trend for both presidential and parliamentary elections from 1959 to 2019 in Nigeria. The figure shows a disappointing less than 40% voter turnout in 2019 from an appreciable 79% in 1959.

Table 1 Voter Data Turnout for Nigerian Elections (Presidential-1999 to 2019)

Year	Voter Turnout	Total Vote	Registration	Voting Age Population Turnout	Voting age Population	Total Population
2019	34.75%	28,614,190	82, 344,107	26.87%	106,490,312	208,679,144
2015	43.65%	29,432,083	67,422,005	32.11%	91,669,312	181,562,056
2011	53.68%	39,469,484	73,528,040	48.32%	81,691,751	155,215,573
2007	57.49%	35,397,517	61,567,036	49.85%	71,004,507	131,859,731
2003	69.08%	42,018,735	60,823,033	65.33%	64,319,246	129,934,911
1999	52.26%	30,280,052	57,938,945	57.36%	52,792,781	108,258,359

Source: International IDEA Data Base, 2015; 2019

The study contends that the low turnout of voters recorded in every election in Nigeria and especially the 2019 general elections are the result of alienation. The study thus seeks to determine the relationship between bad governance, electoral fraud, electoral violence and the abstention of voters from the electoral process. It further seeks to ascertain if the abstention of voters from the electoral process is due to alienation. The variables of the study mentioned above can affect the consolidation of the democratization process positively or negatively.

Stating the Problematic of Voter Turnout

Effective and popular electoral participation by citizens is necessary for the consolidation of the democratization process. A lack of popular electoral participation would cast doubt on the effectiveness of the political leadership/system in a democracy. The consolidation of democracy would mean more active participation and popular support for the political and electoral system by the people. The active support is seen in the increasing number of voters turning out regularly during elections. However, building and strengthening the democratization process becomes a

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problem when there is a decline in the number of voters that turn out for every election. The low turnout of voters would not only pose a problem of credibility and legitimacy for a political system but also, portray the subsisting administration or government as unpopular.

The Nigerian electoral process is bedeviled with the above-analyzed scenario. The Nigeria voter turnout statistics have consistently been on the decline, especially in the Fourth Republic, that is from 1999 to 2019. The voter turnout statistics from 1999 to 2019 in percentages are: 1999-52.3%; 2003-69.1%; 2007-58%; 2011-53.7%; 2015-43.6%; 2019-34.7%. The declining level of the turnout of voters for elections in Nigeria creates a problem for a democracy that thrives on the principle of popular participation and support.

Research Questions

The study put forward the following research questions.

- 1) What is the impact of unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance on voter alienation?
- 3) What is the impact of electoral corruption/fraud on voter alienation?
- 2) What is the impact of electoral violence on voter alienation?

Objectives of the Study

The study objectives are:

- 1) To find out the reason(s) why many persons of voting age do not vote in Nigerian elections;
- 2) To ascertain the nature of abstention concerning voting activities and to determine if the abstention of voters is due to alienation;
- 3) To examine the implication of low voter turnout for Nigeria's democratic development.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

1. There is no relationship between unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance and the alienation of voters from the electoral process in Nigeria.
2. There is no relationship between electoral corruption/fraud and the alienation of voters from the electoral process in Nigeria.
3. There is no relationship between electoral violence and the alienation of voters from the electoral process in Nigeria.

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The rationale for the study

Elections play a key role in entrenching democracy in any society and regular elections and popular electoral participation ensure the consolidation of the democratization process. It also sustains the credibility and legitimacy of the political system and governance. Low turnout of the voter in elections indicates a decline in interest and support for the prevailing political system. This scenario suggests that the political and governance system is unhealthy to the citizens and may be inimical to their wellbeing. Thus, it became imperative to investigate the reasons for the declining turnout of voters to arrest the trend, encourage popular participation of the people in electoral activities, and ensure the consolidation of the process of democratization. Furthermore, the study will be useful to political decision-makers, academics, and those interested in electoral studies.

METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS OF THE STUDY

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The descriptive analytical approach was employed in presenting and analyzing the data. The study employed the 2006 National Census figures of one hundred and forty million, four hundred and thirty-one thousand, seven hundred and ninety (140,431,790), (Nigerian Data Portal, 2006). The study utilized a sample of one thousand two hundred (1,200) samples selected from six (6) Local Government Areas of the six (6) Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria with the Stratified Random Sampling technique. Three zones were selected from the six zones; two states were selected from each of the selected three zones and two Local Government Areas were selected from the selected three states.

The Yamane statistical formula was employed to calculate the sample size for the study. A five percent (5%) margin of error and ninety-five percent (95%) level of confidence was adopted to calculate the study population producing a sample size of four hundred (400) subjects. To make up for possible attrition and reduce the margin of error as well as to increase the sample representativeness, the sample size was multiplied by three (3), yielding a sample size of one thousand, two hundred (1,200) for the study. The increase in the size of the sample did not affect the 95% confidence level but increased it because the sample of 400 is the least standard required to attain the set confidence level. Primary data were mainly utilized for the study which was in the mode of closed-ended type questions. Contingency tables and simple percentages were employed to describe the data, while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Technique was used to test the stated hypotheses. The Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was employed because it is adequate for measuring the strength and direction of association intrinsic in the hypotheses in line with the

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study. The Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was computed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Table 2 Tabulation of the selection process- 1

GEOPOLITICAL ZONES	SELECTED ZONES	SELECTED STATES	SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS
NORTH- EAST			
NORTH- WEST			
NORTH- CENTRAL	NORTH- CENTRAL	PLATEAU	JOS SOUTH
		KOGI	DEKINA
SOUTH- EAST			
SOUTH- WEST	SOUTH- WEST	OYO	IBADAN SOUTH WEST
		EKITI	EKITI WEST
SOUTH- SOUTH	SOUTH- SOUTH	RIVERS	DEGEMA
		DELTA	UGHELLI SOUTH

Source: Compiled by the Researcher

Table 3 Tabulation of the selection process

SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS	POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE	PERCENTAGE (%)
JOS SOUTH	311, 392	250	21
DEKINA	260, 968	209	17
IBADAN SOUTH WEST	283, 098	227	19
EKITI WEST	179, 600	144	12
DEGEMA	249, 461	200	17
UGHELLI SOUTH	212, 638	170	14
TOTAL	1, 497, 157	1, 200	100

Source: Nigeria Data Portal, 2006)/Researcher

In table 2 above, the sample size was arrived at by multiplying the figure of the population of each selected local government area by the total figure of the sample divided by the total population of

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the six selected local government areas. The sample size percentage was gotten by multiplying each sample size by 100 divided by the size of the total sample figure.

Data gathering and Analysis

Out of the one thousand two hundred (1,200) questionnaires administered, one thousand, and sixty (1060) were duly completed and returned by the subjects of the study. The demographic composition of the 1060 sample shows that majority of the respondents were males, making up 57.1%, while 42.9% were females. The age groupings of the sample show that the respondents between 18-25 years were 50%, those between 26-40 years were 38.2%, while the respondents from 40 years and above constituted 11.8%.

The age distribution revealed that the sample participants constituted youths of virile age capable of active political participation. The sample also showed that among the respondents, 26% of them were married, 69.3% were single, and 3.3% were divorced, while 1.41% belongs to the “others” category. Moreover, 0.94% of the respondents were primary school certificate holders, 21.7% were post-primary certificate holders, 34.4% were OND/NCE certificate holders, while 43.0% were holders of post-graduate certificates. Thus, the respondents in the majority have the basic knowledge to respond to the questions posed in the questionnaire.

Furthermore, 22.2% of the respondents belonged to the paid employment cadre, 32.5% were self-employed, while 45.3% were unemployed. Finally, 60.4% of the respondents were Christians, 31.6% were Muslims, 7.07% belonged to African Traditional Religion (ATR), while 0.94% belonged to “other” religion. Thus, the distribution indicates that the respondents cut across the religious divide.





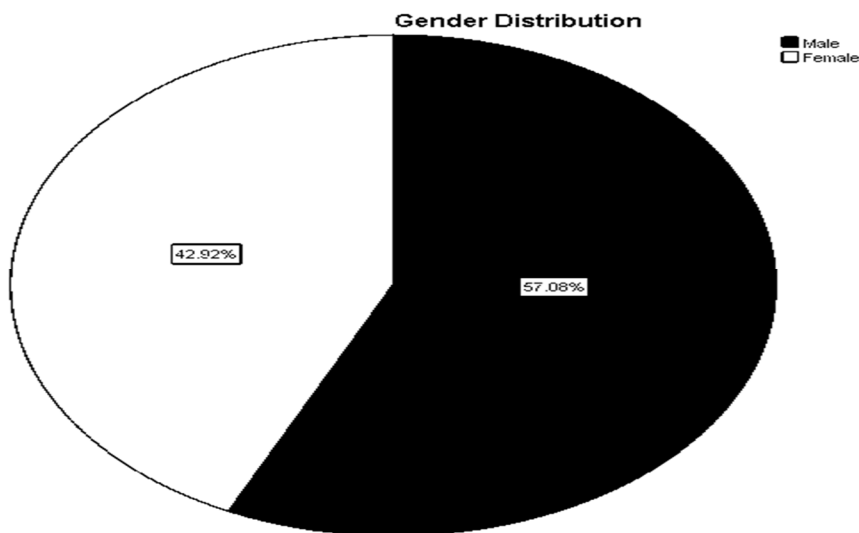
Frequency Table

Gender Distribution

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid Male	605	57.1	57.1	57.1
Female	455	42.9	42.9	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019”

Pie Chart



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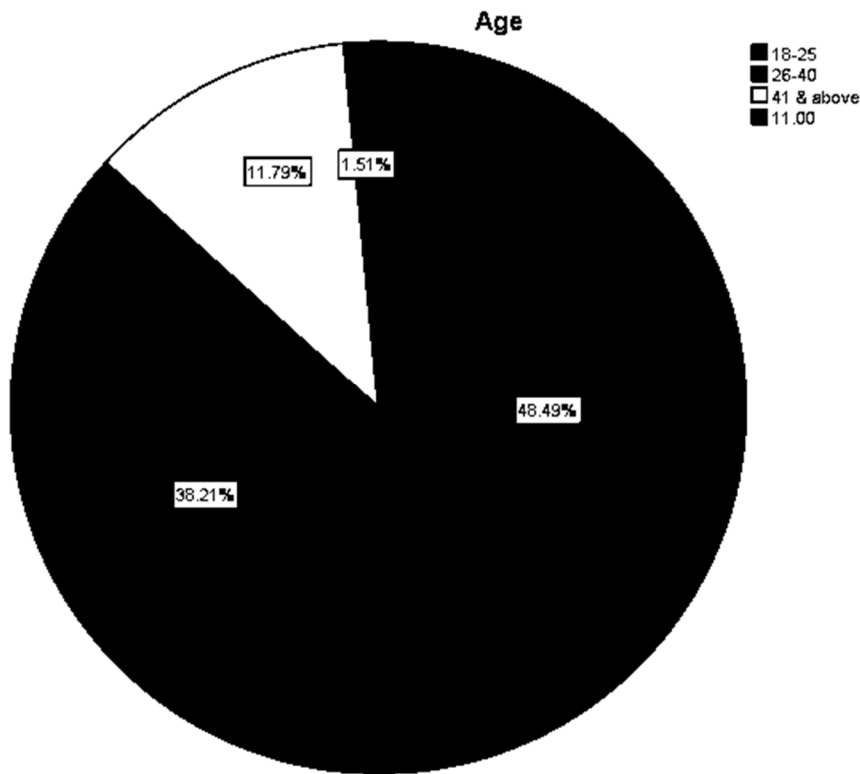




Age

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
18-25	514	48.5	48.5	48.5
26-40	405	38.2	38.2	86.7
Valid 41 & above	125	11.8	11.8	98.5
11.00	16	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019"



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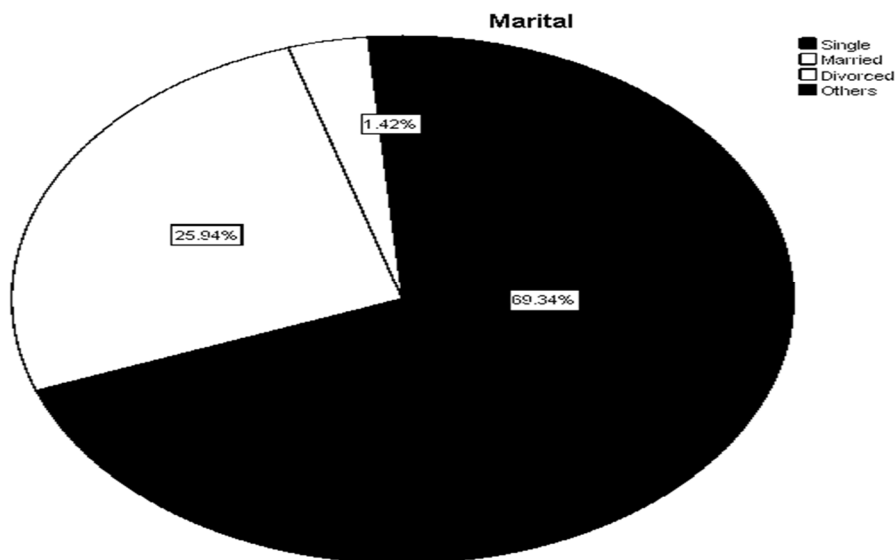




Marital

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Single	735	69.3	69.3	69.3
Married	275	25.9	25.9	95.3
Valid Divorced	35	3.3	3.3	98.6
Others	15	1.4	1.4	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.



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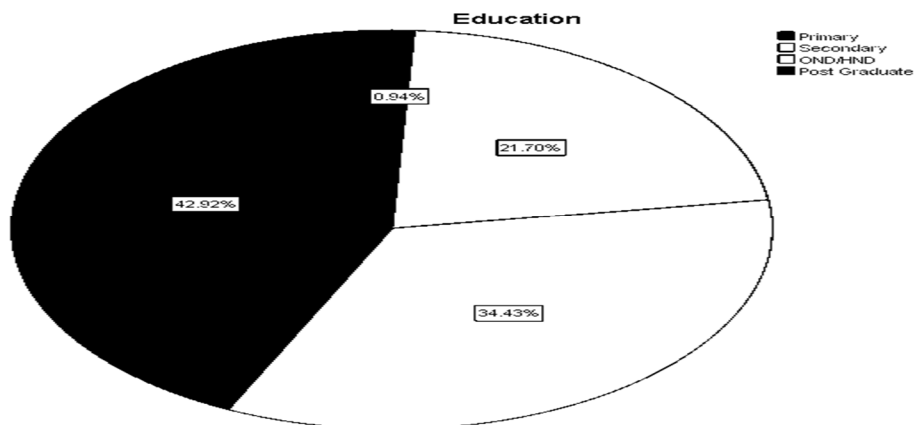




Education

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Primary	10	.9	.9	.9
Secondary	230	21.7	21.7	22.6
Valid OND/HND	365	34.4	34.4	57.1
Post Graduate	455	42.9	42.9	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.



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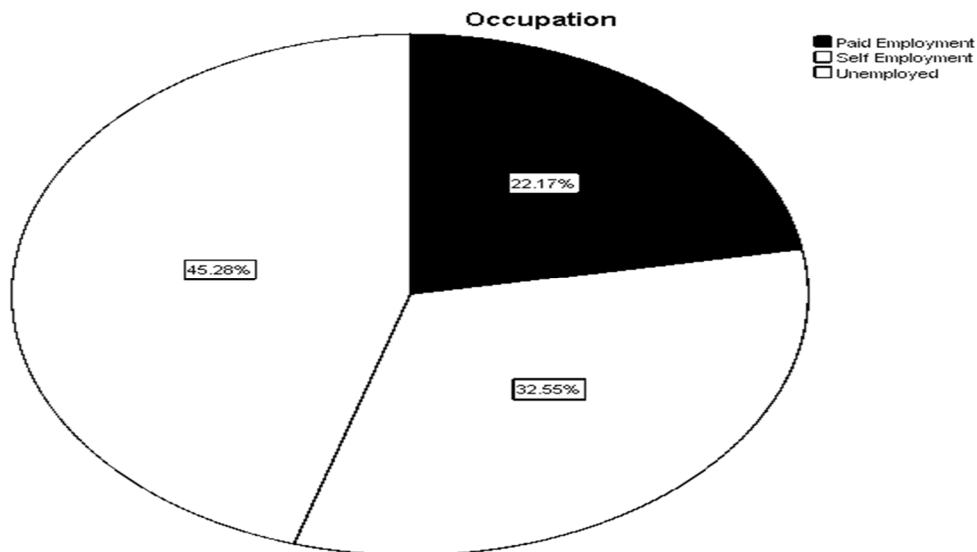




Occupation

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Paid Employment	235	22.2	22.2
	Self-Employment	345	32.5	54.7
	Unemployed	480	45.3	100.0
	Total	1060	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.



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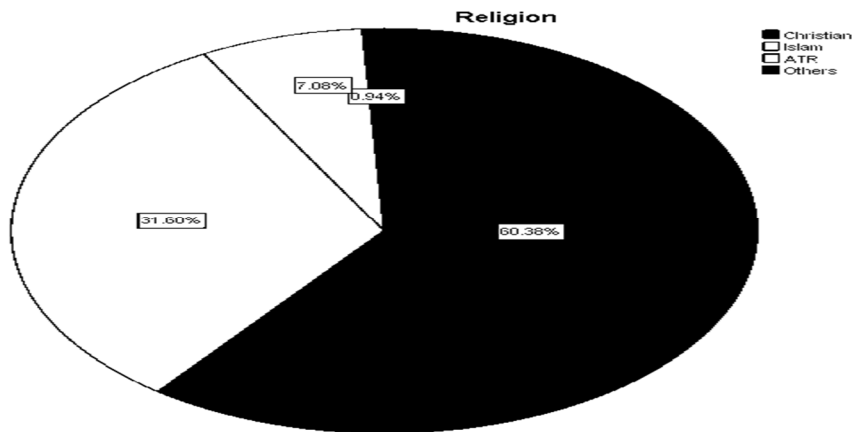




Religion

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Christian	640	60.4	60.4	60.4
Islam	335	31.6	31.6	92.0
Valid ATR	75	7.1	7.1	99.1
Others	10	.9	.9	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.



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RESEARCH RESULTS

Quantitative Data Showing Respondents Responses (N = 1,060)

Question1 Are you of the opinion that conducting elections in Nigeria is important?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	155	14.6	14.6	14.6
Valid Yes	905	85.4	85.4	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 7 shows that 85.4% of the respondents agree that elections are important in Nigeria while 14.6% state otherwise.

Question 2 Do you share the opinion that voting can help to select the right leaders in Nigeria?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	295	27.8	27.8	27.8
Valid Yes	765	72.2	72.2	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 8, 72.2% of the respondents support the view that voting can help to pick the right leaders in Nigeria; while 27.8% hold a contrary opinion.





Question 3. Did you register as a voter for the 2019 elections?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	420	39.6	39.6	39.6
Valid Yes	640	60.4	60.4	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 9 shows that 60.4% of the respondents registered for the 2019 elections in Nigeria, while 39.6% of them did not register.

Question 4. Were you mobilized to register for the 2019 elections?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	880	83.0	83.0	83.0
Valid Yes	180	17.0	17.0	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 10, 17.0% of the respondents agree that they were mobilized to register for the 2019 elections, while 83.0% state otherwise.

Question5. Were you mobilized to vote in the 2019 elections?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	870	82.1	82.1	82.1
Valid Yes	190	17.9	17.9	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.





Table 11 shows that 17.9% of the respondents agree that they were mobilized to vote in the 2019 elections, while 82.1% state otherwise.

Question 6. Did you vote in the 2019 elections?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	445	42.0	42.0	42.0
Valid Yes	615	58.0	58.0	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 12, 58.0% of the respondents agree that they voted in the 2019 elections, while 42.0% did not vote.

Question 7. Do you know of any person who registered but refused to vote in the 2019 elections?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	275	25.9	25.9	25.9
Valid Yes	785	74.1	74.1	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 13 shows that 74.1% of the respondents agree that they know eligible voters who registered but did not vote in the 2019 elections, while 25.9% state otherwise.





Question8. Do you think that the electoral process in Nigeria (registration and voting) is prone to violence and marked by insecurity?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	55	5.2	5.2	5.2
Valid Yes	1005	94.8	94.8	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 14, 94.8% of the respondents agree that the Nigerian electoral process is prone to violence and marked by insecurity, while 5.2% believe otherwise.

Question 9. Are you of the opinion that many Nigerians of voting age are eager to participate in a voting activity on Election Day but refrain from doing so because of fear of violence?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	60	5.7	5.7	5.7
Valid Yes	1000	94.3	94.3	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 15 shows that 94.3% of the respondents agree that many eligible Nigerians do not vote on Election Day for fear of violence, while 5.7% hold a contrary view.





Question 10. If you envisage that there would be violence on Election Day would you go out and vote?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	880	83.0	83.0	83.0
Valid Yes	180	17.0	17.0	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 16, 17.0% of the respondents agree that they would still vote even when they envisage the outbreak of violence on Election Day, while 83% state otherwise.

Question 11. Do you have implicit confidence in the INEC's capability to deliver a free and fair election?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	755	71.2	71.2	71.2
Valid Yes	305	28.8	28.8	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 17 shows that 28.8% of the respondents agree that the INEC can deliver a free and fair election in Nigeria, while 71.2% state otherwise.





Question 12. If you feel that your vote would be meaningless and of no consequence on the electoral outcome due to manipulation by political officials, will you continue to vote?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	815	76.9	76.9	76.9
Valid Yes	245	23.1	23.1	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 18, 23.1% of the respondents opine that they would still vote even when their vote cannot affect electoral outcomes; 76.9% of them state otherwise.

Question 13. Are you of the opinion that many people of voting age want to vote but do not because they believe that their vote will not count due to manipulation (fraud) by electoral officials/political parties?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	80	7.5	7.5	7.5
Valid Yes	980	92.5	92.5	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 19, 92.5% of the respondents agree that many people of voting age do not vote because they believe that their vote will not count due to manipulation (fraud) by electoral officials/political parties, while 7.5% of them state otherwise.





Question 14. Are you of the opinion that the registration and voting process in Nigeria is very cumbersome and therefore can discourage many Nigerians from voting?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	135	12.7	12.7	12.7
Valid Yes	925	87.3	87.3	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 20 shows that 87.3% of the respondents agree that the registration and voting process in Nigeria is very cumbersome and can discourage many Nigerians from voting, while 12.7% state otherwise.

Question 15. How would you rate Nigerian political officials' fulfilment of electoral promises?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Satisfactory	196	18.5	18.5	18.5
Valid Unsatisfactory	864	81.5	81.5	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 21, 18.5% of the respondents rate Nigerian political officials' fulfilment of electoral promises as satisfactory, while 81.5% of them state otherwise.





Question 16. Are you of the opinion that the majority of Nigerians are willing to vote during elections, but do not because they believe that political office has been hijacked by political godfathers and therefore electoral promises would not be fulfilled?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	105	9.9	9.9	9.9
Valid Yes	955	90.1	90.1	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 22 shows that 90.1% of the respondents agree that the majority of Nigerians do not vote in elections because they believe that political office has been hijacked by political godfathers, and therefore electoral promises would not be fulfilled, while 9.9% hold a contrary opinion.

Question 17. Are you of the opinion that many Nigerians want to vote but are restricted because they feel that the political officials do not care for their interests?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	70	6.6	6.6	6.6
Valid Yes	990	93.4	93.4	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

In table 23, 93.4% of the respondents agree that many Nigerians have lost interest in voting because they feel that the political officials do not care for their interests; however, 6.6% of them believe otherwise.





Question 18. Are you of the opinion that many Nigerians want to vote during elections but are restricted because of bad governance by elected officials?

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
No	70	6.6	6.6	6.6
Valid Yes	990	93.4	93.4	100.0
Total	1060	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey: 2019.

Table 24 shows that 93.4% of the respondents agree that many Nigerians do not vote during the election because of bad governance by elected officials, while 6.6% hold a contrary view.

Testing Research Questions of Quantitative Data with Pearson's Correlation Coefficient using the SPSS Package

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance and voters' abstention?

	Responses	Percentage (%)
Yes	955	90.1
No	105	9.9
Total	1060	100

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.





Correlations

		Voters' abstention	Unfulfilled campaign promises/ bad governance
Voters' abstention	Pearson Correlation	1	.802**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	1060	1060
Unfulfilled campaign promises/ bad governance	Pearson Correlation	.802**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	1060	1060

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation of Results: There is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($p < .005$). The direction of the relationship is positive. There is a very strong positive relationship between unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance and voters' abstention, meaning that these variables tend to increase together. Hence, the increase in unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance leads to a corresponding increase in voters' abstention during elections. There is a strong nexus between unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance and voters' abstention during electioneering. Thus, as the political officials' level of unfulfilled promises/bad governance increases, the citizens become more alienated from the political system leading to the low-level turnout of eligible voters during elections in Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between electoral corruption/fraud and voters' abstention?

	Responses	Percentage (%)
Yes	980	92.4
No	80	7.6
Total	1060	100

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.





Correlations

		Voters' abstention	Electoral corruption/ Fraud
Voters' abstention	Pearson Correlation	1	.211**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	1060	1060
Electoral corruption/ Fraud	Pearson Correlation	.211**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	1060	1060

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation of Results: There is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($p < .005$). The direction of the relationship is positive. There is a weak positive relationship between electoral corruption/fraud and voters' abstention, meaning that these variables tend to increase together. Therefore, the increase in electoral corruption/fraud leads to a corresponding increase in voters' abstention during elections. Thus, as the political officials', political parties and INEC officials engage in the harmful practice of manipulation of election results, the citizens become more alienated from the political system leading to a low-level turnout of eligible voters during elections in Nigeria.

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between electoral violence and voters' abstention?

	Responses	Percentage (%)
Yes	1000	94.3
No	60	5.7
Total	1060	100

Source: Field Survey: 2019”.





Correlations

		Voters' abstention	Electoral violence
Voters' abstention	Pearson Correlation	1	.955**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	1060	1060
Electoral violence	Pearson Correlation	.955**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	1060	1060

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation of Results: There is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($p < .005$). The direction of the relationship is positive. There is a very strong positive relationship between electoral violence and voter alienation. This means that the variables tend to increase together. The increase in one variable affects the other variable. Consequently, the increase in electoral violence leads to a corresponding increase in voters' abstention during elections. There is a strong linkage between electoral violence and voters' abstention during the electoral process. Thus, as the level of electoral violence increases, the citizens become more alienated from the political system leading to a low-level turnout of eligible voters during elections in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Interpretation of Research Hypothesis 1

The result shows that there is a strong significant relationship between unfulfilled campaign promises/bad governance and voter alienation. The relationship is positive which means that the political officials' low level of governance is responsible for the alienation of citizens from the political system leading to a low-level turnout of eligible voters during elections in Nigeria. Therefore, the outcome of research results for Hypothesis 1 shows that unfulfilled campaign

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promises/bad governance by political officials hurts voter participation in the electoral process of Nigeria.

Interpretation of Research Hypothesis 2

The quantitative data of the research result shows that there is a weak significant relationship between electoral fraud and voter alienation. The relationship is positive, which means that the political officials' political parties and INEC officials' negative practice of manipulating election results is responsible for citizens' alienation from the political system; thus, leading to a low-level turnout of eligible voters during elections in Nigeria. Thus, research results for Hypothesis 2 show that electoral corruption/fraud hurts voter participation in the electoral process of Nigeria.

Interpretation of Research Hypothesis 3

The quantitative data of the research result shows that there is a strong significant relationship between electoral violence and voter alienation. The relationship is positive, which means that the high incidences of electoral violence are responsible for citizens' alienation from the political system, thus, leading to a low-level turnout of eligible voters during elections in Nigeria. Therefore, research results for Hypothesis 3 show that violence during elections hurts voter participation in the Nigerian electoral process.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are summarized thus:

1. Voter abstention in the Nigerian electoral system is mainly due to alienation.
2. Voter alienation in the Nigerian electoral process is a factor of bad governance.
3. The failure of elected political officers to fulfil electoral promises and work for the interest of the citizenry concerning policy formulation and implementation is responsible for voter alienation in Nigeria.
4. Voter alienation is a factor of electoral fraud perpetrated by the political officials, parties, and INEC officials, which undermines the votes cast by the Nigerian electorates during elections.
5. The acts of election violence carried out by political elite, political opponents, and political parties are the cause of voter alienation in Nigeria.

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6. The electoral process (registration and voting) in the Nigerian political system is cumbersome and thus, discourages many citizens from registering for elections as well as voting.

Findings from the study reveal that the quantitative data corroborates the qualitative data and that results from both quantitative and qualitative data validate the various research questions. The findings are in two categories- major findings and supporting findings.

Major findings

1. Unfulfilled promises and bad governance by political officials are responsible for the alienation of voters and low turnout during elections in Nigeria.

Data from both the quantitative results show that a majority of the respondents are of the view that voter alienation is caused by the failure of political officials to fulfil electoral promises and deliver good governance. For instance, the majority of the respondents, that is 92.5% rate the fulfilment of electoral promises by political officials as unsatisfactory, 90.1% are of the view that political offices have been hijacked by political godfathers and as a result, electoral promises are not fulfilled; furthermore, 93.4% of the respondents are of the view that the political officials do not care about the citizens' interest, while 93.4% of the respondents state that many eligible voters do not vote during elections in Nigeria in reaction to bad governance by political officials.

2. Electoral fraud and corruption by political officials, political parties and electoral officials are responsible for the alienation of voters from the political system and low turnout during elections. Data from both the quantitative and qualitative results show that majority of the respondents are of the view that voter alienation is the result of fraudulent electoral practices in the Nigerian political system. For example, 71.2% of the respondents stated that they lack confidence in the INEC to conduct free and fair elections in Nigeria; 76.9% opined that they will not continue to vote if they feel that their votes will not count, while 92.4% stated that many Nigerians do not vote because they believe their votes will not count due to manipulation and fraud by political candidates, political parties and electoral officials.

3. Electoral violence is responsible for voter alienation from the political process of Nigeria. Data from both the quantitative and qualitative results show that a majority of the respondents stated that election violence is responsible for the alienation of voters and low turnout during elections. For instance, the majority of the respondents, that is 94.8% are of the view that the

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registration and voting process in Nigeria is largely insecure and prone to violence; 94.3% opined that many eligible voters do not vote during elections in Nigeria because of the fear of violence, while 83% stated that if they envisage the outbreak of violence in an election, they will not go out to cast their votes.

Supporting Findings

1. Cumbersome electoral process (registration and voting) is responsible for the alienation of voters and low turnout during elections in Nigeria.

Data from the quantitative results show that the majority of the respondents stated that the very stressful and rigorous registration and voting processes in Nigeria discourage eligible voters from voting during elections. For example, the majority of the respondents, that is, 87.3%, state that the registration and voting processes in Nigeria are very cumbersome and thus can discourage voters from voting in the elections. They opined that the unusually long hours spent in the queue either during voter registration or voting are stressful and discouraging.

The majority of the respondents interviewed displayed adequate knowledge (by their responses) and interest in electoral activities but are averse to voting because of the prevailing environment in the political and governance system. It therefore, follows that their behaviour cannot be described as being apathetic towards the electoral process. This set of people is alienated from the electoral process due to the persisting constraining political environment like bad governance, electoral fraud, and election violence as shown in the findings.

Low voter turnout is inimical to the development and consolidation of the democratization process. The democratic process according to O' Donnell (1996) is consolidated with the existence of open and competitive elections. However, elections would become less competitive when a sizeable number of eligible voters abstain from the process.

The results thus revealed that the majority of the respondents interviewed are interested in the political system, political process, and political participation. They are therefore willing to cast their votes during elections but have been inhibited by some environmental factors in the political system which caused them to become alienated from the political and electoral process. These factors represent the major and supporting findings of the study already discussed above. To buttress the above point, the majority of the respondents, that is 85.4%, opined that elections are

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important in Nigeria; 72.2% are of the view that elections can help to select the right leaders in Nigeria; 60.4% stated that they registered for the 2019 general elections; a majority of the respondents said they are eager and willing to vote during elections only if the election is free and fair, while 83% were not mobilized to register for the 2019 general elections but did so willingly.

The study thus contributed to the existing body of academic knowledge as the first study on alienation as the cause of voter abstention. It also adds to previous studies conducted by other researchers on the subject matter that found apathy as the cause of voter abstention. This present study has broadened academic knowledge and understanding that voter abstention is not only the problem of apathy but also of alienation. The study found out that alienation is the main cause of low voter turnout in Nigeria by carefully observing the responses of the subjects to the variables investigated and the questions posed which can serve for both alienation and apathy. Finally, the study is the first quantitative survey on alienation and voting behaviour.

CONCLUSION

In an enduring democracy, credible, popular electoral participation and regular elections are imperatives. Therefore, consolidating the democratization process cannot become a reality if a majority of the people that are the determinants of electoral outcome (by voting) continue to stay away from the process. The study investigated the relationship between political alienation and the consolidation of the democratic process in Nigeria. It put forward some variables to determine the relationship between alienation and voting in Nigeria, especially in the 2019 general elections. The findings show that political alienation is responsible for the abstention of voters from the electoral process.

It is not in contention that there is a steady and gradual withdrawal or reduction in voter electoral participation across the world and particularly in Nigeria. The contending issue, however, is finding out the cause and how to stem the tide. Not much attention has been given to this phenomenon by scholars, governments and relevant stakeholders in terms of conducting empirical investigation and taking purposive action to encourage impressive turnouts during elections in Nigeria. The study has thus revealed that alienation is the cause of low voter turnout as well as the causal variables. If the trend of voter alienation is allowed to continue, it will pose a threat to the credibility of elections and the electoral system, the legitimacy of elections and the overall stability





of the political system. This scenario would impede the endurance, sustenance, and consolidation of the democratic arrangement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions arising from the findings of the study are made.

1. The elected political officials should ensure good governance based on meeting the yearning, expectations, needs and demands of the citizenry. The qualities of good governance like transparency, accountability, rule of law, fairness and equity in resource distribution should be ensured. The citizens' basic needs such as food, shelter, water, adequate power supply, access roads as well a sustaining and enduring market should be built and maintained.
2. The electoral system of Nigeria as it is presently cannot engender confidence in the electorates. Thus, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) should ensure credibility in the electoral process. The INEC should be made more independent to conduct credible elections. Political interferences from the political leaders and rulers should be discouraged. Also, the political parties and electoral candidates should be sensitized to be fair and ensure a level playing field for party primaries and other elections. The use of electronic transmission should be encouraged and mandatory to reduce electoral fraud and manipulation. Fraudulent practices during elections should be strictly penalized with appropriate sanctions to serve as deterrents to others.
3. Concerted efforts should be made by both the federal and state governments to effectively control violent incidences during elections. This could be done by designating adequate security personnel to man elections in Nigeria. The security personnel should through intelligence gathering and effective networking aim to forestall and control any actions by individual and groups that negate the regulations of the electoral process circle capable of resulting in the outbreak of violence.
4. The federal and state governments should put up modalities to lighten the often-stressful registration and voting processes to encourage more people to participate in the electoral process. This can be done by ensuring that the various electronic gadgets for registration and voting are in working condition, using well-trained and experienced staff, and re-delimitation of registration and polling units to reduce the population to a manageable level. Others are to ensure that the

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registration and voting centres are opened on time and that electoral materials and officials arrive at the designated venues at the stipulated time.

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